



Spark

Where inspiration meets action

VOLUME 4

A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST OHIO CONFERENCE



CELEBRATING MISSION AND MINISTRY

FEATURES

Love Your Neighbor Takes
on Global Meaning

Prayer Porch for Kids

Residents Find New Purpose

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Special thanks to Global Ministries, the international mission, humanitarian relief and development organization of The United Methodist Church. It works with partners and churches in more than 115 countries to equip and transform people and places for God's mission. The Office of Connectional Ministries, especially Mariel Lynn Grace lead the West Ohio Conference mission efforts. We would also like to thank the pastors and congregations of West Ohio who do amazing ministry every day.

This magazine is produced by the West Ohio Communications Team: Kay Panovec, MacKenzie Kuhn, Jillian Thompson and Amy Graham. Please send your comments and suggestions to: westohio@wocumc.org.

HOW UNITED METHODISTS SERVE

When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus answered with two: “You must love the Lord your God” and “You must love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Matthew 22:34-40).

Following Jesus’s call, founder of the early Methodist movement John Wesley taught us to grow in our faith by “doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all” (General Rules).

United Methodists around the world are active in our local communities, and through our global connection of congregations and agencies, we participate in ministries thousands of miles from where we live.

Learn more by watching the video below.



**United Methodists:
What We Believe, and Why**



FEATURE STORIES

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR TAKES ON GLOBAL MEANING

Imagine leaving your home for the last time, taking only what fits into two bags. You'll never return or see your friends and neighbors again. This is the reality for refugees.

In October 2021, images of Afghan refugees clinging to planes shook the world. The following Sunday, Marisa Schoening, a member of Indian Run United Methodist Church, was moved by her pastor's sermon on World Communion Sunday. Rev. Jeff Allen spoke about loving your neighbor and engaging in mission both locally and globally. Inspired to act, Marisa reached out to Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS), a nonprofit supporting refugee integration in Central Ohio.

Three weeks later, Marisa invited her congregation to join her efforts. "There are refugee families that need our support," she said. The response was overwhelming. Members of Indian Run contributed time, funds, and resources. On Christmas Eve, Marisa's family welcomed an Afghan family of four. Since then, the Indian Run Refugee Support Team has resettled nine Afghan families and one Syrian family.

Three weeks later, Marisa invited her congregation to join her efforts. "There are refugee families that need our support," she said. The response was overwhelming. Members of Indian Run contributed time, funds, and resources. On Christmas Eve, Marisa's family welcomed an Afghan family of four. Since then, the Indian Run Refugee Support Team has resettled nine Afghan families and one Syrian family.

"Our goal is to empower families, not foster dependence," said Rev. Allen.

Sama, a young Afghan girl, shared her gratitude: "In Afghanistan, I wouldn't be allowed to attend school past sixth grade or become a doctor or make a difference in the world. I am very grateful to be in the United States."

This ministry has profoundly impacted Indian Run, with the congregation stepping up to meet every need. "It feels good to know you may be saving a life," Marisa said. "This is what God calls us to do."



FEATURE STORIES

TEAM HOPE SERVES UP RESPECT, FOOD, AND PRAYERS

Twice a month, you will find Jonathan “JC” Cody and a team of volunteers in Piatt Park, located across from the main library in downtown Cincinnati. They arrive with pans of hot food and hearts ready to serve. While volunteers set up, JC can be found greeting each person, checking in with regular attendees and asking for prayer requests.

JC is the founder of Team Hope, a ministry of Shiloh United Methodist Church. This ministry now includes a broad coalition of servants from other community churches, a Christian Motorcycle Club, local businesses, and individuals who were once unhoused themselves.

Each Team Hope event begins with worship. At that time, JC lifts up the prayer requests he received moments earlier offering each concern to God. Recently, the Sacrament of Communion has been offered to everyone.

The purpose of Team Hope is to provide a hot, well-balanced, meal while building community and sharing the love of Christ. All meals are thoughtfully prepared and include a protein such as beef, chicken or salmon, vegetables, starches, fruit and a special treat.

As people come through the line to receive their food, JC can be heard saying, “Thank you for letting us serve you today.”

After a recent meal, Team Hope servants spent time listening and praying with people, leading several to Christ. “We are bringing Christ to people who would never come to the church,” JC said.

Through Team Hope, JC and his team are living out the gospel by meeting people where they are. By offering both physical and spiritual nourishment, they create a space where everyone feels valued and loved, demonstrating that God’s grace and compassion extend to all.



FEATURE STORIES

FOUNTAIN SQUARE CHURCH HELPS RESIDENTS BECOME A BEACON OF FAITH

For years, churches and non-profits in Oregon have collaborated to provide monthly meals for residents of Fountain Square, a 110-unit senior and low-income apartment complex. The community is diverse, but many residents face challenges—68% do not drive, and some live with disabilities.

