



The Olive Branch

Olivet United Methodist Church
13575 Olivet Road, Lusby, MD 20657
410-326-8400, olivetumc-lusby.org



Quarterly Newsletter: Winter 2024

Dear friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ! In 2024, we have precious little time in between Advent and Lent. Easter will be here before we know it! In the meantime, I'm happy to share just how much our Olivet community enjoyed a spirited Advent. Our annual Soup with Santa event was a hit yet again, with more people than ever showing up for fellowship, photos with Santa, and music by the Strummers. I was grateful to lead our Advent Bible study, which was a wonderful opportunity for us to center ourselves in the Christmas story and what it means for us today.



Pastor Alex Thomas

The highlight of the season came when 6 new members joined Olivet on the third Sunday of Advent!

We're blessed to welcome (L-R) Jean Wright, Leanne & Stephen Lyle, Amy McHenry, Ellen Curran, and Hugo Blasdel into our covenant community.



Their true welcome was when they lit the Advent wreath candles, with focus on the pink "joy" candle. What's more joyful than seeing such vibrant growth in our Olivet community?

The culmination of Advent was our Christmas Eve candlelight service. It's always so comforting to sing carols, pass the light of Christ, and hear the Christmas story yet again. Thank God I got some help setting up our Nativity set on our altar table! I bet I wasn't the only one who thought I was hearing the voices of angels in our midst when our kids choir so beautifully sang "The Angels Cried." Christmas tends to be a busy time of year for everyone, but I hope we all took time to ponder the beautiful reality of Emmanuel, God with us. In the middle of all the busyness, it meant the world to find out

that so many of you contributed to a most generous Christmas gift for me. Thank you so very much!

On that note, I'm pleased to report that our giving met all of our budget goals in 2023, including the many buildings and grounds updates that were completed in the spring. Our 2024 budget was approved by our Leadership Board in our final meeting of the year, and I'm hopeful we'll continue to meet our month-to-month needs. Olivet is a generous church, and there's always more we can do in our community as an active United Methodist congregation. To see consistent snapshots of our giving, please continue to look out for our "LOVE IN ACTION" updates once a month in our Sunday bulletins as provided by our Treasurer, Gianna Giannelli-Schmidt.

Looking forward, there's a lot coming quick! Easter is March 31, so that means Lent is starting early. Check out page 5 for a schedule of all our Lent and Holy Week events and worship plans, including one of my favorite services of the year. I'm referring to Easter sunrise, and I hope it'll be at least slightly warmer than last year! I'll be leading a Lenten Bible study, and Pastor Ruth Dixon and I will lead a short-term grief group in April and May. If you're grieving a loss of a loved one(s), we invite you to join us.

Before all that, however, we're prepping for our second annual Winter Weekend VBS! The Sanctuary will be transformed into a winter wonderland, and we'll be so glad to have some young friends learn about Jesus's glow up on a mountaintop, also known as the Transfiguration.



To go along with Jesus's shining light, it's absolutely marvelous to see our Sanctuary sport a fresh coat of paint inside the sanctuary. Things are looking bright all around!

Love,

Pastor Alex
410-231-1115
olivetumcpastor@gmail.com

2024 Olivet Leadership Board



On Sunday, January 21, the 2024 Leadership Board members made a covenant to carry, support, and promote the mission and vision of the church. In the photo above from left to right are Administrative Assistant Gerri DiGiovanni-Epps (non-voting member), Treasurer Gianna Giannelli-Schmidt (non-voting member), voting members Steve Schneider, Tiffany Gaines (Chair), Sue Shubert, Susan Graham, Betty Ellis, Scott Gray, Jeanette Roland, and Val Hermansen. Voting members also include Susan Hood and Peggy Wilson.



Your Olivet Leadership Board is always here for you! The Board is made up of appointed members of the Church who make a commitment as a cohesive unit to make informed and discerned decisions on behalf of our whole Olivet family. These include administrative affairs and goal setting for mission and ministry.

During our December meeting, we took time to reflect on our 2023 transition to the 1-Board Model. In significantly streamlining our decision-making, we've become both more efficient and effective. The Board has a lot to report on, thanks to our steady progress throughout the year.

