

news

Thank You!

A heartfelt 'Thank You' goes out to the following persons who cooked and/or delivered dinners for 50 to Project Hope for the Homeless on the third Sunday of the month this past year: Nelda and Larry DeMoss Tom and Kelly Szakal Peter Formica, Bill Hines Ann Horvath and the YF Bob Lacey, Women's Group with Carol Formica Marlene and Charley Zito, Megan Stevenson and Michelle Barnett Dr. Mary Blank, Bob Studer

And also our gratitude to all those unnamed folks who contributed to the Project Hope Dinner Fund. •

Kids4Christ



Parenting Event at Trinity Baptist

February 24th from 9:30–11:30 a.m.

\$10 per adult, childcare provided at no cost. Location: Trinity Church in Mentor, 9225 Johnnycake Ridge Rd, Mentor, OH 44060

Content of the Morning:

Instruction Routine, Positive Conclusion, and a tool box method-consequences to use, Question & Answer Session.

More information to come, look for an email soon!

Kid's Quest @9:30am and 11:00am

Classes: Preschool–1st grade and 2–5th grade

** (Teachers always needed.)

What we will learn about: January will be about Daniel and we will be using "Speed Sketch" video curriculum!

Kid's Choir

Choir runs the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Sundays at 10:30am in the fellowship hall. We are learning new songs! Make sure to say a big thank you to Mrs. Linda for all her years as kid's choir director! Mrs. LeAnn will be starting this month. We hope your child can join us as we are learning songs with Mrs. LeAnn!

Eat This Book Challenge

This is a family challenge set up to help your family read the Bible together. There is a packet we will hand out and you can start right away.

There is a grand prize that will be chosen from the families that participate and hand in their form at the end. WE are giving away one SPORTSCAMP scholarship!

Thanks to all who made the Angel breakfast and the kid's Christmas pageant so much fun! And thank you to all who helped make the RFK Club Kids Christmas brighter!

Celebrating Our Membership!

Congratulations to the following members of our congregation who will reach milestone years of membership this month!

Celebrating 31 years

Barb Schmidt

Celebrating 23 years

Alice Lillich

Congratulations, and thanks for your continuing service to the Lord through WHUMC! •

Don't forget to say a prayer of blessing over your child today! Try Ephesians 3:16NLT •

Rummage Sale

BY: SHAREN OTT

Spring may be months away, but some folks already may be looking ahead to the Rummage Sale. Our annual sale has been supported by the congregation both through your donations and your purchases! Profits were sent to support mission projects and Royal Family Kids Camps.

Every ministry has its life-cycle, and we're sorry to say that the Rummage Sale has come to the end of its long run. It has been fun, but it has also been a great deal of work, and those who have done that work are fewer now than in the past.

We want to say "thank you" for the support, and thanks for the memories through the years! •

Project Hope Pilot Program

An article titled, "The Story of Project Hope for the Homeless," was first published in the October 2016 WHUMC newsletter. The article told the story of the first homeless shelter in Lake County.

It described the origin of the shelter from an ecumenical task force to its permanent home at 25 Freedom Road in Painesville Township.

Our church hosted the first shelter as a pilot program for the homeless opening on 14 February 1993 through the end of March. This article is about those six weeks and the many churches that opened their doors to provide a warm, safe place for the county's homeless population.

In 1992, there was no adequate shelter for the homeless in Lake and surrounding counties. That is why, in September of that year, an ecumenical task force was created through the Catholic Commission of Lake and Geauga Counties and the Lake County Homeless Coalition. Bob Studer recalled that the task force invited Lake County churches to a meeting at Hope Ridge United Methodist Church in Concord Township. The guest speaker was Rev. Ken Chalker, pastor of the First United Methodist Church at Euclid Avenue and East 30th Street in Cleveland. That congregation operated an emergency shelter for women and children. Approximately 80 people attended the meeting, including six from Willoughby Hills United Methodist Church: Rev. Constance Sterner, Ed and Ellie Craun, Thelma Blazy, Maggie Soeder and Robert Studer.