Christ United Methodist Church (UMC) was among the churches offering support. When Rev. Jeremiah Diegel was appointed, he sought to deepen the connection. During his first visit, he led a devotion, explained communion, and shared its significance before serving it to the residents.

As he watched a visually impaired woman being guided to receive communion, he experienced what he describes as a Holy Spirit moment. “We are all blind when we encounter the Divine,” he reflected. “We all need help now and then.” With this revelation, he began to see the residents of Fountain Square not just as a community in need but as a congregation waiting to grow in faith and witness.

Feeling called to do more than provide a yearly meal, Diegel spent a year building trust with residents before proposing a weekly meal with worship and communion. The idea was met with enthusiasm, sparking a new vision for ministry.

Over six years, this effort has evolved into Fountain Square Church. Each Wednesday, Christ UMC partners with over 20 churches and faith communities to offer worship and lunch with 20 to 40 residents participating in the service, with an additional 20 attending the meal. The ministry has expanded to include an on-site food pantry, hygiene cabinet, and spiritual milestones like baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

“Being the church takes place outside the walls of our buildings,” said Diegel. “The church is everywhere—it can happen anytime, anywhere and with any one. We just need to be open to helping people become the hands and feet of Christ within their own community.”

Through the dedication of Christ UMC and its partners, Fountain Square is now a beacon of faith and hope, transforming lives one meal, service, and prayer at a time.

For more information, contact Rev. Jeremiah Diegel at 419-575-4834.



FEATURE STORIES

PRAYER PORCH MINISTRY OFFERS CARING PLACE FOR CHILDREN

In the small village of Edgerton, children gather on the front porch of the United Methodist Church parsonage, swinging on swings, sitting in egg chairs, bouncing on inflatable animal chairs—and praying. That’s right, praying.

Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, kids come together at the Prayer Porch. They enjoy a meal or snack, share their feelings or daily experiences, and lift up their prayers.

The idea for the Prayer Porch emerged in July when Pastor Jennifer Miller and her family moved into the Edgerton UMC parsonage. “I felt God was calling us to do ministry on this porch, but I didn’t know what kind,” she explained.

As the Millers settled into the community, they learned that funding for a local program providing free meals to children had been cut. Burdened by this news, Miller began praying for guidance. One night, she awoke with a clear vision: “A prayer porch!” she recalled. “I knew it was a God thing.”

With the vision in place, donations of food and money started flowing in, and volunteers stepped up to help. Miller also connected with Rev. Ann-Marie Carley, West Ohio Conference Director of Next Gen Ministries, to share her vision. Carley visited Edgerton, met the children, and taught them about the power and significance of prayer.

The children created their own prayer: “God, give us courage to be a space where all belong.” Now, each time the children gather, they begin with their group prayer. They also engage in “popcorn prayers,” where anyone can jump in to pray—and sometimes even argue over who gets to go first! Throughout it all, adults are present to ensure a safe, nurturing, and fun environment.

“It’s been amazing to see what God is doing every day with our Prayer Porch kids,” Miller shared. One 10-year-old even preached during a youth Sunday service. This fall, some of the children have brought their families to church making an even greater difference through this ministry.



MISSIONS FROM ACROSS WEST OHIO

PRESCHOOLERS HELP OTHERS FEEL SEEN AND LOVED

Shiloh Preschool in collaboration with the church's family ministries hosted a "Thanks is for Giving" snack bag drive for the middle school across the street. They packed enough bags to give all 550 students a bag containing breakfast, lunch, 2 snacks, a drink and a sweet treat. They had enough bags left over to donate to the elementary school, too. In addition, the Preschool donated extra money for the school's pantry.

"Our preschoolers went on a field trip and delivered them the snack bags. We wanted to teach them to tangibly be the hands and feet of Jesus and that age does not determine impact. We want all students to feel seen and loved by Jesus and their community," said Preschool Director Candace Rhoill.



MISSIONS FROM ACROSS WEST OHIO

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

In the summer of 2024, the West Ohio Conference supported over 350 scholars in six CDF Freedom Schools with funding from the Peace with Justice Special Sunday offering (50% of which stays in West Ohio!), as well as a significant donation from Monfort Heights UMC in Cincinnati.

