Mahoning Valley Messenger

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District Office Administrators Announced for the Four New Districts

The district office administrators for the four new districts have been determined and they will transition to their new roles on January 1, 2024. The four new administrators were identified through a process in which all eight current administrative assistants were invited to apply for the four new positions. All those who applied were interviewed by members of the Cabinet and Executive Staff Team on Tuesday, November 14.

The district office administrators for the new districts are:

Megan Myers – Central Valley Lisa Huston – Northern Waters Joy Snyder – South Forest Renee Davis – West Plains

While the exact locations of the new district offices have not been determined yet, the

Cabinet has identified that: the office for the Central Valley District will be in the North Canton area; the office for the Northern Waters District will be in the Macedonia/Solon area; the office for the South Forest District will be in the Cambridge area; and the office for the West Plains District will be in the Mansfield area

The administrative assistants who will not be continuing with the Conference will remain in their current roles until January 31, 2024, to help in the closure and transition of district offices and will be given severance packages as an expression of gratitude for their faithful work and dedication.

DISTRICT NAMES

The re-mapping of the four new districts of the East Ohio Conference was announced September 27 and an invitation was extended that day to submit potential names of the new districts, which were designated A, B, C, and D in the release. Thank you for your suggestions. After prayerful consideration and discussion with Cabinet, the names of the new districts are: West Plains (A), South Forest (B), Central Valley (C), and Northern Waters (D).



Page 2 VOLUME 18, ISSUE 10

East Ohio E-News

E-News is the bi-weekly electronic newsletter of the East Ohio Conference. Its purpose is to communicate the many ways that conference clergy and laity are making and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The electronic newsletter includes messages from Bishop Malone and other announcements regarding the mission and ministry within The East Ohio Conference. Click Here: to visit the East Ohio E-News webpage. When you click on the link it will take you to the conference website page, on the right will be a space for you to enter your email address so that you can receive them straight from the Conference Office

Dear Mahoning Valley,

What an honor and privilege it was to serve you these last six months. We would like to say thank you. Thank you for sharing your hearts, stories, hopes, dreams, fears, and love for God and His people. The Mahoning Valley as we know it is changing. Because of this, we want to say goodbye. For many, DS Costello, will be your Superintendent along with DS Edgar Brady in the new Central Valley District. I, DS Lewis, on the other hand, am being deployed along with DS Hitchcock to the District called Northern Waters.

Many blessings brothers and sisters in the faith. Angela Lewis and Cara Stultz Costello.

RETIREE BREAKFAST Thursday, Dec. 14 9:00 a.m. at Eat 'N Park, 5451 Mahoning Ave. Austintown.





PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

All those still suffering from COVID-19 in different ways; all pastors and churches during this busy and challenging period of transition.

Please also pray for Elaine Weaver (Retired Local Pastor), Joan Ready (Widow of Rev. Chuck Ready) Rev. Douglas Lewis



Classified Section:

Lisbon First United Methodist Church is looking to hire a part time administrative assistant. The job entails basic secretarial duties. 16 hours a week at \$10 an hour. Call 330-424-5212 with any questions or to get an application.

I just want to take a moment to wish you all a very Merry and Blessed Christmas and New Years. I also want to thank you all for all the love and prayers that you have given me over my time with you in the District Office, and especially over the last 6 months with my cancer diagnosis. I have been truly blessed to be able to work close with most of you for a while now, and you have always shown me patience and love.

As I head into this new unknown chapter in my life, I will remember you all with a true love and fondness. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers as I finish my treatments the first week of the new year and that I find a new job with benefits.

I love you all and it was my pleasure to work with you,

Stefanie Krugel

HEALING SERVICE

Sunday, December 10 4:00 pm

We will be reminded that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

Come, along with Community members, friends, and relatives and receive God's healing grace as we recognize the pain of grief and loss: loss of relationships, loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the sadness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith, the loss of direction in our lives, and just about any issue that's weighing us down. Come and experience God's healing grace!

Western Reserve United Methodist Church 4580 Canfield Rd., Canfield, OH 44406 330-792-5805 | wrchurch99@aol.com

Come and play: LIFE SIZE

Candyland Game +
Photo Booth
Snacks and Goodies



CLASSIC GAME:

12.8.232PM-7PM 12.9.23....10AM-7PM 12.10.23..NOON-6PM NEW: LIGHTS OUT
WALK THROUGH
FRIDAY...7-8PM
SATURDAY...7-8PM
SUNDAY...6-7PM

Free Event

Great Holiday Fun for Families & All Ages!

Vienna United Methodist Church

4265 Warren-Sharon Road

Vienna Ohio 44473

For More Details Visit

Facebook.com/ViennaUMC





BY FIRE TRUCK! SATURDAY 12/9/23 @ 10AM

COME GREET SANTA AS HE ARRIVES IN VIENNA
WITH HIS FRIENDS FROM THE VIENNA FIRE DEPARTMENT.
SANTA AND THE FIRE TRUCK WILL BE AVAILABLE
FOR PICTURES UNTIL NOON!



