



SEPTEMBER CIRCUIT

PUBLISHED BY THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | Volume 1/Number 9

A Day of Hope: September 18, 2016

By Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

The Day of Hope continues a commitment to days, weeks, months and years of The United Methodist Church, in concert with other faith communities in West Virginia, to bring hope to families and communities dealing with issues of substance abuse.

As United Methodist's, "We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons. We support abstinence from the use of any illegal drugs. Since the use of illegal drugs, as well as illegal and problematic use of alcohol, is a major focus in crime, disease, death, and family dysfunction, we support educational programs as well as other prevention strategies encouraging abstinence from illegal drug use and, with regard to those who choose to consume alcoholic beverages, judicious use with deliberate and intentional restraint, with Scripture as a guide.

DAY OF HOPE

Celebrating & Supporting a
Substance-Free Lifestyle

Faith Community Encouraging
Prevention & Recovery



WV Council
of Churches



We commit ourselves to assisting those who suffer from abuse or dependence, and their families, in finding freedom through Christ and in finding good

opportunities for treatment, for ongoing counseling, and re integration into society." (Paragraph 162 (L) pages 120 – 121 The Book of Discipline 2012)

The Day of Hope reminds us that we need solution-oriented discussions in every congregation that will create a climate of support for families and individuals. My hope is that these discussions will lead to actions that seek to support those who are in recovery and sustained abstinence from substances of abuse. My hope is that in raising our levels of awareness and education that we will see that we can do something to support our youth and assist them in active ways to live drug-free lives.

Our faith and our belief that all persons are individuals of sacred worth calls for an active response to drug epidemic in our state.

As a people of faith, we are to offer compassion for those suffering, ministries of healing for those who are sick, and hospitality within our sanctuaries for those seeking comfort and hope.

The Substance Abuse Prevention agencies across the state of West Virginia stand ready to assist you and your faith community with resources, information and workshops to assist all of us in creating a true day of hope.

My prayer is that each faith community will find a way to respond and support those families and individuals who need help and support because of substance abuse or addiction.

You can find West Virginia Council of Churches resources and Substance Abuse Training information here:

<http://www.wvcc.org/substance-abuse-initiative-trainings.html>



Addiction - From the Eyes of a Pastor

By Rev. Darick Biondi

As a youth growing up in West Virginia, Summer Youth Celebration and Fall Workshop punctuated my annual calendar. As I returned year after year, I grew close to a unique group of friends. Although we did not see one another throughout the year, we always reunited every autumn and summer continuing where we left off. Since my youth, many of these friendships grew distant, but these friendships were foundational.

Just over two years ago I was dismayed to hear the news that one of my Fall Workshop/SYC friends had passed suddenly. I soon learned that this friend had lost his battle with addiction, overdosing on heroin. My friend had died fighting a demon that had plagued him for many years. He died waiting for treatment – where no bed was yet available; he died seeking treatment – as he was caught in the purgatory between filing and waiting for healthcare coverage.

My friend died while he was crying out for transformation and redemption.

I've cared about the plague of addiction in this state since I've gone into ministry, but my friend's unnecessary death changed everything.

The fight got personal.

Each year the Day of Hope punctuates our calendar as a constant reminder that God's grace is greater than we can understand. Each year we remember those that have died because of the demons they were battling. Each year we remember that Christ our Lord cast our demons from countless people, and that Christ still transforms lives today. Every year we remember that with Christ our Lord, there is always hope.

The Day of Hope is a time to pause and remember those that have died unnecessarily to addiction, but to remember that there is still hope and a future for those battling with addiction.

The West Virginia Council of Churches has taken up this fight. The WVCC has been focusing on the issue of addiction and is coordinating several listening sessions throughout the great state of West Virginia. The Church is called to proclaim hope and salvation, but in order to better understand how we can do that in the face of the opioid epidemic, we must first pause and listen to those who are most impacted by this plague.

