

# Oak Hills United Methodist Church

## The Oak Notes

### August 2022



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## A Message from Our Pastor

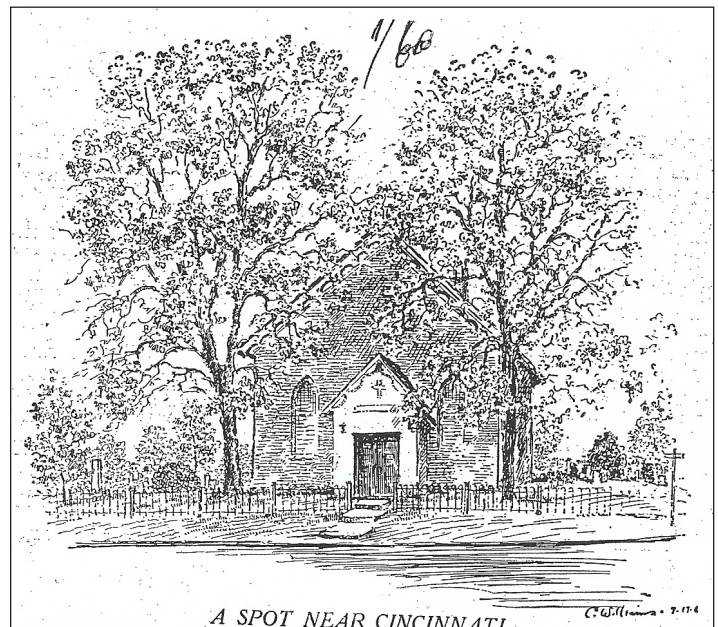
What a joy it has been to worship with you and get to know you this last month. Over the last month, I have spent much time in meet and greets, working my way through the phone book, calling on shut-ins, and reading just about anything I can get my hands on, from the church history, to old newsletters and minutes, and financial statements, to stats and records from the church over the last several years. I have also asked several questions and made many observations about our church life together. In addition, I have met with several community leaders, including several principals from the local schools, the superintendent, the fire chief and the chief of police to get a sense of the needs in our community.

During each of my meets and greets, I've asked the same seven questions to each group: (1) What is going well right now? (2) What is not going well right now? (3) What population of people are we not reaching right now? (4) When you think about our church, our community, or our world, what keeps you awake a night? (5) What is your greatest passion in life? (6) If you could wave a magic wand in the air and money wasn't an issue, what would you like to see the church do? And (7) Where do you want to see our church in 5, 10, or 20 years? As I have listened to your responses, I have begun to see your strengths, growing edges, fears, hopes, and dreams as a congregation and wanted to share that here.

### Strengths

(1) There is no doubt, the greatest strength of the church is its people. This has consistently been mentioned as the thing people most like about the church. It's the thing that brought them and the thing that keeps them here. Oak Hills is like a family. We care for each other and we know each other. Everyone is warm, welcoming, and friendly. People show up for each other when they are needed.

(2) Both Arun and Amit talked about how there is a genuine spiritual hunger in this church. People are open and willing to listen to the word of God and want to be led by the Spirit. I have also seen this in the meet the pastor sessions, where it's been expressed in a desire for Bible studies or a pastor's study during the week. One group even said they would like to see greater freedom in listening to and talking about the Spirit. In addition, I've heard it in conversations as people refer to me as "their shepherd," indicating a respect that is invested in



*The above sketch of the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church is by Caroline Williams, a famous local artist who drew wonderfully detailed illustrations of many well known Cincinnati landmarks. The church was organized in 1839 and met in a log cabin. In 1849, the first brick church was built. It was destroyed by a tornado in 1866 and rebuilt with the same bricks. Amelia Wilke made a generous donation for the land, building, and furnishing of the new Wilke Memorial Community Church in memory of her late husband, August "Doc" Wilke, in 1940. In 1967, the name was changed to Oak Hills Methodist Church and a year later to Oak Hills United Methodist Church. In 1972, the present sanctuary and fellowship hall were built.*

the office of the pastor and a desire to be led and guided in the things of God. A few people also said that the thing that they love about the church is their love for God.