CDF Freedom Schools provide six weeks of academic and socially enriching curriculum, helping scholars in grades K-6 retain knowledge and improve reading skills. CDF Freedom Schools are intensive and impactful experiences for scholars, parents, volunteers, and Student Leader Interns. Here are some stories from this summer's CDF Freedom Schools (names have been deleted to protect privacy):

- One student kept getting sent to me to cool down. I noticed a pattern, so I decided to observe him in the classroom. He would turn his head so his left side was towards the teacher. After a few days of this, I decided to have a conversation with Mom. My hunch was there were hearing issues. I told Mom everything and suggested he go to an audiologist. When she came back, she told me he is deaf in one ear and can't hear specific things in the other ear. He is having surgery to open the eardrum on one side and getting a hearing aid for the other.
- From a parent: This was my daughter's first year in Freedom School and she was sad last night knowing it was over and she had to wait a whole year to go back. She LOVED it and had a great time meeting new friends and doing new things. I love that she enjoyed the program so much for a first timer. For the next few summers you all can count on her being in attendance. I want to say thank you to everyone who made her summer amazing. It's hard finding quality programs for black youth during the summer to be a part of and this helped my family out tremendously. Thank you all, we cannot wait until next summer to do it all over again.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

King Avenue, Linworth and Indian Run UMCs and other community partners recently participated in a Habitat-for-Humanity project through faith affiliate, Hilliard Adopt-A-House, to bring affordable housing to an economically disadvantaged family. Through their collective efforts in providing financial support and 2200 volunteer hours, this family has a new home to call their own.

WEST OHIO CONFERENCE

MISSION FAQ'S

WHAT IS UNITED METHODIST GLOBAL MISSIONS?

The United Methodist Church is in mission from everywhere...to everywhere! Through missionaries and ministries in more than 110 countries, The United Methodist Church seeks to make disciples of Jesus Christ; strengthen, develop, and renew Christian congregations and communities; alleviate human suffering; seek justice, freedom, and peace.

HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT THAN UMCOR?

UMCOR is one part of The United Methodist Church's commitment to global mission. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is a world leader in disaster response and case management, helping to restore communities long after the immediate crisis ends.

WHY DON'T WE COLLECT FLOOD BUCKETS AND HYGIENE KITS ALL YEAR LONG?

In West Ohio, we do not have a long-term storage space for disaster relief supplies. Twice a year, we work with Midwest Mission Distribution Center in Illinois to bring a truck to West Ohio for a large-scale collection. These two collections happen in late May/early June – the beginning of “disaster season” – and in November – to replenish disaster supplies at the end of “disaster season.”

WHERE IS THE NEAREST UMCOR COLLECTION SITE?

A small-scale UMCOR depot is located at Gay Street UMC in Mount Vernon, OH. The closest facility that can hold large amounts of relief supplies is Midwest Mission Distribution Center in Pawnee, IL.

WHAT DO YOU LEARN AT EARLY RESPONSE TRAINING?

You will learn how to provide a caring Christian presence in the midst of a disaster, including the importance of spiritual and emotional care. You will also learn the various team members that make up an Early Response Team, as well as practical knowledge such as how to clean out flooded homes, remove debris, and tarp a roof.

DO I HAVE TO BE AN EARLY RESPONSE TEAM MEMBER TO RESPOND TO A DISASTER?

The answer depends on timing – if you have a desire to respond during the relief phase of a disaster (tasks such as debris clean-up and tarping roofs), then you will need to become a trained early responder. If your desire is to assist during the recovery phase (rebuilding/repairing homes), then you are not required to become a trained ERT.

WEST OHIO CONFERENCE MISSION FAQ'S

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEER IN MISSION PROJECT SITE?

UMVIM project sites must be safe, ethical, and approved by the North Central Jurisdiction UMVIM coordinator. Projects should have a Safe Sanctuaries policy in place to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults. To apply to become an UMVIM project, [click here](#).

DOES WEST OHIO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR UMVIM TRIPS?

West Ohio's UMVIM program does not use any apportioned funds and so cannot provide scholarships for teams or team members. However, the North Central Jurisdiction UMVIM provides three types of scholarships – [click here](#) to learn more.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO LEAD A MISSION TEAM TO THE CONGO?

West Ohio has a long-standing partnership with the North Katanga Conference of the D.R. Congo. However, planning a journey to North Katanga is quite involved and is best done after traveling to the Congo with an established team leader. If interested, contact mgrace@wocumc.org.

HOW DO I FIND MY NEXT MISSION JOURNEY?

Your next mission journey is just a few clicks away! On the West Ohio website, you can find a list of project sites in Ohio, the U.S., and in Central America: <https://www.westohioumc.org/mission-vim-opportunities>.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact Mariellyn Grace, Mission & Communication Coordinator, at mgrace@wocumc.org or 380-223-9212. Mariellyn works with disaster response/ERT, Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM), and global missions.



MIDWEST MISSION



WHEN A DISASTER HITS, MIDWEST MISSION IS READY

Midwest Mission works with US and global partners to be ready when disaster happens.

When a disaster strikes, there are four phases: readiness, rescue, relief and recovery. Midwest Mission works with US and global partners in each stage except for the rescue stage.

Year-round, Midwest Mission prepares for disasters. They work with the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR) to receive, assemble, store, and disburse UMCOR kits. They also work with Food For The Poor to pre-stage Disaster Relief supplies in Southern Florida and in 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Pre-staging allows for supplies to get to victims quickly despite disruptions in transportation due to the disaster.

Their preparedness allows them to quickly disburse relief in the event of a disaster. They commit to responding within 24 hours once a request comes in.