The listening sessions will focus on small group discussion so that everyone attending will be heard. Our goal is to ask how the Church might better help provide hope, help, aide, and transformation for those battling addiction. While we are not sure of the outcome, we are optimistic that together we can envision a future where churches across West Virginia provide a support system that promotes both prevention and rehabilitation.

We hope that you can join us as we proclaim hope in the midst of this overwhelming epidemic. Even though the powers of sin and death still ravage this world, Christ is King has conquered sin and death. Together we can unite as the Body of Christ, and with God's help even this apparently insurmountable epidemic will one day crumble thanks to the transforming power of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Rev. Darick Biondi is the pastor of Glasglow and Mt. Juliet, Belle, UMC's. He is married to Cindy Briggs-Biondi who is also a United Methodist elder. Darick serves on the Council of Churches Substance Abuse Initiative Steering Committee.

CALENDAR

Conference Event Highlights - The role of the Conference Calendar is to share the events and business of conference level agencies and ministries.



September

9 - 11	United Methodist Men's Meeting
16	Covenant Council Leadership Training
16 - 17	Bishop's Summit on Diversity and Inclusion
16-18	Course of Study
18 - 23	Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation
23 - 25	Minister's Mates Fellowship

October

7 - 8	2016 Fall Christian Academy
8	Lay Mobilization Institute
12 - 14	Nurturing Appalachia: Heart & Soul
18 - 20	2016 Clergy School
21 - 22	United Methodist Women Annual Meeting

November

11 - 12	Reaching New People 2016
18 - 20	Fall Workshop



View the conference calendar online at
wvumc.org/events

We Remember

Polly Mae Miller, wife of late Rev. Marvin G. Miller, died Friday, July 15.

Rev. John Taylor, retired pastor, died Monday, July 18.

Rev. Dean E. Hughes, retired pastor, died Saturday, July 23.

Rev. F. Emerson Wood, retired minister of the Western District and previous District Superintendent, died Tuesday, July 26.

Lawrence O. Hakes, father of Rev. Larry Hakes, died Tuesday, July 26.

Janis Fout Johnson, wife of Retired Pastor Jonas "JR" Johnson, died Wednesday, July 27.

Jarratt C. "Jack" Branch, step-father of Rev. Rick DeQuasie, died Friday, July 29.

Barbara "Babs" Woods, surviving spouse of Rev. William Woods, died Friday, July 29.

Rev. Gerald Harshbarger, retired pastor from the Little Kanawha District, died Sunday, July 31.

Martha Jane Ware, wife of late Rev. Dr. Virgil H. Ware, died Monday, August 8.



The Monthly Circuit
P.O. Box 2313
Charleston, WV 25328

Voice: (304) 344-8331

Fax: (304) 344-2871

Resident Bishop:
Sandra Steiner Ball

Communications Director:
Rev. Deborah Coble

Communications Assistant:
Whitney Cherry



My Response to Heroin



By Rev. Kerry Bart, *First UMC,
Barboursville, W.Va.*

On Tuesday, August 16, 2016, the nation heard the news that on Monday there had been 27 heroin overdoses in the city of Huntington, WV, over the course of just a few hours. Remarkably, there was only one fatality.

Although Huntington has had more than two dozen heroin overdose fatalities since the first of the year, the fatality rate is down from 35 at this time last year.

One saving grace is Narcan (aka naloxone), a medication which blocks the effect of opioids like heroin, although ideally naloxone is paired with subsequent detox and rehab. It is my hope that knowledge can also help reduce the incidence of overdoses.



Rev. Kerry Bart, pastor First UMC.

Like many, I was shocked and astounded by the news. Grieved. The overdoses took place within a mile-and-a-half radius in the city of Huntington, less than ten miles from my home and the church where I serve. I wanted to do something.

When I was appointed to Barboursville First UMC, I found in my desk a two-page list of phone numbers of various community services. It was a great guide, but it was overwhelming as well. I took it upon myself to create a "Barboursville Area Resource Card," which is a double-sided business card made at a popular online vendor. On my Resource Card I included the address and phone number of a local food pantry, a local homeless mission, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and even a local domestic violence shelter. I wanted to be able to put this information into the hands of someone who knocked on my door, and these categories seemed about right to me.

