

West District Tools for Ministry 2026

On February 28, 2026

Location: Salem UMC: Manheim, 140 N. Penn Street, Manheim, PA 17545

Cost: \$10 registration

The West District Tools for Ministry is a training opportunity for laity and clergy. Sessions will provide innovative ideas on how to expand ministries beyond the church walls, prepare you for various leadership roles in the church, and offer networking opportunities with other members of the UMC. Light refreshments will be available during registration. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged, but walk-ins will be welcome as space permits.

Schedule:

8AM – Registration & light refreshments

8:30-9:10 AM – Introductions, Worship, & Keynote Message
from our West District Superintendent, The Rev. Jenny Freymoyer

9:10-9:15 AM – Transition

9:15-10:30 AM – Session #1

10:30-10:45 AM – Transition between Sessions

10:45-12:00 PM – Session #2

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS: *You may select one workshop in each of the two sessions. Your \$10 registration fee covers the entire morning including light refreshments. **Registration must be paid in advance.** We will accept online registrations **until Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at Noon.** After that you will need to register at the door and pay cash/check. *Please note that space may be limited or workshops may close based on registrations entered by Feb. 25.**

If you are unable to pay the registration fee online or want to pay as a group by a check, (or if you need other assistance with payment or registration issues), please contact Pastor David T. Ryan (pastordavidryan@yahoo.com) or (410) 739-7018 to get a code to enter that you will be paying at the door.

PRESENTERS at Tools for Ministry should contact Pastor Jason Perkowski (jbperkowski@gmail.com) or (717) 333-9238 to get the **Discount Code so you can attend for free.** Presenters should then register for their own workshop *AND may register for an additional workshop* in the opposite session.

SESSION 1:

Session A1: Many Minds, One Body: Neurodiversity in Educational Ministries

Elizabeth Christie has been working in the field of children's and family ministries for over two decades. She has served in a wide variety of ministry settings, and frequently speaks at various gatherings of United Methodists across the country. Elizabeth has written resources for Discipleship Ministries, the Breakthrough Sermon Series, and the General Commission on Race and Religion, and she finds great joy in helping make lifelong faith formation transformational for all.

Description: Every child is fearfully and wonderfully made—and every mind learns, experiences, and engages faith differently. This workshop invites ministry leaders, educators, and volunteers to explore how our educational ministries can better reflect the diversity of God's design.

Session A2: How Do I Choose? Decisions Seniors Need to Make

Rev. Dr. Dave Harris, PCC, MCE is creating communities of audacious love and thriving life, as coach, teacher, and chaplain. Mr. Cameron Prentice, MDiv a hospital chaplain, hospice experienced, & passionate about helping others achieve a 'good death.

Description: How do Seniors and those assisting them, make choices for quality outcomes. Presenters will including your questions and decision topics, on everything from Finances to End of Life Choices.

Session A3: Church Social Media in 2026: A Practical Guide

Pastor Kevin Kresge is a part-time Licensed Local Pastor, full-time marketing director, and musician serving Marticville Church in Lancaster County.

Description: This course is designed to equip churches to use social media effectively in 2026 by focusing on visibility, trust, and human connection. We will teach practical, accessible strategies for posting, images, and video that engage today's online audiences.

Session A4: Lay Leader Roundtable Discussion

Sue Grimm Mattox has served as West District Lay Leader for over 10 years. She is a Christ Servant Minister and often offers messages when asked. She is involved in mission work at Kabala, Sierra Leone; the complex organized by Rev. Dorcas Kamanda.

Description: Session will revolve around answering, "What does a Church Lay Leader Do?" and sharing information and ideas from participants helping each other gain an insight into this vital role in our churches.

Session A5: Worship in Truth and Spirit

Joseph Torres is entering his 21st year as the worship leader for New Creation United Methodist church. He is a graduate of Millersville University and is completing his 18th year as an educator for the School District of Lancaster.

Description: This workshop is designed to equip worship leaders, musicians, and ministry teams with a deeper understanding of worship styles while anchoring every expression in Biblical truth and spiritual authenticity. Together, we will explore how diverse musical and cultural styles—traditional, contemporary, gospel, liturgical, and spontaneous—can all serve as vessels for genuine worship when aligned with God's Word and led by the Holy Spirit.