Our greatest achievement was a complete overview and update of every Olivet policy. These include Safe Sanctuaries, the Finance Policy, the Gift Policy, the Advertising Policy, the Cemetery Policy, the Wedding Policy, the Good News Center Policy, and our Office Hours and Inclement Weather Policy. We also approved the upkeep of several vital buildings and grounds projects. Crucially, the Leadership Board also supports Pastor Alex in making the life of the church as collaborative as possible. With our Treasurer's guidance, we've approved our 2024 budget with strong promise for continued congregational giving.



As a reminder, our meetings are open to all save for the occasional executive session. In 2024, we're meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. We're thankful for Bob Evans and Terry Goss for their year of service as they move off the Board this year. Tiffany Gaines is continuing as our Chair, Val Hermansen is our new Lay Leader and Lay Representative to Annual Conference, and we're blessed to have 3 new members come aboard. These folks include Scott Gray, Steve Schneider, and Sue Shubert. We look forward to all of what awaits us in this new year of ministry, and we're thankful for your prayers and support! Always feel free to reach out to Tiffany Gaines or Pastor Alex with any inquiries.

The Leadership Board

Class of 2024

Tiffany Gaines, Chair
Susan Graham
Jeanette Roland

Class of 2025

Betty Ellis
Susan Hood
Peggy Wilson

Class of 2026

Scott Gray
Sue Shubert
Steve Schneider

Staff

Administrative Assistant

Gerri DiGiovanni-Epps

Treasurer

Gianna Giannelli-Schmidt

Lay Leader/Lay Rep thru 2025

Val Hermansen

Other Appointed Leaders

Leadership & Nominations

Marva Burgess, 2024
Marjorie Zimmermann, 2025
Elnora Wease, 2026

Trustee/Head of Buildings & Grounds

Doug Hood

Cemetery Coordinators

Christine Hendershot
Kathy Hoskins

Membership Secretary

Vicki Bivens

2024 Board Meeting Dates

Feb 13	Aug 13
Mar 12	Sep 10
Apr 9	Oct 8
May 14	Nov 9
June 11	Dec 10
July 9	

Support Team Updates

Buildings & Grounds

We are so happy to share that Olivet's sanctuary has a fresh new look after an amazing paint job by Efrain Mijango, who beautifully painted the Good News Center in the Spring. Come see how clean and bright the walls look against the dark-wood-framed stained glass windows and our magnificent wooden cross.



~Doug Hood, Trustee

Garden Guild

Happy New Year from the OUMC Garden Guild! On Saturday, January 20, the Calvert County Master Gardeners had their Annual Seed Swap at the Prince Frederick Library. The seeds were free and native to this area. To view the list of seeds available to swap, copy and paste the link below. It's not too late to request up to 10 different seeds. If you would like some, contact Sue Hammond at 301-509-2145.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3A83664503-c676-3556-8648-c7ecdeb4f13a>

~Sue Hammond

Hospitality

The Hospitality Committee continues to host Fellowship Hour following the 9:30 AM worship service. We welcome volunteers who may be interested in this ministry. For more information, call me at 410-340-2221, or come see me any Sunday morning during Fellowship Hour.

~Ceferino Epps, Chair

United Men's Ministry

The monthly Gathering of Olivet UMM continues on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 9:00 AM. Coffee, donuts, a short video of "Mighty Men of Prayer," and friendly fellowship welcomes you. The Gathering lasts no longer than an hour. This is a splendid opportunity to get to fellowship and get to know better the like-minded men of the Olivet family. An open and standing invitation is extended to all.

~Ceferino Epps

Worship Support Team

The Worship Support Team meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 1:00 PM to discuss worship plans and select the hymns for the next month. We normally follow the New Revised Common Lectionary. Pastor Alex, Susan Hood (leads the Strummers), Carl Zimmermann (leads the Choir), and the other participants would love to hear your input. Please feel free to pop in on Tuesday, Feb 27, Mar 26, and/or Apr 30.



L: We give thanks for all the special times in our liturgy throughout the year, especially All Saints Sunday.

A Blessing for a New Year of Ministry

May your new work excite your heart,
kindle in your mind a creativity
to journey beyond the old limits
of all that has become wearisome.

May this work challenge you toward
new frontiers that will emerge
as you begin to approach them,
calling forth from you the full force
and depth of your undiscovered gifts.