When we were hit by a wave of overdoses, I decided to compile a local list of phone numbers a person could call if they had trouble with drugs or alcohol.

On my list: Alcoholics Anonymous; Narcotics Anonymous; The hospital's drug recovery unit; A drug addiction treatment center. I found out about www.help4WV.com (844) 435-7498, which is a statewide hotline for drugs and alcohol abuse. I put a new page on our church website that listed all these things and more. I found a resource for folks addicted to prescription pain-killers. I put up a local Sex Addicts Anonymous phone number, and Gambler's Anonymous as well. I also know a nearby church that offers Celebrate Recovery. On the list. Check out the full list at www.FirstChurchBville.com/recovery.html.

Still, I wanted something like a business card that I could put in people's hands – that I could hand out to people on the street. Something we could give out at the fall parade. I went back to the popular online vendor and crafted a new card. One side says, in large letters, "I want to stop using, but I don't know how..." It includes several of the drug-related phone numbers, and the suicide hotline **(800) 273-8255**. The other side says, in large letters, "I wouldn't call the drinking 'out of control,' it was only two DUIs..." and some AA related phone numbers. It also includes the number for Al-Anon, for people who have a friend or family member with alcohol dependence.

I want to be able to help people, and I want to have a tool handy to put in their hands so I don't need to say, "Hang on, let me look that number up for you," and the moment has passed. I want to be able to walk up to a stranger on the street and say, "Do you know someone whose life is negatively affected by drugs or alcohol? Give them this card. It could help save their life." And I want my church to be a place known for reaching out to people who are in need.

I don't know when I'll receive a new appointment or where that appointment may be, but I know this: when I get there, I will make some more local resource cards.



Changes in Labor Law

Effective December 1, 2016

By Whitney Cherry

On Friday, August 19, Rev. Jim Berner, WV Conference Treasurer, spoke to Conference staff and District Superintendents about the changing labor law concerning over-time pay and comp time that will affect our full-time working employees.

Almost all hourly workers — those who get paid a set rate for each hour worked — get paid time-and-a-half for any hours over 40 per week.

But many salaried workers — those paid an annual salary, regardless of hours worked — do not get those same protections.

As the rule stands, salaried employees (exempt) who make more than \$23,660 a year and whose primary duties are “executive, administrative or professional” do not have to be paid time-and-a-half for overtime hours.

The new rule, effective December 1, 2016, essentially doubles that threshold to \$47,476, making many more workers eligible for overtime benefits (non-exempt).

These changes will also affect set hours. For employees of the Conference, the stated hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with an hour for lunch. These hours are to be observed unless modified by Conference Leadership.

For more topics and answers regarding this law change, visit
<http://wvumc.org/News/2016/Change-in-Labor>.

If you have any specific questions for your own Conference workplace, please contact
Rev. Jim Berner at **304.344.8331, ext. 35** or **tresrr@aol.com**.





Mission U

By Sue Dostal, Conference Secretary of Program Resources

Each year, the United Methodist Women of the West Virginia Conference participate in mission studies preparing themselves for faithful living and service. Geographic, topical and spiritual growth studies are offered each year. The studies are designed to motivate, inform and encourage our commitment to global ministry.

Mission u, as it is called, is an opportunity to study issues that pay particular attention to women's responsibilities in fulfilling the mission work of the United Methodist Church. It is not just for women though, but children and youth as well. The boys and girls study one of the adult studies designed appropriately for their age group. They have their own activities separate from the adults. They experience classroom studies, arts and crafts as well as field trips. They also participate in a Mission Opportunity where they help at a mission project site, working alongside others who have made a commitment to helping families within their community. Mission is a learned process. It needs to be carried out through education, preparation and partnerships. This is what is taught to the young people.