According to Rev. Connie Sterner, then pastor of WHUMC, "We are a small church and at first we kept saying, 'We can't.'" But several weeks later the Intercessory Prayer group said, "We think we can". What follows is "the rest of the story."

Bob Studer recounted, *"In November our church approved an ad hoc Liaison Committee to interact with the CCLGC. The CCLGC was directed by Terry Shuping, the only compensated member of the committee, and volunteers from several Catholic churches in the area. The Liaison Committee consisted of Chairman Robert Studer (Mission Committee Chairman), Rilda Flanagan (President of Church Council), Maggie Soeder, Bert Powell, Dave Miller,*

Pastor's Pen

I've been encouraged by so many things recently here at WHUMC. If I tried to list them all, I'd miss something or someone, and I wouldn't want to do that. But there's one that I so want to mention. There's been a renewed call to get into the Bible.



Carol Formica took it upon herself (felt the urging of God?) to read through the Bible from front to back. Here's what she posted on Facebook after completing it: "I just finished my first reading of the entire Bible. I can't encourage you enough to read it for yourself! There's so much more

in there than I realized, and I have such a greater understanding of God's patient love for each of us! I'm looking forward to reading it again in 2018, and I already have a different version ready to go."

I'm so glad to see this, because it has always been a ministry emphasis of mine to point people toward the Word of God. Growing in the faith requires that we know what God has done in and through his people in the past. That's what the Bible reveals to us.

We read what God says, and we'll also find out that some of what we believe is in the Bible really isn't! Two examples – lots of folks will say that "God will never give you more than you can handle." That isn't in the Bible. It's a misquotation of First Corinthians 10:13 – "But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.." Or how about Hezekiah 3:16? "God helps the man who helps himself." Not there. (There is no book of Hezekiah, either.)

In my own walk, I just finished the Old and New Testaments on the same day. So at that natural 'breakpoint', I retired my old New International Version Study Bible, and bought a new edition of the New Living Translation. It has both the Study Bible and the Life Application Bible notes side by side under the Scripture passages. (Remember, 'version' refers to the translation, and 'edition' refers to the study notes).

So I'd like to encourage you to pick up the challenge that Carol set out: make the commitment to read through the Bible from front to back. You'll see the wide scope of God's purposes and plans for people and for us. If you need a Bible, or a reference as to which one to buy, contact me and I'll be happy to help in any way I can. It's one of my greatest joys to see people getting into God's Word!

"For the word of God is alive and powerful..." (Hebrews 4:12 NLT)

Blessings!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol".

Gertrude Perry, Thelma Blazy, Kevin Malecek (President of Youth Fellowship), and Lara Virostko [Waldenmaier] as backup to Kevin. Rev. Connie Stermer joined when time allowed. The Liaison Committee's duties included reporting to Church Council and consulting with the CCLGC.

"A site (steering) committee was formed to proceed with the operation of the emergency shelter. The steering committee consisted of the following people from the CCLGC: Marty Hughes (co-chair), Father Gerald Bednar, Terry Greaves, Sandra Hartog, Kathy Hughes, Fred Kraus, Rick Mergen, Rich Rzepka, Rev. Roger Skelley-Watts, and Terry Shuping; and from our church: Bob Studer (co-chair), Thelma Blazy, Ed Craun, Rilda Flanagan, Kevin Malecek, Gertrude Perry, Maggie Soeder, Rev. Connie Stermer, and Lara Virostko [Waldenmaier]."

Bob Studer continued, "The duties were divided between the two partners. The CCLGC portion interviewed and hired professional social workers to oversee the actual hours of operation and sought volunteers to aid in the hours of operations. The WHUMC portion performed duties relating to the physical site: meet the safety requirements of local agencies, the allowed capacity per county inspector (5 men and 5 women), waste (sewer) capacity and bacteria content, fire department inspection, etc. It also purchased mattresses, pillows, bedding, linens, fire detectors, internal doors for the education wing, and cleaning equipment and supplies. The Site Committee also set up the rules of operation, guidelines for the required conduct of the guests, duties of the volunteers, site cleanup procedures, etc."