May the work fit the rhythms of your soul,
enabling you to draw from the invisible
new ideas and a vision that will inspire.

Remember to be kind
to those who work for you,
endeavor to remain aware
of the quiet world
that lives behind each face.

Be fair in your expectations,
compassionate in your criticism.
May you have the grace of encouragement
to awaken the gift in the other's heart,
building in them the confidence
to follow the call of the gift.

May you come to know that work
which emerges from the mind of love
will have beauty and form.

May this new work be worthy
of the energy of your heart
and the light of your thought.

May your work assume
a proper space in your life;
instead of owning or using you,
may it challenge and refine you,
bringing you every day further
into the wonder of your heart.

~John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*



February 9-11, 2024

Friday Night: 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Saturday Night: 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Sunday Morning: 9:30 AM Worship Service

Where: Olivet United Methodist Church,
13575 Olivet Road, Lusby, MD 20657

Who: Ages 3 (or potty trained) to 11!

Why: Explore God's goodness and warm up with
God's love during a chilly winter season!

Join us for lessons, games, crafts,
dinner both nights, and songs!

IT'S FREE!

To register or for more information, please visit:
www.olivetumc-lusby.org or call 410-326-8400

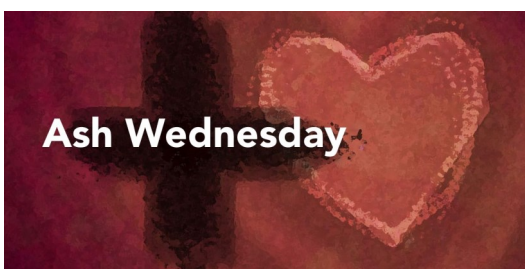
Lent & Holy Week Schedule



Shrove Tuesday, February 13

5:00—7:00 PM

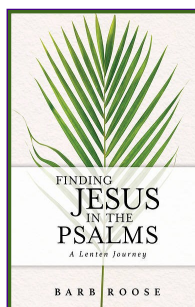
Olivet Fellowship Hall



Ash Wednesday, February 14

Worship: 12:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Olivet Sanctuary



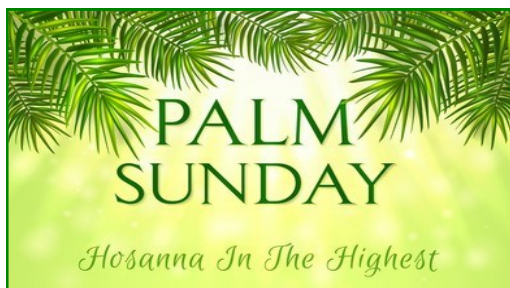
Lenten Bible Study:

*Finding Jesus
in the Psalms*

Wednesdays

Feb 21 — Mar 27

11:00 AM & 7:00 PM



Palm Sunday, March 24

9:30 AM Worship

Olivet Sanctuary



Maundy Thursday, March 28

Worship: 7:00 PM, Olivet Sanctuary

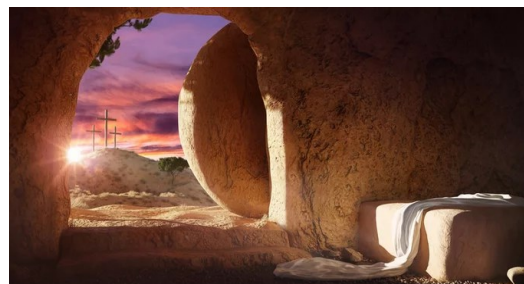


Good Friday, March 29

SMILE Processional: 11:00 AM @ St. Peter's
Ecumenical Service @ Our Lady Star of the Sea

Catholic Church: 12:00 PM

7:00 PM Evening Service, Olivet Sanctuary

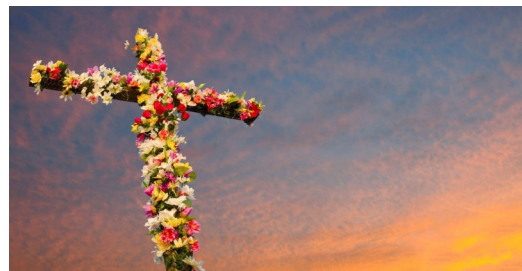


Easter Sunday, March 31

Sunrise Service: 6:40 AM

Drum Point Beach in Lusby

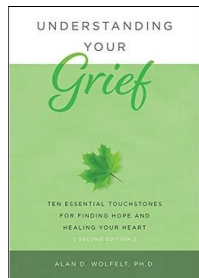
A continental breakfast follows in the clubhouse