To learn more about supply kits, [click here](#) to visit the Midwest Mission website.

Thank you, West Ohio, for your generous donations of UMCOR Cleaning Kits (flood buckets), Hygiene & Feminine Hygiene Kits, sheets, pillows, blankets, and laundry detergent! On Monday, November 11, West Ohio Conference staff loaded all of the donations onto a Midwest Mission truck and trailer, including 180 flood buckets, 40+ boxes of kits, and a variety of other supplies. "Our shelves were bare," said Midwest Mission Distribution Center Executive Director Chantel Corrie. "Now, thanks to East and West Ohio, we have more to give!"



VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

Looking for a place to serve in 2025? We have you covered! Whether in Ohio, elsewhere in the U.S., or around the world, West Ohio's Volunteers in Mission web pages hold a wealth of information! Look below for links and descriptions of what West Ohio VIM can offer your team!

- **Mission (VIM) Opportunities** - If you're looking for a vetted UM place to serve, start here! This page lists sites in West Ohio, East Ohio, the U.S., and Central America.
- **VIM Team Leader Trainings** - Did you know that West Ohio offers trainings on how to lead a mission experience? Typically, trainings are held twice each year. Already been trained? Take a look at our refresher videos!
- **Team Leader Forms** - Mission team leaders, start here! Find information about insurance, checklists, team leader reports, and how to run your team's finances through the Conference (yes, that's an option!).
- **Team Member Forms** - Team members should fill out a number of forms prior to going on mission, including liability, emergency contacts, medical, media release, and additional forms for minors. Don't just assume everything will go as planned!

If you have any questions about Volunteers in Mission, contact Mariellyn Grace at mgrace@wocumc.org or 380-223-9212.



U.S. & GLOBAL PROJECT SITES

Is your church or youth group looking for a place to serve in mission? Below are recommended project sites in Ohio, around the U.S., and across the world!