My dear friends -

I greet you in the name of Jesus, the beloved of God who came near to us that we may draw nearer to God. Below is a series of reflections for your Advent journey in the spirit and form of *Las Posadas*. May you be blessed as you come to find a 'place of refuge' in the love of Jesus.

Feliz Navidad!

Rev. Cara

DECEMBER 16, 2023



Today begins the celebration of *Las Posadas* (place of refuge - the inn). In the 9 days before Christmas, in honor of the 9 months of Mary's pregnancy, we remember the prenatal journey of the Holy Family. In the days before God would be born to us

in Jesus, we recall that Mary and Joseph were searching for a hospitable place. They traveled far under the weight and the blessedness of who they were called to be and bear. They sought welcome and warmth, to no avail. As we prepare for Emmanuel, pondering the following questions may create more room in our hearts to welcome the Holy One:

- Are there parts of ourselves that we will not bring to the altar and/or to the dinner table because we wonder if they will be welcomed?
- Who are the people we will exclude because of their particularities?
- What beliefs do we leave unquestioned and/or hold on to which perpetuate rejection of individuals and populations?
- What legislations of our principles and dogmas create or perpetuate systems of marginalization? What needs to change in our hearts so that God and all of God's beloved will have a place at our celebration tables? *Las Posadas Resources:*

https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/december-2019/las-posadas-a-mexican-christmas-tradition/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkstcozWBPM

DECEMBER 17, 2023



Christopher Heffron, editor at Franciscan Media, observes, "Las Posadas isn't about being somber and still during Christmas: It's about pilgrims and a pilgrimage, rousing song, prayer and deep faith—all of it in motion." On this journey toward Christ all are invited to be pilgrims. We are called to travel as a community. We are invited to take our faith on the move. As we trek let's ask ourselves:

How is my faith being put into action?

With whom are we keeping company? Who is not traveling with us?

Are we only taking the roads which are well traveled? If so, why have we chosen this path? What might this paved, fast, smooth road deprive us of?

Resources for the Journey:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZBVWLNtVlA

https://www.umcjustice.org/what-you-can-do/advocacy

DECEMBER 18, 2023

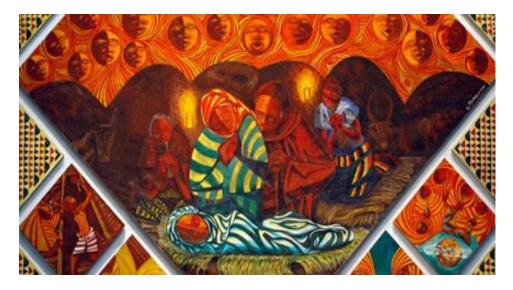


In the Gospel of Luke (2: 1-5), we hear of the Holy Family sojourning to Bethlehem because they were mandated to go to Joseph's hometown to be counted in a census. We might rightly expect that if the travelers were going to Joseph's hometown they might be welcomed by his family. Not so. They were rejected by their nuclear and extended family. In the days following the birth of Jesus we see a revelation of a whole new family forming. Those who were outcast, unsanctioned, nonconforming, and people of diverse hues, backgrounds and perspectives found a place at his side. How will we welcome those whom Jesus draws to himself?

The Blessing of Holy Community

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTDRg5G77x4

https://bibleproject.com/blog/jesus-genealogies/



Fr. Engelbert Mveng, Nativity, early 1990s. Central scene from church mural. Holy Angels Church, Aurora, Illinois.

My mother told me that my first set of full sentences was, "No, mama. Self. I do it myself. Me, not you." This is certainly an affirmation that a unique characteristic of mine - fierce independence - was present at the outset. I think it also points to the universal human characteristic of placing ourselves at the center of our own orbits. We place ourselves at the center and then orient all others in reference to us. When we do this, our perspective and the way in which we choose to order things becomes what we understand as 'normal.'

I would venture to say that all conflict is related to clashing of one person's 'normal' against another person's 'normal.' Clashing is not inherently problematic. If we take the opportunity, in the midst of an encounter with someone else's 'normal,' growth can happen. When we don't take that opportunity to grow, we can become calcified, rigid, unmoved and unmoving. This is what is problematic. In this problematic dynamic someone with another particularity becomes not just AN other but THE other. We have a habit of vilifying 'The other.'

God has come into this world in Jesus with an ethic of justice and mercy, equity and redemption. This clashes against the world's preferences for retribution and power.

How will we meet the Holy Other?

Will we invite the Spirit of God to help us in the work of de-centering ourselves?

How will we join in God's work?

Resources for joining the Holy Other

https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9781501824753/

https://www.mekishmusic.com/musicplayer/listen



A confession: I love having guests. And... I have to 'wind myself up' to be able to host with ease. Before they arrive, I get inordinately concerned with things like dirty baseboards, a smudged refrigerator, and dust alligators under the couch. By the time my company arrives, I have generally either attended to my worries (and about worn myself out!) or let the Holy Spirit coach me to set those superficial concerns aside for the benefit of simple life-giving presence with one another.