Easter Sunday, March 31

9:30 AM Worship

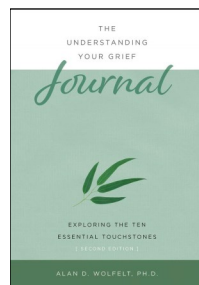
Olivet Sanctuary



Understanding Your Grief

Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart
by Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Wednesdays on
April 10, 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15
11:00 AM and 7:00 PM



Pastor Alex Thomas and Pastor Ruth Dixon will be leading a grief support group this spring. This group is open to all who are going through any stage of grief. Our guide, *Understanding Your Grief*, will help us understand and befriend the painful, complex thoughts and feelings after the death of a loved one. Dr. Wolfelt's Ten Touchstones are basic principles to learn and actions to help engage with your grief and create momentum toward healing. *Understanding Your Grief* pairs with a guided journal.

Cost: \$26.18 for both books (Book: \$13.39; Journal: \$12.79).
Books are available in the church office.

Lenten Bible Study:



Finding Jesus in the Psalms

Wednesdays ~ Feb 21 — Mar 27
11:00 AM & 7:00 PM

In this 6-session study, author Barb Roose will guide us through a meaningful encounter with the Psalms to accompany Lent. Combining an interpretation of the Psalms with real life stories, the study moves through the familiar words of Psalm 23 toward the painful cries of Psalm 22 uttered by Jesus on the cross. The study includes reflections on the original context of the writings, along with connections between the Psalms and the life and death of Christ. Come join us!

Kick-Off to the Christmas Season

Soup and Santa on December 2, 2023



Top—Mr. & Mrs. Claus arriving on a Solomons firetruck. **Right**—All soups were donated to the Solomons Mission Center. **Far Right**—Santa with Paisley, Madelyn, and Camden Crim.

A Christmas Blessing for 2024

May there be harmony in all your relationships. May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.

May you give and receive love generously. May this love echo in your heart like the joy of church bells on a clear December day.

May each person who comes into your life be greeted as another Christ. May the honor given the Babe of Bethlehem be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.

May the hope of this sacred season settle into your soul. May it be a foundation of courage for you when times of distress occupy your inner land.

May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you. May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you too easily take for granted.

May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather with your family and friends around the table of festivity and nourishment.

May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.

May the coming year be one of good health for you. May you have energy and vitality. May you care well for your body, mind, and spirit.

May you keep your eye on the Star within you and trust this Luminescent Presence to guide and direct you each day.

May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One who offers you peace. May you bring this peace into our world.

~ Joyce Rupp, *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season*



Service dog Greta watching over the poinsettias.



New members lighting the Advent wreath candles on December 17.



Many thanks to Elnora & Ken Wease for gifting Olivet this beautiful Advent wreath stand!



Our Olivet Trio played the anthem "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" on December 10.

L-R: Ross Thompson, trumpet; Carl Zimmermann, horn; Val Hermansen, piano.



"Silent Night, Holy Night" — Passing the light of Christ at the Christmas Eve candlelight service.



Led by Choir Director Carl Zimmermann (R), Olivet's Children's Choir delightfully sang "The Angels Cried" at the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. L-R: Reese Allor, Ryan Allor, Gemma Bruce, Delaney Postanowicz, and Madelyn Crim.

OLIVET MISSIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH CORNER

THE RIPPLE CENTER (St. Mary's Adult Medical Day Care Center) — We worship every Thursday at 10:30 AM with holy Communion and lots of energetic singing. The residents look forward to it every week!



For many years, Olivet has supported Project Echo, a homeless shelter for men, women, and families in Prince Frederick. The Olivet family donates a meal for 40 people on the first Sunday of each month. Our 3 volunteer coordinators (Peggy Wilson, Sue Shubert, and Betty Ellis) are happy to chat further if you have any questions before or after Sunday worship.