Session A6: Social Justice & Holiness: Our Faith in Action

The Rev. Peter J Wolfgang Peter served as Lead Pastor at several churches in Ohio before serving as Pastor of Outreach at Community UMC. He earned degrees from NYU and Columbia University and is deeply involved in community ministry with recovering addicts, those returning from carceral environments, the unhoused, and others on the margins of societal power structures. Rev. Jason Perkowski is serving at Faith & Oregon Community UMC. He is passionate about shaping ministry and public policy to better serve all of our neighbors—especially those most frequently harmed by power.

Description: We will explore what it means for the church to advocate for those most in need, to help encourage and empower people to find their own voices, and to be directly involved in service and advocacy as a means to embody our faith and witness.

Session A7: AI in the Pastor's Toolkit: Practical Help for Ministry and Life

Rev. Dr. John A. Laughlin, Sr. has served faithfully in pastoral ministry for 36 years and currently leads Salem United Methodist Church in Manheim. He holds a Doctor of Ministry in Church Leadership, bringing a deep passion for equipping congregations and clergy to serve with clarity, purpose, and practical wisdom.

Description: In this practical, hands-on workshop, pastors will discover how artificial intelligence can become a helpful partner in sermon preparation, pastoral care, leadership, and daily life. Through real examples and simple tools, we'll explore how AI can support your ministry—lightening administrative load, enhancing creativity, and opening new possibilities for communication and outreach. Designed for clergy and laity of all comfort levels with technology, this session focuses on ethical, faithful, and effective ways to use AI without losing the human touch that defines pastoral ministry. Participants will leave with step-by-step prompts, ready-to-use tools, and new confidence in using AI wisely as part of their pastoral toolkit.

Session A8: #Unstoppable United Women in Faith

Tamara Clark is a member of Mid-Town Parish in Philadelphia and Treasurer / Chief Financial Officer for United Women in Faith's National Office.

Description: Women United in Faith are #UNSTOPPABLE. Together we lead change in our local communities to impact the lives of women, children and youth everywhere.

Session A9: Reimagining your Church Space: Being a Good Steward of the Physical Facilities of a Local Church

Jim Anderman is pastor of Palmyra First where the building is in use 6 to 7 days each week.

Description: This workshop will discuss decisions to be if a church wants to be open for new uses, including options for new ministries, rental opportunities, and partnerships with other ministries. It will cover various ways church facilities can be used to generate revenue, publicize ministry, and provide services to the community.

Session A10: One Board to Rule Them All

Rev. Jeff Kapp has had 10 years of experience with the single board model.

Description: One board has potential for great power. But it can be used improperly and be problematic. Explore this alternative to the traditional polity of the local church.

SESSION 2:

Session B11: Orientation to Ministry

Rev. Dr. John A. Laughlin, Sr. serves on the West District Committee on Ministry, where he supports candidates as they explore and discern their call to ordained and licensed ministry. Rev. Dr. Brunilda Martínez serves on the West District Committee on Ministry, where she helps guide and mentor candidates in their exploration of ordained and licensed ministry.

Description: Orientation to Ministry is an introductory course designed to help individuals explore their call to ministry within the United Methodist Church. This class provides an overview of clergy and lay ministry pathways, the theology and polity that shape UMC leadership, and the steps involved in the candidacy and ordination process. Participants gain clarity about their gifts, sense of calling, and next steps as they discern how God may be leading them to serve in the life of the church. This class meets the requirement for those beginning the candidacy process. All participants will receive a certificate for their records.

Session B12: They're Coming Back: Understanding Gen Z, Gen Alpha and the New Landscape of Young People

Rev. Eric Drew is the Conference Director of Young People's Ministry for the Eastern PA & Greater NJ Conferences and helps lead and support conference youth, young adults, college students and those who serve them. Denise Harris has decades of experience as a Youth Minister and is currently serving at Yardley UMC. She believes in the transforming power of our saving LORD and God's detailed plan for every human. Her focus is to meet students where they are in their Spiritual Journey and provide opportunities for them to take the next step closer to God. Rev. Jason Perkowski is serving as pastor at Faith & Oregon Community UMC and has been leading shared Youth Ministries at several local churches for the last 30 years.

Description: We will explore the changing dynamics in the spiritual journeys of our younger generations—and the new ways in which they are connecting with God. We will lay out their strengths, gifts, talents and needs—and how we can redesign our ministries with and for them to be more relational and authentic.

