



THE CONNECTION

Connecting Westside to the Community

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE:

- ~ A Note from Pastor Josh - 1, 2
- ~ Christmas Eve Service - 3
- ~ Leadership Message - 4
- ~ Youth News - 5
- ~ Forget-Me-Nots - 6



A NOTE FROM PASTOR JOSH

Dear Westside family of God,

2020 has been a year that no one will forget. We thought it would be great to have a year focused on clear “20-20” vision but it has been as muddled as it gets. From lock downs, curfews, social and physical distancing, reduced hours for shopping, empty shelves when trying to purchase a needed item, getting sick with this dreaded disease, and in some cases dying, we all wanted to scream, “what’s next!!!”.

Covid-19 has not made our situation at Westside UMC any better. The continuing trend of a lack of sufficient finances to keep ministry going has caused a number of holes to break open and not be patched anymore. One good thing that Covid-19 brought was government assistance with the PPP program that allowed the church to maintain the staff with a 100% forgivable loan, while other churches and businesses laid off or closed the doors. We were also able to save significantly on our utility bills by, unfortunately, having our building doors closed for a number of months.

We also received a true blessing from our Annual Conference with a grant that helped support pension payments. Another blessing, with sadness, was that the church was listed as a beneficiary when Mr. Charles Irvin passed away. Westside, through our financial hardships, had not fully paid apportionments to the district or conference, in order to keep our doors open, and the blessing from Charles Irvin was applied to our apportionment deficiency. The deficient apportionments actually extend back to 2005 and has become worse in recent years. It did not catch us up completely, but it helped out a lot to try and stay in connection with our beloved United Methodist Denomination. Mr. Irvin’s trust also provided a three-month mortgage payment, again a blessing.

Westside United
Methodist Church
604 Gloria Avenue
Lima, OH 45805

(419) 223-2881
Office Hours
(by phone only)
Monday—Friday
9am to 1pm

One other blessing that occurred this year was Stephanie applied for a loan deferment and we received a three-month deferment from the bank, which is tacked onto the end of the mortgage. This deferment enabled us to, again, stay afloat for a few more months.

Even though our leadership has reduced as much as we could to save money during this time, we had to make the unfortunate decision to eliminate the janitorial position as of December 12, 2020. We, as the church, will step up and clean what needs to be cleaned and Kristen has agreed, with her youth director position, to take on some cleaning responsibilities. We are so very thankful for Kristen ministering to our youth and providing wonderful curriculum for our talented volunteers to use during Kids' Connection. What also needs to be reinforced is Westside's portion of Kristen's salary is paid through a conference grant, Trinity covers the other half.

I am very thankful for all of you. You who have stepped up and volunteered in areas that have stretched you. You who have generously and extravagantly increased your tithes and offerings to the Lord so ministry could continue at Westside. You who have continued to support all the ministry work through worship attendance, either in-person or online. You who have prayed the prayers that only God will know that positively affected the ministry work of Westside. When we support, love, and work together, we become Christ to and for one another. Thank you for those who actively and unselfishly engage in fruitful ministry.

I am thankful for all who have supported our online ministry reach to bring the gospel to people wherever they are physically located. Digital ministry is the future, and the technology is wonderful to reach many multitudes worldwide. We continue to learn, adapt, and focus on how to make the online worship and devotional experience better. During our shutdown, I was able to utilize our Facebook page and continue to bring the gospel in word and, thanks to Eileen, in music with her God-given talent. Many thanks to Emily who does an amazing job with our multi-media in-house and with our ministry advertisements online. Tom, thanks for running the live stream camera so we can stay connected and engaged with our online family.

Times are tough, and yet, many have continued to positively engage in service to God with one another in Christian love. As much as we have done, there remains an uncertain future for Westside UMC. Given the statistical record of decline with giving and worship attendance over the last decade, Westside has reached a point where we are now in discussion of an option of potentially going dark and entering into a partnership with a church, that is more financially stable, to keep the United Methodist ministry going in our location. This has not been established yet as we are in the beginning stages to discuss this opportunity.

The conversations we are currently engaged in are with Barry Burns, NWP District Superintendent, and Brad Aycock, Conference Director of New Church Development. The potential option we are discussing is to try and maintain our current property within the United Methodist family by going dark and partnering with a fellow UM Church, which will enable that the positive message of our grace-filled Wesleyan theology will stay intact. What does going dark mean? It means that all Westside ministries will stop, Westside will cease to be, and the property, along with the debt, will be assumed under the partnering UM Church, whomever that will be. To be clear, this is the leading potential option, and we are currently in conversation with this future possibility.

This is the current update in our conversations concerning the potential future of our property. If this does become the option that we will take, then let's be thankful ministry will continue in the United Methodist tradition, although under a new vision. We will be thankful for the years of ministry and legacy of Westside

UMC and will support the future knowing it is for the benefit of spreading the Gospel of Christ to our neighborhood.

As the conversations continue, we will remain open in our communication with the church family. Let's finish the race strong and in love with the message of Christ for all.

God bless,

Pastor Josh

Christmas Eve Service

Christmas Eve service is hosted by Trinity UMC this year. Due to covid-19 we are requiring RSVP to attend the service. We have a social distance capacity of 55-60 in the sanctuary. We ask that you call Heather and reserve your spot for Thursday, December 24 at 7pm. Since we know families tend to gather together on this holiday, we will try our best to sit the family together in the same pew.

Just to make it clear, you must call Heather to reserve a seat, 419-647-4451. This will be first call first receive a seat/pew event. We are hosting for Trinity and Westside, so if you even think you plan on coming, please RSVP early. If we fill up then we won't be able to take walk-ins. 2020 is a different year and we all need to adjust, breathe, be calm, and love one another. Again, we will stream this online if you choose to stay home.