(3) Prayer. One group talked about how there is a strong atmosphere of prayer. From the Wednesday prayer meeting, to the time we pray for each other during church, to texts that include each other in prayers, to prayer partners during Lent in the past, and prayer before the pantry opens each week. Prayer has been a consistent focus of the church.

(4) Sissy's Pantry. Based on my observations and comments made at one meet the pastor sessions, this ministry seems to be the strongest ministry in the church. Sue Schloss spoke at the board meeting about how people were moving from just being served by the pantry to actually serving others at the pantry. Some have begun to come to church and a few

even showed up to get to know me at one of the meet the pastor sessions. With additional support, there may be great ministry potential here to launch some kind of small group or study in conjunction with the folks who attend the pantry on Wednesday evening. In fact, I had a phone call just last week that asked if there was a worship service after the pantry.

(5) Community Dinners. In one session, folks commented that this ministry is doing quite well and that we should consider expanding it to do community dinners more often, maybe even weekly. Critical to this move would be a need for more volunteer servant support as even these ministries need more help.

## Growing Edges

(1) The growing age of the church and the lack of young people. When asked what population we are not reaching, the typical response was either kids or young families. One group talked about how it was easier to reach this group of people when we had the



*For many years, the church held a Jesus Palooza festival to welcome the community.*

Child Care. In my introduction, it was expressed that the church needed a pastor with a young family in order to reach young families with children. The truth is our current congregation is aging and we need to reach the next generation. In order to move forward into the future, we need to find ways to build relationships and reach the people around us.

(2) Foremost among those ministries is our kids and youth ministry. Though we have strong leaders in Amit, Lorna, and Kathy, the average week has only a few kids and a few youth and we need to reach more people. Parents from our congregation expressed a need for better and stronger programming for their kids. This was a genuine concern even for our family ministry leaders as they wanted something that would provide a stronger foundation for their own children. We must find ways to both reach families with children and to strengthen and improve these ministries if we are to move forward. This includes expanding our volunteer base so that we do not rely on just a few people in these ministries.

(3) Volunteer Support. Nearly every ministry in the church is struggling for more volunteer ministry support. Several folks have spoke about how the 80/20 rule is in effect here (80% of the ministry is done by 20% of the people). Kathy spoke about how she needs help with kid's ministry (JAM). At the board meeting, several folks talked about how their ministries need more support. When speaking about the desire to grow and reach out, some talked about how getting people to go out is like pulling teeth. One group suggested finding ways to streamline committee involvement to free up more people for ministry.

(4) Ministry Teams (Passionate Worship, Faith-Forming Relationships, Risk-Taking Mission) are defunct. Radical Hospitality seems to be the only one that is working well. While there was a lot of energy around these teams when they first started, they have fizzled out and they have either stopped meeting or only have a few folks involved, and no one seems to know who all is involved in each of these teams.

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(5) Since the closing of the Child Care Center, finances have become a greater concern for the church. The Child Care Center was covering all of the utilities and we are struggling to figure out how to cover those overhead costs. That fear is made ever stronger with the reality of our aging facility and the necessary maintenance costs that come with that, but if we do sell the parsonage, then funds could be used to cover those big capital improvement costs. If Oak Hills is to move forward, we must identify ways to increase giving from our current members, bring in new people from the community, and find alternative methods of generating revenue for ministry. Already we are working on Amazon Smile.

## Hopes and Dreams

(1) There is a strong desire to see the church grow and be full again. People want to reach out and reach new people, but the truth is, we don't know how to do that. The things we've tried don't seem to produce results. Nothing seems to work to actually reach people and grow the church. Several ideas were discussed in each of my sessions for moving forward from offering recovery ministries, using the van to pick kids up, offering something for battered women and/or those reentering society after time in prison, to random acts of kindness, grandparents raising grandparents classes, more technology in Sunday School and JAM (smartboards), and sports ministry outreach. We will need to determine which of these or other ideas will best serve our community and move in



*Vacation Bible School has welcomed generations of children. Everyone knows that on at least one night, the games will involve water.*



*No matter what our ministry is, we love and appreciate each other and we like to have fun!*

that direction. Key will be moving outside the church to where the people are and doing ministry there, not expecting them to come to us.