Service Makes Individual Lives

Exciting — Olivet is one of the founding members of SMILE. Olivet provides financial assistance from the donations offered on Communion Sundays. There are always fun volunteer opportunities in the food pantry and thrift shop! Be on the lookout for SMILE's 2023 annual report.

FLYING NEEDLES — This group gathers 3 times a week to knit, crochet, needlepoint, etc. They create blankets, hats, gloves, and the like for themselves as well as for people and families in need. If you'd like to learn anything needle, they are there to offer free training. They meet on Tuesdays at Olivet UMC 6:00—8:30 PM, and at the Lusby Starbucks on Wednesdays 9:00 AM—Noon and Thursdays from 1:00—4:00 PM. For questions and more information, contact Wendy Mitchell at 443-968-6250.



YOUTH MISSION TRIP — June 23-29

Our third annual youth mission trip is coming up! We will be partnering with Glen Mar UMC for another trip to coastal North Carolina to do vital home repair for those in need.

We work with the amazing folks at Carolina Rebuilding Ministry, and we'll stay at their newly renovated volunteer center. All adults are welcome! Youth must be 14 years or older (completed 8th grade this year). Cost is \$200 per person (need-based scholarships are available). For inquiries, please contact Pastor Alex at olivetumcpastor@gmail.com.



Rise Against Hunger is an international hunger relief non-profit organization that coordinates the packaging and distribution of food and other aid to people in developing nations. It was founded as **Stop Hunger Now** in 1998. St. Paul UMC, located at 11000 HG Trueman Rd., will be hosting a food packaging event on Saturday, March 23, from 1:30—3:30 PM. Everyone of all ages is welcome to participate! Online registration is coming soon.

SUMMER VBS: June 18—21



All kids ages 3 to 11 are invited to shoot to the stars with us for our summer VBS. We will experience an out-of-this-world adventure and light years of faith-building fun!

Registration will be on our website at www.olivetumc-lusby.org.



Solomons Mission Center

A United Methodist Mission Center located on Solomons Island: a place to go for food/clothes.

Volunteers are needed and always appreciated!

Hours on Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday
10:00 AM—1:00 PM
or by appointment
410-326-3278

14454 Solomons Island Road South
Solomons, MD 20688
solomonsmissioncenter@gmail.com
410-326-3278

BIRTHDAYS

It's your birthday!
Rejoice in Jesus—
Grow in faith—
Pass it On!

February

- 01 Gracelynn Blackistone
- 04 Myrna Smith
- 05 Pastor Alex Thomas
- 06 Marijayne Biggans
- 07 Lindsay Benson
- 11 Jack Shunk
- 17 Marva Burgess
- 19 Thomas Goss
- 23 Carl Hammond
- 25 Sue Stevenson
- 26 Camden Crim

March

- 05 Leanne Lyle
- 07 Timothy Johnson
- 09 Melynn Wisniewski
- 16 Joan Holmes
- 26 Roy Blackistone
- 30 Bob Evans

April

- 01 Don Seidenspinner
- 05 Kirsten Sleeth
- 10 John Davis
- 18 Lisa Wisniewski
- 20 Jan Biggans
- 27 Chris Stelloh-Garner

Not Listed?

Call the church office
410-326-8400

Annual Chili Cookoff ~ January 21, 2024



Top: Sue & Mark Shubert won 1st place with their smokey meat chili.
Right: Pastor Alex won 2nd place with her turkey chili. Congrats!



Sacred Scrolls for Epiphany 2024

Every Epiphany, Olivet celebrates the story of the Magi by receiving sacred scrolls to carry into the new year. God's Word is God's light! Your scroll can go on your fridge, a doorpost, a closet door, or a mirror. If you would like one, call or email the church office (410-326-8400; olive-tumcoffice@comcast.net). May it bring you many epiphanies!