OHIO PROJECT SITES

WEST OHIO

Good Works, Athens

Jackson Area Ministries, Jackson

Urban Farm Church, Columbus

EAST OHIO

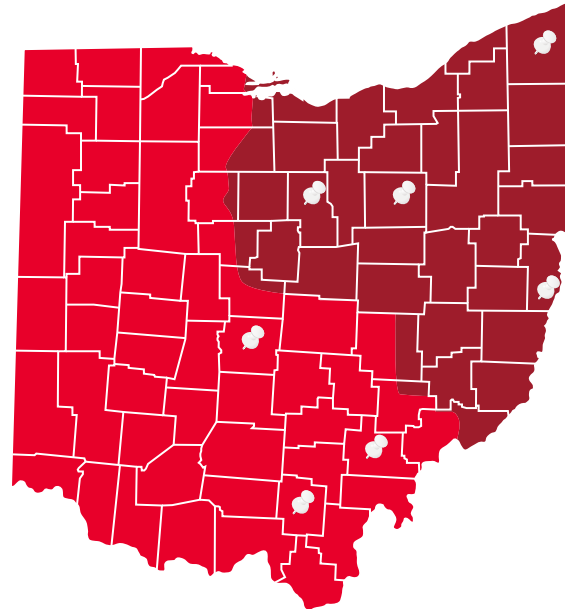
Blue Rose Mission, Mansfield

Covered Bridge Mission, Jefferson

North Street Mission, Wooster

The Nehemiah Mission, Cleveland

Urban Mission, Steubenville



U.S. PROJECT SITES

Appalachia Service Project

Cass Community Social Services

Midwest Mission Distribution Center

Mississippi Long-Term Disaster Recovery

Red Bird Mission

Tree of Life

NCJ Youth Mission Journey



INTERNATIONAL SITES

Belize-contact VIM Teams Coordinator Sandy Raasch at methodist4belize@gmail.com

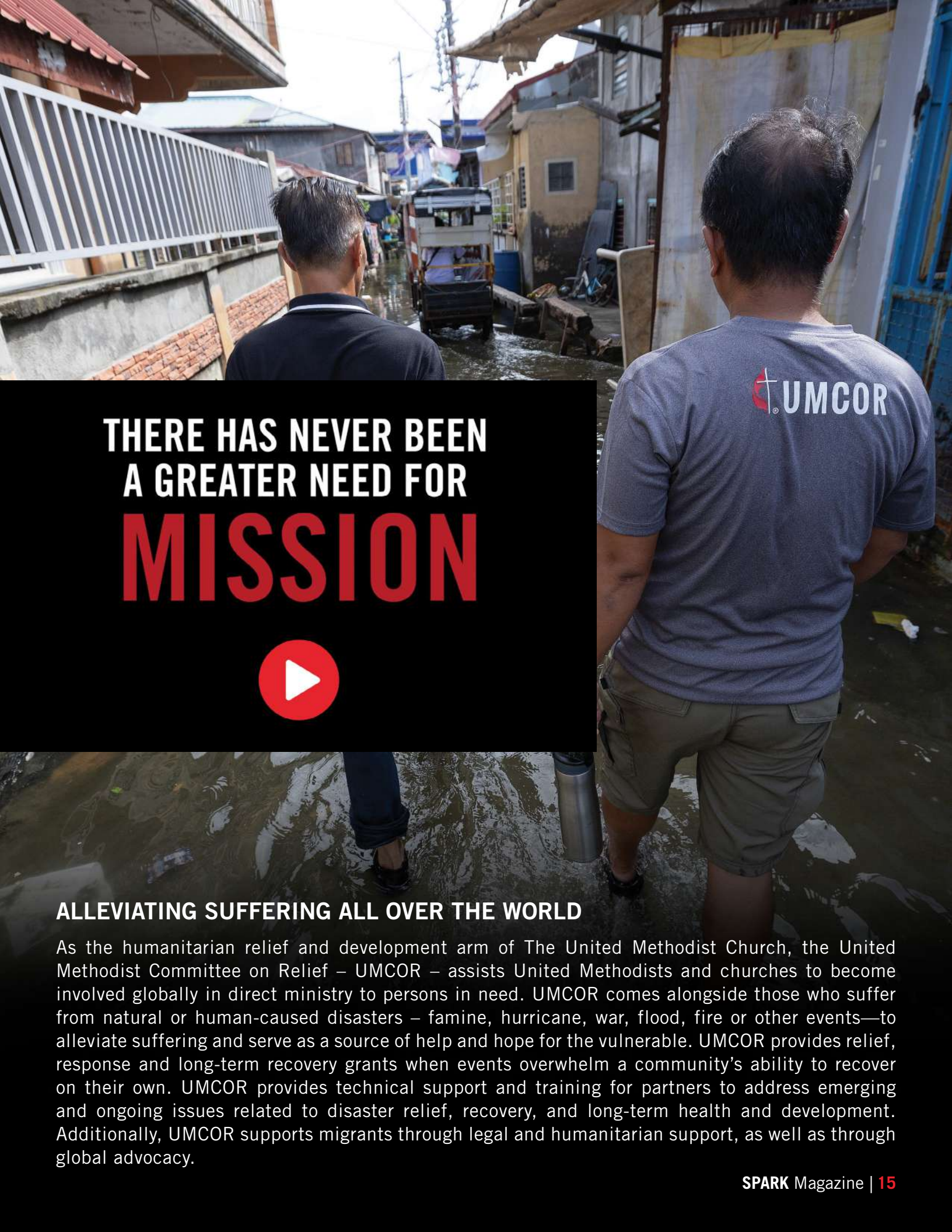
Guatemala-contact VIM Teams Coordinator Lulu Ramirez at lourdesramirez@umcmmission.org

Chillicothe-Trinity UMC will be taking teams in February and November 2025 - contact Wes Souders at wesandjenny@gmail.com or 513-470-9384

Honduras-[click here](#)

Didn't find what you were looking for? Search the entire UMVIM project list [Here](#).

Questions? Email West Ohio UMVIM Coordinator Mariellyn Grace at mgrace@wocumc.org.



**THERE HAS NEVER BEEN
A GREATER NEED FOR
MISSION**



ALLEVIATING SUFFERING ALL OVER THE WORLD

As the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church, the United Methodist Committee on Relief – UMCOR – assists United Methodists and churches to become involved globally in direct ministry to persons in need. UMCOR comes alongside those who suffer from natural or human-caused disasters – famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events—to alleviate suffering and serve as a source of help and hope for the vulnerable. UMCOR provides relief, response and long-term recovery grants when events overwhelm a community’s ability to recover on their own. UMCOR provides technical support and training for partners to address emerging and ongoing issues related to disaster relief, recovery, and long-term health and development. Additionally, UMCOR supports migrants through legal and humanitarian support, as well as through global advocacy.

UNITED STATES DISASTER RESPONSE

The United Methodist Committee on Relief U.S. Disaster Response (UMCOR USDR) seeks to alleviate suffering caused by disasters that strike within the United States and its territories.

With a “communities own their recoveries” philosophy, UMCOR supports local efforts to accomplish immediate relief and long-term recovery while providing for volunteers to offer compassionate ministry in the aftermath of disasters.

In partnership with disaster response ministries and coordinators in U.S. annual conferences, UMCOR journeys with affected communities throughout a disaster’s cycle, including disaster preparedness, relief, response, recovery and mitigation.

UMCOR’s Early Response Team (ERT) training program supports conference preparedness and immediate response efforts. Key activities for conference ERT and other response teams are supplying survivors with food, water, shelter and help with mucking out and cleaning up. UMCOR offers emergency financial assistance in the aftermath of a disaster to support local relief work.