(2) In at least two meet the pastor sessions, people talked about a desire for greater racial diversity in the church. The Fire Chief also expressed to me that the community is beginning to grow more diverse. The demographics from Mission Insite show that 90% of the community is white. The goal of a congregation is to reflect the demographic of the community. This would mean that roughly 1 in every 10 should be of non-white or mixed race. While we do have a few folks of other racial groups, we are not currently at 10% of our worshipping congregation so there is some room for us to grow in this area.

I want to be sure that I am hearing you correctly, so if there is anything I missed or anything in here that is not correct, please let me know by emailing me at [jfuhrma@hotmail.com](mailto:jfuhrma@hotmail.com) or by speaking to me directly. I hope to be able to present some tentative goals for moving forward by our next newsletter. Thanks so much for your input! Your feedback is greatly appreciated!!!

*—Pastor Justin*



August 2022

# OHUMC Family Ministries

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*Philippians 4:4,6*

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*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

## **OHUMC Kids:**

Sunday school is from 9:30-10:20 am every Sunday. Join for a Bible-based lesson with crafts and prizes you can take home! Come and enjoy JAM (Jesus and Me) during the church service in the Sunday school hall. Puppets also visit the worship service once a month, and that's always an exciting time!

## **OHUMC Youth:**

The youth enjoy meeting weekly for group time on Sunday mornings at 9:30. Sometimes, we have breakfast together to start the day, so stay tuned! Recently, we talked about Philippians 4 and how every moment in our lives is a choice. There are four commands/choices we can make.

1. In Philippians 4:4, we are told to rejoice in the Lord and choose joy. Biblical joy is a choice and not a feeling. It's a state of mind we can choose, knowing that ultimately God is in control of our lives.
2. In Philippians 4:6, we are told to talk to and ask God for what we need and then choose to take His help. Instead of allowing anxious thoughts and feelings to fill our minds and hearts, we can choose to rely on God's help.
3. In Philippians 4:7, we are told to accept and choose God's peace. It guards our hearts and minds. This peace is not the superficial "pray for world peace" we often hear. It's a wholeness inside our hearts that only God can bring. Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we can have a bridge to God and be complete again. This is the peace God gives - an inner peace that transcends the chaos around us.
4. In Philippians 4:8, we are told to commit and choose to think about what is good and right. We should control our thoughts. If we find our mind wandering to darkness or depression, choosing honorable, just, lovely, excellent things to think about is better. The Bible is a great place to start. :)

For family ministries as a whole, we will be hosting a “listening session” for parents and kids/youth to give feedback about what they enjoy and would like to see still happen in this arm of OHUMC. Please keep the families and church leadership in your prayers!

Please feel free to share any suggestions for Family Ministries to Amit Dutta at [amitincincy@gmail.com](mailto:amitincincy@gmail.com).

Here are a couple of snapshots of family ministries in action.



# Praying “Keys to the Kingdom”

by Diane Cordell

*My house will be a house of prayer. (Matthew 21:13a)*

Hopefully everyone has had a chance to attend a “Meet the Pastor” meeting, or will soon. It was an excellent time to get to know Pastor Justin and learn about His family and his background, but it also was a great time to discuss the current impact of our church and to take stock of our direction and plans. Our group felt that we have a strong personal prayer ministry in our church, although we need a more concerted effort for prayers for our church, its mission, and for our pastor. Therefore, I’m including prayers that are adapted from Dr. Terry Teykl’s “Keys to the Kingdom” which is a collection of cards with prayer prompts. This is just a beginning. Feel free to add your own praises and concerns.