Olivet Stewardship 2023: Love in Action

2023 Approved Budget	\$224,277.00
~2023 Total Income	\$261,136.77
Average Weekly Income Needed	\$4,500.00
53-Sunday Average Weekly Income	\$4,927.11

I CAN'T HANDLE IT GOD; YOU TAKE OVER⁽¹⁾

recovery requires a true
SURRENDER
in a battle
we already lost

Life in recovery provided my

**“change to a
peaceful surrender
to the will of God.”**

A Day at a Time, Dec 24

GOD,

I surrender all
of my battles to
you ❤️

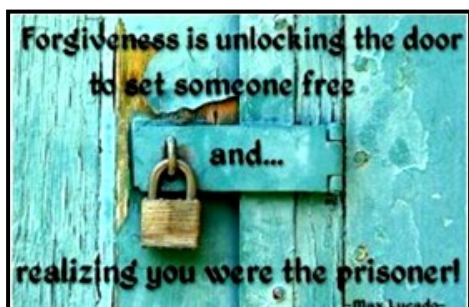
The question is not,
how can I have more of the Spirit?

But, rather, can the Spirit have more of me?

Accept his power. Be the glove and let him get his hand deep into your life.

Surrender to his plan. Harbored sin interferes with Spirit circulation. Confessed sin restores power.

And *keep* at it...unceasingly seek God's Spirit. **A-S-K.** (2)



“Addiction is a spiritual disease, a disease of the soul and illness, resulting from longing, frustrated desire and deep dissatisfaction, which is ironically the necessary beginning of any spiritual path.”

Richard Rohr from David Bradshaw. (3)

“A life of ‘sane and happy usefulness’ is what we are promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps.”—The Tools of Recovery, (Overeaters Anonymous). (4)

References:

- (1) <https://www.bluidkiti.com/AASlogans.html>
- (2) <https://maxlucado.com/listen/gods-glove/>
- (3) <https://davidbradshaw.medium.com/the-spiritual-secret-of-aas-success-5beeb0857fcd>
- (4) The Tools of Recovery, p. 6. (Overeaters Anonymous).



Hope Instead of Depression

AA Weekly (12 & 12) Breakfast Meeting

Every Saturday at 7:00 AM

Olivet UMC, 13575 Olivet Rd, Lusby, MD 20657

All are welcome!

Questions? Call Bob Evans at 410-279-6664

To be continued...

~Bob Evans

Missionaries Corner

Nan McCurdy (L) is a United Methodist missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries. She and her husband, Miguel Mairena (R), serve with Give Ye Them to Eat in Puebla, Mexico.



The purpose of "Give Ye Them to Eat" is to strengthen the capabilities of marginalized people and communities to meet their basic needs, and to determine and sustain a just and integrated development process. They provide training in appropriate technologies, sustainable agriculture, and health. Their farm and training center is in Tlancualpican, which was at the center of September 2017 earthquake and where many families lost their homes. The staff provides training to make straw-bale homes that are cooler and more earthquake resistant than homes built with bricks or blocks.

Go to www.gytte.org to learn more about the organization, Nan and Miguel's ministry, and how to donate.

Volume 1 | Issue 8

Monthly message from your Annual Conference

The Bulletin

Bishop Easterling's monthly publication *The Bulletin* comes out on or about the 15th of the month. It includes articles, artwork, and messages for the following month. Keep a lookout for it in your emails, or feel free to check it out on the BWC website at www.bwcumc.org. On the homepage, go to **News**, then click on **Bulletin**.



COLLEGE Scholarships

The Annual BWC Scholarship application process is open: The BWC will award scholarships to qualified college students and high school seniors who plan to attend college in the fall of 2024. The process closes on March 13. To learn more and to apply, copy and paste in your address line:

www.bwcumc.org/administration/local-church-resources/scholarships/.

BWC 2024 SUMMER CAMP

West River in West River, MD, and Manidokan in Knoxville, MD

REGISTRATION OPENS:

Overnight Programs — Feb 1 at 9:00 AM

Day Camps — Feb 15 at 9:00 AM



West River and Manidokan offer overnight programs for 1st–12th graders and day camps for 1st–8th graders. See the full schedule, and program descriptions, and registration at bwccampsandre-



Do no harm...do good...
stay in love with God.

—John Wesley



United Methodist General Conference

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024 - FRIDAY, MAY 03, 2024

CHARLOTTE CONVENTION CENTER, 501 S COLLEGE STREET, CHARLOTTE, NC 28202

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, which was postponed from 2020 (the General Conference is held every 4 years, so the last General Conference was held in 2016), will meet April 23 through May 3 at the Convention Center in Charlotte, N.C. A 12-member delegation will represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference at this session.