For disasters that require long-term strategies, UMCOR provides conferences with expertise, grants and training for more extensive programming, such as disaster case management, materials and construction management, volunteer management and psychosocial support for survivors.

UMCOR and its partners are responding to disasters in the United States every day.



Photo: Mike DuBose, UM News

INTERNATIONAL LATEST RESPONSES

UMCOR and its partners are responding to disasters across the globe every day. Please join us in prayer for the affected areas and consider giving to UMCOR International Disaster Response to support these efforts.

UMCOR will provide further updates as they become available. For the most up to date information, follow the [UMCOR Facebook page](#).



100% with



UMCOR

United Methodist Committee on Relief

100% of each gift reaches the mission or ministry of your choice.



UMCOR GIVING FOR HURRICANE RELIEF

In recent months, communities across the southeastern United States have been devastated by Hurricanes Helen and Milton. Through your giving to UMCOR, relief has been sent through grants and Emergency Response Teams to individual annual conferences.

To help support disaster relief, please click the link [here](#).

MISSIONARIES REPRESENTING WEST OHIO GLOBALLY



NORTH KATANGA MISSIONARY SERVES AS AGRICULTURAL RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

Lorraine Charinda is a missionary with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries serving as an Agricultural Rural Economic Development specialist in the North Katanga Episcopal Area in the Democratic Republic of Congo, based in Lubumbashi. She was commissioned in October 2017.

North Katanga forms one of the largest episcopal areas in The United Methodist Church and it is one of the poorest. Most of the people depend on small-scale farming to earn a living and the church is committed to maximizing agricultural productivity. Farming serves as a tool for both evangelism and economic development. Projects include several farms that grow a wide range of crops, plus projects in beekeeping, fishing, and moringa tree cultivation.

Lorraine is from Zimbabwe, but has recently lived in Windhoek, Namibia, where she studied, worked, and was involved in Celebration Church- Zimbabwe.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture and natural resources from Africa University in Zimbabwe, and a Master of Science degree in agricultural economics from the University of Namibia. In Windhoek, Lorraine worked in industry and education.

Raised in a religious family, Lorraine became a “just attends church” Christian as a teenager, until a visiting pastor shared her personal testimony with Lorraine. Her life changed as she received God’s forgiveness and grace. “I began to experience joy and purpose in life, and on top of that, God gave me peace I had never experienced before I became a true Christian.”

Lorraine’s call to mission involved the experience of being partnered with an effective volunteer evangelist in a mission campaign. “She had a kind of serenity and certainty about her that I always admired. When I heard her minister to people we met in hospitals with a fiery passion and compassion, not only did it encourage me to want to do more, but it also gave me the courage and strength to serve.”

She volunteered to teach in a church academy for children and adults who are unable to pay for mainstream schools, “That’s when my zeal for missionary work increased. It brings me joy to know that my academic achievements can help others.”

To support Lorraine’s ministry in North Katanga, please [click here](#).



MISSIONARIES REPRESENTING WEST OHIO GLOBALLY

WINGS OF THE MORNING MINISTRY LED BY NTAMBOS

Jeanne Ntambo is the radio operator for Wings of the Morning, an aviation ministry in the DRC. Imagine a country with no weather service or air traffic control—this is the reality in the DR Congo. While Gaston flies to save people's lives, Jeanne updates him on weather and other safety matters. Jeanne provides the technical assistance needed to keep Gaston safe, especially during the rainy season, so that lives can be saved. Jeanne also runs the guest house for patients after they leave the hospital. Gaston Ntambo is the pilot for North Katanga Wings of the Morning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a land where there are no roads, Gaston provides emergency air transportation to the critically ill and injured, distributes medical and other supplies to village clinics, and transports pastors and missionaries to remote areas, including areas being reclaimed following the war. Gaston says, "I believe God is using me as a tool to reach out and save lives."

A native of Kalemie, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jeanne Ntambo earned an associate degree in accounting from the Institut Kitumaini and an associate's degree in economics from the University of Lubumbashi. She received a diploma in accounting from Institut Kitokeji in Kamina. Jeanne's husband, Gaston Ntambo, grew up in Kamina, DRC. Gaston earned associate degrees in accounting and piloting from Davis College in Toledo, OH.



He received a mechanic's certificate from the Michigan Institute of Aeronautics in Detroit, MI. Prior to his commissioning as a GBGM missionary, Gaston served as an assistant and secretary with the United Methodist Church in Lumbumbashi, DRC. Gaston's father is retired Bishop Ntambo Nkulu of the North Katanga Conference. Jeanne & Gaston have five children: Andy Nkulu, Lorree Nkulu, Gabriel Kahenga, Noah Kabove, and Eileen.

By supporting Jeanne & Gaston, you can save the lives of people living in poverty across the North Katanga Conference. Like all United Methodist missionaries, Jeanne & Gaston are responsible for raising their own support through covenant relationships with individuals, groups, and congregations. To support the Ntambos, [donate online here](#), or send a check to West Ohio Conference, 32 Wesley Blvd, Worthington, OH 43085, with 'Jeanne Ntambo, #14176Z' or 'Gaston Ntambo, #14177Z' in the Memo line.