Children and youth are brought to Mission u by a mom, grandma, aunt or family/church friend. The young people would not have the opportunity to learn how to serve if we did not encourage them to do so. For the past several years, we have averaged 18 children and youth at Mission u. We have young people who have been attending since they became eligible upon completion of Kindergarten. They look forward to returning and participating each year.

Financial Accountability and Transparency: General Conference gives pastors access to and responsibility for church giving records

The 2016 General Conference adopted an important change to the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church that all pastors and church financial secretaries should know about.

As I travel the Annual Conference meeting with various groups of church clergy and lay leadership, on several occasions I have been involved in discussions around whether the pastor of a congregation should have access to congregational giving records. There are definitely two schools of thought.

Some believe that giving is private and the pastor has no business knowing who gives what. Others believe that giving is a spiritual issue, and the pastor needs to know about giving in order to provide effective leadership for the congregation.

My view that the pastor should know the giving history of individual congregants. The most frequent argument I hear from those who disagree is that the pastor might treat people differently based upon their giving. A pastor should never give favorable treatment to one group of parishioners over another based upon giving or anything else. But if a pastor thinks that knowing individuals' giving record would change the way s/he interacts with them, the pastor is probably already treating people differently based upon incorrect and incomplete information. One of my mentors taught me that some people wear a big hat, but don't have a lot of cattle; others have lots of cattle but wear a small hat.

There are many arguments to support the position that the pastor should have access to giving

records, but that is not the purpose of this article, because irrespective of our individual opinions, the General Conference has made it clear that the pastor should have access to and responsibility for the congregation's record of giving. In May, the General Conference overwhelmingly adopted (761 for, 21 against) action that added the following language to ¶340.2.c.(2)(c) of the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church:

To ensure membership care including compliance with charitable giving documentation requirements and to provide appropriate pastoral care, the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.

Giving is part of each member's covenant with God and the Church to faithfully support the church through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Members' giving, therefore, deserves careful stewardship by pastors and financial secretaries.

Pastoral leadership can improve significantly when congregations include the pastor in stewardship of donor relationships and share knowledge about congregational resources.

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc. is willing to help you with questions around stewardship in the broad sense. Feel free to contact **Kim Matthews** or **Jeff Taylor** at the at **1-800-788-3746 ext. 45** or **info@umfwv.org**.

Consider the possibilities.

Pastoral Care and the Bigger Picture

By Rev. Maria Wiblin

"I have been blessed by spirit-filled holy conversations with survivors of the horrible flooding. Words cannot describe the sight of devastation and destruction that has swept through the community of White Sulphur Springs. There are no words that express the pain and loss felt by those I have talked to. I have heard stories of grief, sorrow, sadness, confession and some of thanksgiving even in what seems to be the darkest days. May God's healing continue to work in the lives of each who has been touched by the raging waters."

Rev. Maria Wiblin, campus ministry leader at Fairmont State University, posted the statement above on June 26, 2016, while visiting White Sulphur Springs right after the flood. Since having such experiences, she then went on to recall a particular conversation that truly touched her heart, which she has shared below.

While I was doing pastoral care work immediately after the flood in White Sulphur Springs, a call came to Emmanuel United Methodist Church that a friend had not been heard from in three days. The caller asked if someone could please go check to make sure she was okay.

I stood with three pastors and a fourth care person trying to decide who would make the wellness check. It was decided that two of us would go together. As we drove, we pondered out loud what we would find. We speculated that we could find anything from a woman trapped in her home some way to perhaps even finding her lying dead.

We drove the rest of the way in silence and I know I used this time to pray. As we drove I noticed the road had recently been covered in water. There were trailers picked up and placed in the middle of fields! This was a sober reminder of the power behind the flood waters.

We found the house and were met in the driveway by a woman with a questioning look. We introduced ourselves and explained why we were there. She immediately became teary eyed and hugged us.