Do you experience hospitality as a source of anxiety - a hazard to a tidy and disciplined life?

A hospitality code is foundational to Middle Eastern culture. Abraham entertains guests that are a visitation of God. The downfall of Sodom and Gomorrah is connected to the lack of welcome to strangers. So, when Joseph and Mary are met with closed doors, the host would have known the shameful significance of the action. And yet, he shut the door. That's just how powerful the pull of our own comfort can be.

Could the comfort of knowing ourselves held in God's saving embrace through Jesus Christ – which leads us to follow him to places of discomfort - be greater than the enticement of a nice and neat faith?

May we submit to the 'coaching' of the Holy Spirit to set our superficial comforts aside so that we can be present to the presence of God in Christ.

Resources for Holy Hosting:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwBReV_pjjQ

https://www.eocumc.com/globalmigrationsunday/index.html

DECEMBER 21, 2023



welcome at the open table."

Jesus asks us to make room for Him and all whom he loves.

One of our East Ohio UM clergy, the Rev. Gary Henderson, who serves with United Methodist Communications, says, "[At] the Communion table...The image that I have is the image of a banquet where everyone is a VIP, a very important person with a special seat at the table. At this table, I know I am special. I know that I am honored here. I just want to be present and linger a while in the company of others. I sense at this table, that God is present and the real guest of honor. John Wesley invited all to the table. The Lord, Jesus Christ invited all to the table. All are

When you imagine the never-ending and open table of God who do you picture there? Invite God to give you God-sized vision. Invite the Holy Spirit to grant you wisdom and courage as you live into God's vision.

Open Table Resources:

 $\underline{https://www.umc.org/en/content/united-methodist-beliefs-open-table\#:\sim:text=\underline{Transcript\%3A-,The\%20Rev.,experience\%20the\%20love\%20of\%20God.}$



DECEMBER 22, 2023

Greg Weatherby, Dreamtime Birth, 1990s
We sing, "Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, Love divine; Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign."

Love connects heaven and earth. Love connects families far-flung. Love connects people of different languages, cultural backgrounds, political persuasions, religious and

ethical beliefs. The love of God in Jesus is just that powerful.

How will we let the love of God transcend our penchant for division?

Resources for Jesus-oriented Connection:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIr5th0d44 https://vimeo.com/323559861

December 23, 2023



He Qi, Nativity, 1998. Ink and gouache on rice paper.

We are on the lookout for Jesus.

Where are we looking?

Are we willing to invest in knowing Him when we find him?

We truly see someone only when we know their particular story and tradition. "To know them is to love them," the saying goes. Jesus was a Middle Eastern Jewish male from a working-class home.

What do we know about these cultures, belief systems and points of view?

Our faith in Jesus invites us into an up close and personal relationship with God through him. As we get close to Jesus we get closer to those whom Jesus loved.

How can we invest in really getting to know the people for whom Jesus lived, died and was raised to new life?

What can you and your congregation do to become more inter-culturally competent?

Resources for Seeking and Seeing:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xJ hbD4TQA

https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/the-qualities-of-competent-intercultural-leadership/https://blog.culturaldetective.com/2012/02/22/new-release-bridging-cultures/

DECEMBER 24, 2023



In the *Las Posadas* liturgical drama the faithful of Jesus – good church-goers like you and me - act as the innkeeper and effectively shut Jesus out over and over again. It is hard to give the following response to the pleading Holy Family,

Although you tell us that you are weary, we do not give lodging to strangers.

We don't care what your name is; let us sleep.

We are telling you that we will not let you enter.

By the benediction, the drama is resolved and the faithful have made space for Jesus.

• Will we make room for Him?

By what power will we be redeemed from those who close the door on Jesus and his friends to those who fling the door of our hearts wide?

https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship/las-posadas-service-of-shelter-for-the-holy-family

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UXBtfhZhp0

https://guideposts.org/inspiring-stories/people-helping-people/trouble-at-the-inn/

Greetings Mahoning Valley,

Included in this newsletter I have given an upcoming events list for youth and leaders in the Central Valley District. I want you to know that I will continue being the regional coordinator for this area. The Young People's ministry team is led by Tim Beck and Pastor Christy Suffecool along with five regional coordinators in various locations of the East Ohio Conference. We all work together at conference events and often collaborate for district events.

If you are not already connected to our messenger page, please join us at the Marvelous Mahoning Valley Youth Leaders or let me know and I will add you to the messenger group. On that messenger page, I share information as I receive it about opportunities in our district and conference as it deals with youth and young adults. You can be a youth leader, volunteer, or pastor to be a part of the group, all are welcome!

My goal is to help you network with each other and resource you with what you need to make disciples of Jesus Christ with youth and young adults. I can listen to you and your ideas and meet with you to see how you can reach youth and young adults, even if they are not in your church. If you ever want to grab a cup of coffee, I am in. Well to be honest, you can have coffee and I'll grab a diet coke.

I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming year.

Wishing you peace and joy,

Stefanie Williams

Stef.vouthministry@gmail.com

Regional Coordinator Team member for the EOC Youth Leaders Network