MISSIONARIES REPRESENTING WEST OHIO GLOBALLY



BERMAN SERVES AS MISSIONARY IN MEXICO

A missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, Guillermo Berman Ramirez is serving in his home country of Mexico as the Mexican Methodist Border Mission Coordinator based in Reynosa. Serving in a similar ministry since 2001, Willie has worked with VIM teams from annual conferences in Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee and Iowa.

Willie's call to mission was inspired by the work of his parents (lay persons) as they received and worked with mission teams in the poor areas of Reynosa, Mexico. He began sensing God's call to mission as he saw how US teams in Reynosa worked with the people with so much love and care, and how inactive his local church was in mission. "I felt they (US teams) were doing what we (the Methodist Church of Mexico) were supposed to be doing as a church," Willie shares.

During the past few years Willie has been involved in many opportunities of ministry and mission.

New ministries have been started in the communities with which work teams serve: sewing classes, wood-working shops for men, medical clinics, scholarship programs, Bible distribution, construction of houses/schools/community centers, breakfast and lunch programs, craft programs, a Personal Energy Transportation (P.E.T.) Shop and many other programs. "I have seen wonderful growth of the social outreach ministries of our church and hope to see many more."

In 2008 Willie began helping in developing a new strategy for the Methodist Border Mission Network as the program works with immigrants along the US-Mexico border.

After attending the Instituto Tecnológico de Saltillo and earning a degree in engineering, Mr. Berman worked in the computer industry while serving part-time as VIM coordinator for the San Pablo District of the Eastern Conference IMMAR.

Willie and his wife Veronica are the parents of two young children. The Bermans attend Ebenezer Church in Reynosa, Mexico.

To support Willie's ministry, please [click here](#).



MISSIONARIES REPRESENTING WEST OHIO GLOBALLY

WEST OHIO PASTOR SERVES AS MISSIONARY IN GENEVA

The Rev. Dr. HyoJin Kim, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, was commissioned in 2024. He serves as coordinator for Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation and Unity for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. Most recently, he was senior pastor of First United Methodist Church, New Carlisle, Ohio, in the West Ohio Annual Conference.

A graduate of Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Kim earned a Master of Divinity at Methodist Theological University and a doctoral degree in political science at Korea University, both in Seoul, South Korea.

“From my youth,” he said, “God has guided me along an unpredictable path. While many attempts to achieve diverse goals have failed, they consistently opened new windows of opportunity, allowing God’s new direction.”

Kim’s ordination as a full United Methodist elder was an example.

Had he stayed in South Korea during his Master of Divinity course, Kim noted, he would not have considered the possibility of becoming a pastor in the Korean Methodist Church.



Kim felt called to serve English-speaking congregations within The United Methodist Church.

“In today’s complex world, missional success requires divine wisdom coupled with cultural understanding, language proficiency and strategic communication. This endeavor also demands passion and expertise in church planting and gospel dissemination. I aspire to be part of this mission. I am committed to continually discerning God’s unfolding direction amid unpredictable changes.”

Today’s mission, Kim asserted, aligns with Christ’s Great Commission. “Many regions globally have yet to encounter the gospel message or gain a comprehensive understanding of Christianity due to limited exposure or infrastructure,” he said.

To support Rev. Dr. Kim’s ministry, please [click here](#).

Today, United Methodist missionaries serve in about 60 different countries in many types of professional careers, including as pastors, evangelists and church coordinators; teachers and educators; doctors, nurses and other health workers; agriculturists; development specialists; community organizers and peacebuilders.

WEST OHIO NEWS

EAST AND WEST OHIOANS UNITE IN THANKSGIVING HOPE

Worthington, Ohio – More than 300 United Methodists from across Ohio gathered at Worthington United Methodist Church for a day of thanksgiving, unity, and hope. Representing the Ohio Episcopal Area, which includes both the East and West Ohio Conferences, participants came together to celebrate their shared faith and mission.

The event's theme, rooted in Romans 5:1-5, emphasized hope, endurance, and the transformative power of God's love. These principles served as a lens for exploring The United Methodist Church's mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Rev. Dr. Paul W. Chilcote, a renowned scholar of Wesleyan theology and Christian discipleship, delivered two inspiring keynote addresses.

“Our DNA as Methodists orients us naturally to spiritual renewal,” Chilcote shared. “The Wesleyan way of renewal entails our engagement with practices that deepen our love of God and neighbor. Our partnership with God in God's good work in the world carries us toward the goal of beloved community.”

Chilcote reminded the gathering, “As United Methodists, we have a future filled with hope because we draw from a deep well of spiritual insight and practice.”

Worship throughout the day was rich with scripture readings, prayers, and songs centered on lament, healing, unity, and hope.