Session B13: Immigration & Social Justice as Ministry

Rev. Mark I. Salvacion is Lead Pastor at St. Luke UMC in Bryn Mawr and Chancellor of the Eastern PA Annual Conference.

Description: “Immigration & Social Justice as Ministry” is a workshop designed for church leaders wishing to grow social justice ministry in their context, using Immigration ministry as an example. The workshop will also cover areas including restorative justice, education equity, neurodivergence, and other ministries.

Session B14: Generosity, Fear, and Faith: Learning to Develop Giving as a Spiritual Practice

Rev. Kent Kroehler is a retired UMC clergy who works at loving Jesus, his partner Joy and family, and mostly everyone God brings into his circles. In his latter years, he focuses on generosity development, South Sudan mission, and the county jail. Rev. Derrick Gutierrez is an FT Licensed Local Pastor serving Covenant UMC in Lancaster City. Prior to being a pastor, he has served in various leadership roles related to finance and capital campaigns in his local church.

Description: This workshop equips church leaders to overcome fear, engage generosity faithfully, and guide honest conversations that shape giving as a life-giving spiritual practice.

Session B15: Flexible Faith Formation: Models Beyond Sunday School

Elizabeth Christie has been working in the field of children's and family ministries for over two decades. She has served in a wide variety of ministry settings as both staff and consultant, and frequently speaks at district, annual conference, and national gatherings of United Methodists. Elizabeth has written resources for Discipleship Ministries, the Breakthrough Sermon Series, and the General Commission on Race and Religion, and she finds great joy in helping make lifelong faith formation transformational for all.

Description: For generations, Sunday school has been a primary space for nurturing faith—but today's families and communities need flexible, creative approaches that meet them where they are. This workshop invites ministry leaders to reimagine faith formation beyond traditional classroom models and explore new ways children grow in faith throughout the week and across different settings.

Session B16: “Beyond a Smile: Living Out Radical Hospitality”

Rev. Jason D. Ríos has been in ministry for 20 years. Jason has served in Puerto Rico, New Jersey, and is currently serving in First UMC Lancaster. Jason has served in multiple committees at the Conference level.

Description: We will explore how the church can share radical hospitality and the impact it can have on people, communities, and beyond.

Session B17: From Ministry to Message: Communicating the Life of Your Church

Rev. Sarah Borgstrom Lee, is the Executive Director of Communications for EPA & GNJ

Description: This workshop will provide practical communication tools to support your church's storytelling and witness. We'll explore a few formats for telling the story of your church's ministry programs and discuss how to engage people effectively in a digital age. You'll leave equipped to share about how your ministry is transforming lives in your faith community and beyond.

Session B18: A Tried-and-True Bible Study Method for Bible Study Leaders “Hook, Book, Look, Took”

Rev. David T. Ryan is an Elder in EPA, now serving as Pastor at Leola UMC and Akron Mt. Zion.

Description: This tried-and-true Bible study method will make planning your Bible study presentation easy. It encourages creativity and will help the lesson “stick” with your participants.

Session B19: The Problem of Pain – Knowing When to Refer

The Rev. Jeff Kapp is an elder serving a local church and extension ministry as a pre-licensed MFT.

Description: Pastoral care through the lens of Abraham's family: when to refer, legal and ethical responsibilities, suicidality, mandated reporting, pre-marital counseling; applying bio-psycho-social-spiritual model, family systems, grief, and trauma insights.

Session B20: Neurodivergence in Leadership: How to Manage Your Own Needs and To Develop a Team that Works Well Across Differences

The Rev. Peter J Wolfgang Peter served as Lead Pastor at several churches in Ohio before serving as Pastor of Outreach at Community UMC. He earned degrees from NYU and Columbia University and is deeply involved in community ministry with recovering addicts, those returning from carceral environments, the unhoused, and others on the margins of societal power structures. The Rev. Bob Garvey is serving Wesley UMC, Strasburg. He grew up in Millersville and graduated from Penn Manor. He had a 20-year career in corporate sales, and now finds deep satisfaction teaching and preaching God's Word and introducing people to Jesus. He is a graduate of Cornell University (BS) and Lancaster Theological Seminary (MDiv) and enjoys reading, jiu jitsu, and rugby.

Description: We will explore neurodiversity in leaders—laity and clergy. This will include ways people can be effective in their own ways of understanding and working in the world as well as ways to develop teams for church ministry that are able to work well across differences.