She shared with us that the flood left them with no water, no electricity, no gas, no telephone, and only spotty cell phone service. She then began to share that she had



A home in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va. ravaged by the June flood.

a heart condition and takes Coumadin and that her blood pressure was high the last time her visiting nurse had been to see her. On her nurse's advice she had stopped taking it and but now it had been three days with no contact from her nurse. She was really worried that something could go wrong.

I reassured her that we would call her nurse and let her know the road was clear. She then told us her daughter had been trapped in a tree for 6 hours the whole time she didn't know where she was. With each response and head nod she shared more and more of her life. The woman broke down, big tears rolling down her face, finally sharing that two weeks prior to the flood she had been diagnosed with breast cancer in her left breast. I felt her pain to the bone and was transported back ten years to the moment I heard those words myself.

Something inside me said to share my story. So I opened up and told her about my own battle with cancer. As I spoke, her face began to relax and the tears began to subside.

Woman to woman we began to talk. She asked me questions. Questions that came from deep within. As we finished talking she hugged me tightly telling me that I was the first person that she had talked to about her cancer. She thanked God that He had sent me.

I told her it was definitely the work of the Holy Spirit and she said AMEN. We held hands and prayed.

Rev. Maria Wiblin is an ordained deacon and Campus Ministry Leader at Fairmont State University. Our West Virginia Conference Campus Ministry leaders were deployed as early responders to the flood areas. We give thanks for their ministry among us.

Update: Flood 2016 and the next phase of recovery

We caught up with **JF Lacaria**, Assistant to the Bishop, and Jack Lipphardt, newly appointed Disaster Response Director for the West Virginia Annual Conference to talk about our West Virginia Conference's response to the summer floods.

WVUMC: It appears that West Virginia has moved into a new stage in flood relief. Can you talk about our partnership with UMCOR and what's next for WVUMC?

JF: The West Virginia Conference has moved into the long-term recovery phase of the response to flooding that took place across southern and central West Virginia in June, 2016.

We anticipate that this will be a two-year commitment to help families return to the "new normal," defined as strong and healthy and better prepared for any future disaster.

Having received excellent advice from UMCOR throughout the response

and relief phases of the flood, we are strengthening our partnership with UMCOR requesting a large matching grant that will enable us to respond to the multitude of unmet needs that we know will flow through WV VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Assisting in Disaster) where we join our ecumenical partners and other non-profits to restore families' lives and homes.

WVUMC: We've seen advertisements for three new positions, when do you hope to have these folks hired and deployed in the field?

JF: Long-term recovery will be greatly enhanced by having people in the field who will serve as the eyes and ears, hands and feet of Jesus in determining people's needs and our response.

The United Methodist team will include a Disaster Response Director, 2 Case Managers, 1 Work Site Coordinator, and 1 Work Team Manager. The Director, Rev. Jack Lipphardt, has been hired and we hope to have all the others in place and trained by mid-September. All will be deployed strategically across the scope of the disaster.

WVUMC: What will be their first assignments?

JF: In coordination with WV VOAD and the County Emergency Management teams, the case managers will be deployed alongside other agencies' case managers to engage with families,

listening to their dreams, assessing their needs, determining what resources will help them move to full recovery and advocating for them in the marketplace of response, where service and material providers calculate their ability to respond to unmet needs.

areas affected by the June flood in order to grasp the magnitude of this 1,000 year disaster.

We also want to plug them into available training from FEMA and UMCOR. They also need to establish relationship with St.

Vincent de Paul case management which is the “pro” organization in this field - we will be working closely with St. Vincent de Paul in the months to come.

For a first assignment for the construction coordinator, I want him or her to visit with the Long Term Recovery Committees and to see the region. Once the construction coordinator is on board, we’ll have the

team in place, and I hope to establish a close working relationship among the bishop’s office, the case managers, the construction coordinator, and me.

WVUMC: What is the current status of our churches and parsonages that received damage?