“We come together with new hope and fresh dreams after the challenges of the last several years,” said Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, reflecting on the global pandemic and church disaffiliations. “We declare together that we are a new United Methodist Church, renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Bishop Jung challenged attendees to focus on the church's mission. “We must think less about shaping the church to suit our preferences and more about how it can share the Good News with a world desperately in need of Christ's love. We do not engage in works of piety or mercy to qualify for grace freely given but as a response to such amazing grace. We live to discern and do the will of God.”

A sacred highlight of the day was the practice of Tongsung Kido (tong-sung ghee-do), a Korean tradition where individuals pray aloud simultaneously. Voices lifted together in heartfelt petitions created a powerful moment of connection.

As the day concluded, Bishop Jung encouraged those gathered: “I have great confidence in you, Ohio Land, that you will continue your impressive outreach to the lost, the least, and the last. Together, we will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

WEST OHIO NEWS

“ It was a day of joy, spirit, hope, compassion and love. It was a life-giving event.
Judith Nedel, East Ohio ”

“ This event was refreshing and enlightening. We are opening up to new possibilities.
Les Hall of West Ohio ”



“ I feel like The United Methodist Church is on the verge of renewal. This was a Spirit-led event in which we embraced the love of Christ, bringing all together in unity.
Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Kniseley, East Ohio ”



PLAY AM SERVICE VIDEO



PLAY BISHOP JUNG'S SERMON



PLAY PM SERVICE VIDEO



FRESH COMMUNITIES OF FAITH REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES ACROSS WEST OHIO

Across the West Ohio Conference, diverse communities of faith create space for powerful worship and engaging ministries.

Summit United Methodist Church gathers at the Armstrong Conference Center. This multi-generational church makes anyone entering their doors feel at home. Led by Steve Rudisill, this church seeks to become the most inclusive missional church in the area that provides a space of belonging to anyone who walks through its doors.



SUMMIT UMC
COME AS YOU ARE



New Covenant

A vibrant global community worships at New Covenant United Methodist Church. Led by Alfred Author, New Covenant welcomes neighbors from Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, and other African countries, who call Cincinnati home. New Covenant invites all to come as you are and leave as family.

Urban Farm Church is a sustainable urban farm where people center the heart, mind, body, and spirit, and serve their neighbors. For this unique faith community, the farm is the sanctuary, a place where people serve and grow side by side. All of the fresh, organic produce grown on the farm is given away to the community – more than 7,500 pounds so far this year!



FRESH COMMUNITIES OF FAITH REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES ACROSS WEST OHIO

Open Church consists of eight communities for people to gather and worship under common interests. Led by Allyssa Graves, Open Church offers individuals an authentic connection to community and God.



hope collective church

You are loved

Hope Collective Church in the Oregon District of Dayton became a chartered church of the West Ohio Conference. Led by Jon Morgan, Hope Collective exists to develop inclusive communities where people discover sacred worth and calling.

We are grateful for all the ways these new communities invite others to know God and become disciples of Jesus Christ, for the transformation of the world.

RESOURCE: MISSION ADVOCATE

KATIE MEEK: MISSION ADVOCATE

Katie Meek, a Mission Advocate for the North Central Jurisdiction, is deeply committed to her work with United Methodist Global Ministries. A Mission Advocate shares the story of the mission and promotes its growth within their jurisdiction's conferences—but for Katie, it goes much deeper. "It's the privilege of not only hearing and sharing mission stories but also connecting people so that the mission across conferences, organizations, and beyond can be strengthened," Meek explains. "Then, to tell these stories in a way that hopefully inspires others to jump in, doing similar work or finding what fits their own community."

Katie's path to mission work began with a calling in her early twenties that led her to serve in Sierra Leone for six years. While there, she taught at the United Methodist University in the School of Theology. Upon returning to the U.S., she embraced her current role, which keeps her connected to mission work and allows her to witness the United Methodist Church's growth locally and globally.

Her work as a Mission Advocate involves extensive travel across her jurisdiction, from the Dakotas to Ohio. Through these journeys, she has observed a renewed sense of dedication and connection within the United Methodist community. She describes it as a "groundswell of desire to return to the heart" of mission work, as congregations strive to bring kindness and goodness to a world in need.

When asked what advice she would give to West Ohio and the broader church community, she responded simply: "Just go and visit places." Meek encourages others to visit local mission sites, connect with organizations, and witness the inspiring work happening in their own communities. "Go visit and see what the Spirit does," Meek says. "I just want to offer testimony not only that the mission is strong, but also encourage you to just go see what's going on... There is more going on than we realize."



KATIE MEEK





“And do not forget to do good and to share with others,
for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Hebrews 13:16



West Ohio Conference

The United Methodist Church

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The Mission of the West Ohio Conference is to equip local churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world... A world of justice, love, and peace filled with people growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ.



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