When you call to RSVP, please designate the total number of family, with names, and Heather will arrange the pews as best as she can. You will be assigned a pew so please sit in your designated spot. If we happen to go over our capacity then we will try and utilize other rooms throughout the building and live stream, this means that even you choose to not attend Christmas Eve that you will still be able to watch live on the Spencerville Trinity UMC Facebook site.

We will take a Christmas offering and, like we do for services, place the offering in the plates before service starts or use our electronic Givelify option. The offering will go to UMCOR which is doing such great work for those in need when disaster strikes. God bless you all and let's make a good ending to 2020.

Thoughts from The Chair

Reflecting on the past two years as a part of the Leadership Team at Westside, I will have to admit it has been a roller coaster ride. As a team of twelve, we have strived to perfect our skills in communication and outreach, but more importantly our listening to God's direction for Westside. We have had the privilege as a team to share in communion, Bible study and prayer. We began 2020 reading and reflecting on the book *Fresh Expressions*.

And then COVID struck, and again we had to become more flexible, diligent in seeing how we could continue to enjoy worship together, sharing with one another in a Christ-like manner and supporting each other as a new challenge faced our gatherings. The Leadership Team had to begin to meet by ZOOM which was a new challenge for us as leaders, but we found we could do it. Technology has been a very useful tool enabling us to share worship on line, share music safely in on-site services, sharing our needs and progress via Facebook and the prayer chain. Change is challenging but we have found a way and we can do it.

This Thanksgiving holiday I am so thankful for the faithful team members who have worked tirelessly with Mr. Anthony Mosley and Mr. Brad Aycock; Rev. Doug Widdowson, Rev. Barry Burns, Rev. Josh Andrews and each other as we have attempted to move forward with a solution to our problems at Westside. We are all aware of the financial crisis we are experiencing, unresolved conflicts and the various problems caused by the COVID pandemic. We know we are not able to continue doing "what we always have done." A quote from C.S. Lewis "You cannot go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." Change is inevitable.

We, the Leadership Team, covet your prayers and support as we move forward as God leads us into new and challenging ways to further His Kingdom. As we look forward to 2021, I challenge each of us to meet at the foot of the cross, in humble repentance, open hearts, open minds and with ears to hear what God tells us our next steps will be. Will you join us?

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CANDY SALE

Homemade candy will be sold December 5th through December 19th at the church. All candy will be sold for \$7.00 per package approximately ½ lb. each. A business/corporate basket will also be available for \$30.00, along with a variety plate available for \$12. *Payment is due when order is placed.*

THIS COMPLETED PRE-ORDER FORM WILL GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY

Buckeyes Turtles Chocolate Fudge
 Chocolate Covered Caramels Peanut Butter Fudge Peanut Clusters
 Chocolate Covered Cherries Business/Corporate Basket (\$30.00) Variety Plate (\$12.00)

Orders must be placed one week in advance and can be picked up in front of the church (under the portico) on Saturday mornings 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Feel free to drop your order in the collection plate on Sunday mornings. To order by phone call 419-221-3466 (leave a message if no answer), email rsteigleder@woh.rr.com or call the church office at 419-223-2881.

Youth News

Over the last several months, Westside Youth Ministry has been focusing especially on our Children's Ministry. Through Kids' Connection, we have had the opportunity to build relationships with the children who attend our church, while giving them a space that they're excited about.

This year, we went through a series called "Wonder Women of the Bible." Each week focused on a different woman from the Bible and showed different qualities these "superheros" possessed. The kids heard about Esther's bravery and how we, too, should have the courage to make the right decisions even when it's hard. They heard about Deborah's leadership and Abigail's humility. Most recently, we went through a series called "Emojis." It used emoji faces to teach us that our emotions are a gift from God. Each lesson went through a Bible story focusing on a certain emotion (sadness, anger, happiness, silliness, etc.) to show that He has a purpose for all of them, and that we can express them in a good way.

In Kids' Connection, we have a lesson, a craft, and a game or activity. The kids get a chance to learn about who God is, have some fun, and build relationships with each other and the teachers. Growing up in church, I couldn't necessarily recall what the "Children's Church" lessons or activities were. What I DO remember are the adults who were consistently there, building relationships with us kids. That is what I have enjoyed watching grow through Kids' Connection at Westside. We have a dedicated team of teachers who keep Kids' Connection running smoothly!

Giving the kids of our church a place that they can call "theirs" is so important. Making them excited about coming to church, seeing their friends and teachers, and building positive relationships at church will help to set solid foundations for our youth as they get older. We can't wait to see how our youth continue to grow!



**This is what
it's all about!!**



Forget Me Not's

Annabelle Harriman
370 N Eastown Rd.
Lima, OH 45807

Richard Ward
2075 N. Eastown Rd.
Lima, OH 45807

Mid Crawford
606 Fairfield Dr.
Lima, OH 45805

Louann Sybert
2911 Wyngate
Lima, OH 45805

Pat Humes
750 Brower Rd.
Lima, OH 45801

Elizabeth Atkinson
2535 Ft. Amanda Rd.
Lima, OH 45804

Shirley Newland
2535 Ft. Amanda Rd.
Lima, OH 45804

JoAnna Frail
2651 Ft. Amanda Rd.
Lima, OH 458094

Jacqueline Morrisey
1070 Gloria Av.
Lima, OH 45805

Harriet Riser
100 Red Oak Dr.
Cridersville, OH 45806

Ava Melton
1010 Lincoln Hwy.
Wapakoneta, OH 45895

Shirley Taylor
410 W. Elm
Bluffton, OH 45817

Jean Kaple
2625 Legends Way, Apt 126
Crestview Heights, KY 41017

Mary Dunaway
883 W. Spring St.
Lima, OH 45805