JF: The fifteen churches and two parsonages that received damage are in various stages of recovery. We are maintaining contact with all of them assisting them financially with the many



Where appropriate, our Work Team Manager will deploy volunteer teams that have queued up to volunteer to sites where our Work Site Coordinator will see that they have jobs, materials, and necessary support to get the job done.

JACK: First assignments for the case managers will be to get the “lay of the land” by visiting with the Long Term Recovery Committees that are organized for each county affected by the flood. Also, I want to take them for visits in the

projects that they face, from replacement of floors and HVAC to structural engineering concerns and partial rebuilds.

WVUMC: What are the current needs of the communities that were flooded in June (and Follansbee in July?)

JACK: Needs range from primary disaster response for many individuals, families, and communities to recovery efforts for those who have been able to get past the immediate disaster clean-up. Some have the means - financial, physical, and spiritual - to recover on their own. But most, including whole communities need massive help in recovery.

It is too soon for me to get very specific about needs other than to say some still need their homes to be mucked out and many need large-scale reconstruction and remediation of flood damage. The demoralizing effect of such a dramatic disaster is huge as people wonder how they can put their lives together or wonder how their entire community will be able to survive. I guess the simplest answer to what is needed is prayer and the willingness of those with the means to help to attach hands and feet and pocketbooks to their prayers.

WVUMC: If a group or an individual wishes to help with recovery efforts what should they do? Who do they call?

JF: Teams should register with Sandy Binotto, VIM coordinator. Registration forms and contact information may be found here: <http://wvumc.org/about/ministries/vim>

JACK: Financial gifts are definitely needed and may be directed through local church contributions identifying 2016 Flood, #935 or through the United Methodist Foundation of WV, Inc. directed to the June 2016 flood. To give on line go to: <http://umfwv.org>

WVUMC: What is your prayer for our region as we move forward?

JF: My prayer is that families and communities can enter their new normal with hope, strength, and a sense of promise for their futures.

My prayer for our churches is that they can take up ministry where they left off and move forward with a new sense of purpose and resources to extend grace even further into their communities.

JACK: My prayer is that the Church and the whole region can muster the strength and resources God gives us to enable people to return to or find a new and sustainable normal.

Reaching New People



- What growing, fruitful churches are doing today
- Reintroducing your church to your community
- How pastors lead into the mission field
- How laity grow relationships that introduce new people to the church
- Leave the workshop with a six month action plan

Friday, Nov. 11 – Saturday, Nov. 12, 2016

First UMC
117 North 2nd St.
Clarksburg, WV 26301

For registration visit:

<http://conta.cc/2bpSDPC>

Workshop runs

Friday 5:00pm – 9:00pm

Saturday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Churches will be invited to participate in an optional 12 month coaching cluster for clergy and laity to implement the fruitful behaviors taught in the workshop.

You can read comments from past participants here:

<http://wp.me/P1Mvzd-lfk>

Lay Mobilization INSTITUTE

Helping congregations move
to the *next level* in ministry.



Join Us
for this **FREE** Event

LMI Intro Event
October 8, 2016
9:00am-12:30pm

Community of Grace UMC
225 28th St.
Huntington, WV 25702

Questions?

Call Amy Shanholtzer
1-800-788-3746 ext. 26

Register by calling or
emailing
ashanholtzer@wvumc.org

*Rekindle your ministry,
Reignite your passion,
Refuel your leadership
through the
Lay Lay Mobilization Institute.*





Dear Conference leaders,

I am inviting you to join me for the 2016 Summit on Diversity and Inclusion at the Charleston Conference Center.

Our time together will be focused on building our Intercultural Competency by exploring the concept of diversity and the need for cultural sensitivity. Rev. Giovanni Arroyo will lead our plenary sessions and we have a fantastic music ministry team joining us for our times of worship.

The event begins at noon on Friday, September 16 and we will conclude around noon Saturday. Registration closes on September 2, so go to wvumc.org today and follow the links to get registered!

CEU's are available.



<https://www.facebook.com/wvumc>



<https://twitter.com/WVUMC>