## FOR THE CHURCH:

Dear faithful and loving God, we are grateful for the opportunity to be your light shining at the corner of Bridgetown Road. As your community, the church, help us to learn to love and support one another in our faith journey. Only then can we share your love with everyone you bring in our path. Forgive us the sins of pride and judgment that may prevent others from seeing your face.

Father, help our church to be a vessel through which your love pours. Inspire us to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, may we as a congregation, reach out to those in need and share the Gospel message to the lost and hurting. We are humbled by the sacrifice of your son, Jesus, and overwhelmed by the glory of His resurrection! With thankful hearts! AMEN!

*(Matthew 18:15-17; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; Acts 9:11 and 17)*

## FOR PASTOR JUSTIN:

I thank you Father that your eyes are on our shepherd, Justin. Your ears are attentive to his prayers, and your face is against those who plot dissension against him. Lord, let Pastor Justin have a discerning mind to prioritize the precious moments of his day, and deliver him from the tyranny of the unfinished. Grant him a sense of fulfillment and the personal joy of Jesus. Bless his preaching that he may preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and lead us to a revelation of the Savior. I lift up his family that you will be their refuge and strength. AMEN!

*(1 Peter 3:12; 2 Corinthians 11:14; John 15:11; Philippians 4:19) Ω*





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**August 22, 24, 27, 29, 2022**

For More Information  
Call Linda St Myers 513-402-7587  
Sandi Fenstermacher 513-532-2872

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## Update on the Ebenezer House

During the Administrative Board Meeting on Monday, July 11, our church board decided to start the process of selling the church parsonage located on Ebenezer Road. While we explored the option of renting the parsonage, the needed work to the facility and the need for being an ongoing landlord made the board opt for selling it instead. In the United Methodist Church, this requires approval from the District Committee on Church and Location, written consent from both the pastor and the District Superintendent, as well as a majority vote of the congregation at a duly called church conference (*Book of Discipline*, ¶2541).

Moreover, the proceeds of this sale, if ultimately approved by the above bodies, will be restricted only to “capital improvements beyond the regular operating budget.” According to *The Book of Discipline* such funds cannot be used to support “the current budget or the operating expense of the local church” (¶2543.1). We will let you know when any such church conference will be held to vote on the possible sale of the Ebenezer parsonage in the days ahead. In the meantime, we would invite you to pray and if you have any questions to ask Bob Schloss (Board Chair) or Anthony Smith (Trustee Chair). Ω



## Announcements

8/6 – **Yard Sale**, 9am-1pm

8/13 – **Sports Card Show**, 9am-3pm

8/14 – **Youth Ministry Listening Session**, after the worship service (lunch provided); everyone who cares about youth is welcome

8/28 – **Membership class after worship**; lunch provided (need firm count by August 14). Sign up at church or let

Pastor Justin know if you are interested in exploring membership.

8/31 – **Community Dinner**, 6pm

**Zoom Prayer Meeting** – Wednesdays, 6:45-7:30pm

**Sis’s Pantry** – Wednesdays, 6:30-8pm

**Discover Your Purpose Class** – Starts Sunday 9/11/22 (this is a 4 week class that meets after church)

## Bible Studies

Sunday School 9 am

Women’s Group, Mondays at 10 am (9:30am on 1st Monday of the month)

Thursdays, 10:30 am, with John Wieman

TOGA (Thursdays on Green Acres), 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7pm @ 5609 Green Acres Ct., 45248

## Church Office Support Needed!

Oak Hills UMC is looking for several volunteers who will help to piecemeal the role of a church secretary. If you are interested in helping with any of the following things, please contact Pastor Justin at the church office by calling 513-574-1131 or by emailing him at [jfuhrma@hotmail.com](mailto:jfuhrma@hotmail.com).

- Answer and respond to phone calls/emails coming to the church office a few hours each week.
- Assemble, print, and fold the weekly bulletin and the monthly newsletter.
- Send out email blasts/prayer requests to the entire church email list as needed.
- Assemble, stuff, stamp, and send out church mailings as needed.
- Record weekly stats and records in the conference database.
- Order church supplies as needed.