Bob recalled the procedures that the volunteers went through to provide a warm and safe environment for the shelter guest: "The Youth Fellowship prepared all the toiletry kits needed. Under Kevin Malecek's and Lara Vitrostko's [Waldenmaier] leadership they sought donations of supplies, purchased some items and assembled all the kits for the hosted homeless persons."

Kevin Malecek stated, "I coordinated an effort among the youth group to supply hygiene bags (dental supplies, shampoo, etc.) by gathering materials from local medical/dental offices for any clients that came into the shelter. It was extremely fulfilling being a small part of a community effort-- the first established, sustained community effort in our corner of the world-- to address the problem of homelessness in our area."

Lara Virostko [Waldenmaier] added, "Helped to greet some of the overnight guests or help set up but I didn't stay overnight with them at the church... [Bob Studer explained that overnight volunteers had to be over 18 years old]... It was an inspiring thing to be a part of!"

Bob Studer continued:

"In late January, 1993, Rev. Connie Stermer sent a letter of intent to the Willoughby Hills Safety Director (Mayor) stating that the church was going to be hosting up to 10 homeless persons start-

ing on 14 February 1993. In it she noted that this would be the reason for lights on late in the evenings for possibly six weeks. In the meantime, St. Noel Catholic Church sent to WHUMC a letter of support for the church's endeavor. They noted need for such a shelter in the county.

"The shelter opened on 14 February 1993 and operated until the end of March. Over that period 16 homeless persons were welcomed into a warm Christian facility on those cold winter nights. Two rooms in the education wing were the assigned sleeping quarters for the guests, one for up to 5 men and one for up to 5 women. Any parent with children was assigned to a third room. The guests entered through the west door of the wing. The east end of the wing was closed and secured by overlapping doors purchased at an inexpensive price and installed by Ed Craun and Bob Studer.

"Guests were met at the Points West shopping center parking lot at the corner of Euclid Avenue and SOM Center by the social worker and a volunteer of the opposite sex. This alleviated any anxiety by guests without their own vehicles who needed a ride to the site. Any guests with cars were to follow that vehicle to the site. Each day, during the operation of the shelter, end-of-the-day doughnuts from Biaggio's on Vine Street were delivered by a St. Noel Catholic Church lay deacon on his way to a church on the west side of Cleveland. This lay deacon also personally donated a used refrigerator to the WHUMC kitchen. No cooked meals were provided, only coffee, tea, and hot chocolate with the doughnuts."

Bob also noted that the shelter was open from 9pm to 6:30am and that three volunteers were typically present to assist the guests. He continued:

"The third of April 1993 was a day of celebration. The first "Celebration of Project Hope" service was held at our church. This service was one of thanksgiving of the blessings that our loving God had bestowed on the shelter. The event included meditations from the United Methodist Church district superintendent Rev. Joan Skelley-Watts; a pastor from the CCLGC Rev. Roger Skelley-Watts, the superintendent's husband; and a priest delegate from the Cleveland Catholic Diocese.

"After Project Hope had closed on 31 March 1993, the joint committee of the Liaison Committee and the CCLGC evaluated the situation. They gathered together, conducted elections, and wrote by-laws. In late 1993, the Ecumenical Shelter Network of Lake County became incorporated in the state of Ohio. The Ecumenical Shelter Network consisted of a 12-member board of trustees that oversaw Project Hope for the Homeless. The term 'Project Hope for the Homeless' was coined by the CCLGC during or just prior to the six week operation."

According to Project Hope's website, "The Ecumenical Shelter Network of Lake County is the governing body of Project Hope. The network, which counts more than 100 concerned area residents, meets annually to elect members of the 12-person board

of trustees. A minimum of two other yearly meetings provides them the opportunity to learn about what Project Hope is doing in the community.”

The East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church published an article titled, “Project Hope gives hope to Lake County” in the 2 May 1993 “East Ohio Today” newsletter. The article described the six-week Project Hope pilot program that WHUMC hosted from February through March 1993. According to Rev. Connie Sterner, pastor of WHUMC at the time, *“Project Hope was an important project in discipleship and cooperation between churches in our district that are in Lake County. . . Housing homeless people in the church hall helped the Willoughby Hills congregation gain some insights. . . It changed our understanding in a way about mission and of what intercity churches have to deal with. It gave us a great sense of being disciples of Jesus Christ. . . The ten men and six women who used the church as a temporary home ranged in age from 18 to 66. The pilot program was a cooperative, ecumenical effort between the Painesville District of the UMC and the Catholic Commission of Lake & Geauga counties. Over two-dozen church congregations countywide helped support the project.”*

Rev. Connie Sterner continued, *“I have never seen them work together on anything like this before. It has been great for the ecumenical movement around here, too, with closer ties having been established with the Catholic Church.”*

Judy Burr, current Executive Director of Project Hope for the Homeless, explained her experience as a residential specialist at WHUMC. *“[I] was hired. . . [as one of several residential specialists] and stayed overnight at the WHUMC. They hired me in that position due to my primary job at a local mental health agency as the first homeless outreach worker. I had a heart for the people I was working with on the street that had nowhere to sleep at night.”* Judy added: *“I still remember sleeping in your Sunday school rooms [at WHUMC], and the first young man who stayed there to get away from his drug-addicted parents. He graduated high school and went into the military directly afterwards. I remember him reading the Bible aloud in the hallway at night to bring himself comfort. This was the beginning of my true walk with Christ. The words came alive for me. I often wonder where he [Brad] is today. . .”*

Judy continued, *“Project Hope for the Homeless was modeled after a homeless shelter in Steubenville, Ohio. Rev. Roger Skelley-Watts, a founding trustee of Project Hope, brought the model of the shelter here from Steubenville.”* Rev. Skelley-Watts had been the Director of the Urban Mission in Steubenville in the late 1980s and early 1990s. *The Urban Mission began the first shelter for the homeless in that area, the Hutton House.*

After the Project Hope pilot program ended on 31 March 1993 at WHUMC, two other churches hosted the shelter. During 1993-1994, Project Hope operated 22 weeks, opening at First Christian

Church of Willoughby, and later moving to Mentor Plains United Methodist Church. Then in November 1994, Project Hope found a temporary home at Painesville United Methodist Church.

A 27 September 1999 Plain Dealer article explained, “For the last five years Project Hope had been based at Painesville United Methodist Church. But the city officials, weary of being the only community willing to be host to the center, told the shelter it would have to build a permanent center or find a temporary home in a new city. Over the next few weeks the shelter will travel to various churches in Mentor and Painesville.”

A 28 October 1999 Plain Dealer article listed the various churches that hosted the Project Hope shelter in 1999-2000.

- Painesville United Methodist Church
- St. Bede the Venerable Catholic Church, Mentor
- Church of the Brethren, Painesville Twp.
- St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Mentor
- Mentor United Methodist Church
- Christ Lutheran Church, Willoughby
- Advent Lutheran Church, Mentor
- First Church of Christ, Painesville
- Willoughby United Methodist Church
- St. Mary Catholic Church, Painesville
- Lake Catholic High School, Mentor
- Cleveland Catholic Diocese Center for Pastoral Leadership, Wickliffe

Project Hope moved into its current site at 25 Freedom Road in Painesville Township on Christmas Eve 2000.

In a 16 November 1998 Plain Dealer article, Judy Burr stated, *“The shelter’s thrust is to give people a safe place to stay overnight, a warm meal and a chance to improve their lot through religious, and drug and alcohol counseling.”*

On 14 February 2018, Project Hope for the Homeless celebrates the 25th anniversary of fulfilling The Ecumenical Shelter Network’s mission statement, a statement that was created or adopted before the shelter opened: *“To serve the human hurts and hopes of persons in Lake County who are homeless by providing emergency shelter, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ.”* There will be a special church service on Sunday, February 11th, at Willoughby Hills UMC. Judy Burr, Executive Director of Project Hope for the Homeless, will be sharing a brief message, “From the Seed to Sustainability,” with one or two testimonies, time permitting.

Later that same day, all are invited to celebrate Project Hope’s anniversary by stopping in between 2 and 4 p.m. for a celebratory open house with tours of the 25 Freedom Road location. Visitors will learn about the 50-bed operation that now has a family and aftercare program. •