



United Methodist Church Westlake Village

Covenant

The mission of the Church is to make, mature and mobilize disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

Volume 2024, Issue 12

December 2024

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: December 2024



Pastor Darren

'Tis the Season(s)

We know it's coming because we see the displays in all the stores and on DIY sites. Christmas is coming! Halloween did a pretty good job of keeping our attention. But poor Thanksgiving doesn't stand much of a chance. (You can only advertise turkey and stuffing so much). But

Christmas is coming, that's for sure.

In the church we call this season Advent, not Christmas. Christmas is actually the season that starts on Christmas day. It lasts for 12 days, commemorating what we understand as the time it took the magi to find their way to the nativity setting. Advent itself is actually about 'preparation.' During the four weeks leading up to Christmas we look to 'prepare' ourselves for Christ's birth. The hope is that Christ's birth will be all the more meaningful the more we can focus on what it has meant, not just today, but for 2000 years.

Here lies the difficulty for the pastor. For the world around us, Christmas starts mildly around mid October, hits a stride the second we get past Thanksgiving, reaches a peak somewhere near the day itself, then finds a nice couch to sit on for a week. So, right when we're getting ready to enjoy the celebration, the world around us is putting things back in boxes. Interesting, huh?

Through it all, there is one main goal that remains, no matter the culture... We want Christmas to be meaningful; maybe even life changing. For Christians, the day of Christ's birth is when we realize the depth of love God has for us. The understanding is that God sends a beloved child so that we might know that love more deeply; this is what we celebrate through advent and Christmas.

I pray that this season awakens you to a new understanding of God that finds its way deep into your heart. May the season be one of love, and of sharing that love!



Come, Let Us Adore Him

The Season of Advent is one of the highlights of the Christian Year. With this season, we launch another cycle of living into the story of Jesus and the church that emerges—and of which we are a part. We sometimes think we need to find a new way of telling this story and do something fresh and unique. There is certainly space for that, but tradition and remember-

ing the songs and stories from our beginnings can be a powerful invitation to grow as disciples as we grow closer to Christ. So, I invite our church community to consider the *Preparations* and the *Passion of Advent* so that we might embrace the *Presence* and *Promise of the Christ who comes*. And through it all, we will gather to worship. **So, come, let us adore him!**

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

By Carol Ames, Communications Coordinator

“**Closer to the Heart of God**” was the theme of the **Women’s Retreat** held in Alton Hall on Sat., Nov. 2. Led by two of our former pastors, Rachel and Kristi, it was six hours of fellowship, reflection and spiritual growth for the 40 women who participated. Included were creating a couple of crafts, availability of a prayer or meditation room, and chair massages for those who wanted them, as well as breakfast and lunch.



Women’s Retreat in Alton Hall

Children’s choirs participated in worship during the month of November. Katie’s “As One Harmony” choir sang and Katy’s Chimes Choir made its debut. During **Sunday School** on Nov. 10, the children wrote letters to military troops overseas, in honor of Veteran’s Day.



Children’s choirs & Sunday School classes

November 10 was a busy Sunday, especially following worship. The **Crafty Ladies** were set up under the Alton Hall eaves to sell Fall and holiday décor and gifts that they have been busy making during the past few months. Inside Alton Hall, **Women’s Ministry** had its annual **Soup & Pie Luncheon**, always a delicious treat with several varieties of soups and pies available from which to choose. Also, the **Missions Committee** had the kick-off of its “Share the Joy” **Christmas Gift Market** on the patio. It will be available each Sunday until Christmas.



Crafty Ladies’ Sale and Soup & Pie Luncheon



Christmas Gift Market table on the patio

Village Voices Chorale

presents

Spirit of the Season



UMCWV Covenant Ringers will be playing in these concerts.

Dec. 6, 8:00pm – Dec. 7, 2:30pm

Gloria Hilliard, Director
Christine DeKlotz, Accompanist

**Bank of America Performing Arts Center
Scherr Forum Theatre – 2100 E. T.O. Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, California**

*Cash-only Opportunity Drawing (at intermission)
—exciting themed baskets!—*

Tickets: (\$30) call box office (805) 449-2787,
Village Voices (805) 501-7341, or visit our website

Get tickets, more info, & support us at

villagevoices.org



The Chancel Choir, directed by Gloria Hilliard, presents:

Appalachian Winter

*A Cantata for Christmas
by Joseph M. Martin
Sunday, December 15
10:00 worship service*

*The Chancel Choir will be accompanied by flute, violin, cello,
mandolin, guitar, percussion and piano.*

Appalachian Winter celebrates the legacy of early American carols & combines traditional sounds with more rustic elements, creating a blend that is fresh and pleasing. Thoughtful narration weaves the movements together in a meaningful tapestry of song and scripture.



Advent Celebration & Christmas Concert

Enjoy the singing of carols and music presented by all of our choirs

***December 8
4:00-6:00pm***

***Crafts for Children &
Snacks at 3:15pm***

Lasagna Dinner Served in Alton Hall at 5:15pm

Following the ceremonial lighting of the outdoor nativity scene

Experience the joy of the Christmas season!



***A freewill offering for the lasagna, beverages and paper products will be taken.
Last names A-N: Please bring a salad or side dish to share. Last names O-Z: Please bring a ready-to-eat dessert to share. Food should be dropped off in the kitchen before the concert begins. Please be sure the food items are ready to be served, i.e. mixed together or cut in serving-size pieces.***

Christmas Gift Market

SUPER SALE

Sunday December 8
After worship

On the Patio

Baked goods, Gift cards, Ornaments & more!

Offered by Missions Committee

Proceeds benefit Church World Service



Poinsettia Dedications



Decorate our altar & Chancel for Christmas

*Purchase a Poinsettia(s) in honor or memory of a loved one,
or to celebrate of a special event - \$15 each*

Dedication forms in the Narthex or email Vinia@umcwg.org

Submit your dedications by Monday Dec. 16.



*Pay by check to UMCWV, poinsettias in memo line
or online UMCWV.org poinsettias fund*



Christmas Eve Services at UMCWV



COME, LET US
Adore Him

Christmas Eve Services Times At UMCWV Tues Dec 24
4:00 P.M. Family Service with Children's Pageant
7:00 P.M. Traditional Service with Choirs & Instrumentals -
This service will be live streamed

Enjoy the UMCWV tradition of Cocoa and Carols!



COCOA AND
CAROLS
SUNDAY 12/29 10 A.M. IN ALTON HALL
Casual Attire

December Mission Moment



The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great JOY for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

(Luke 2:10-11)

Christmas is coming...and soon the joy of the season will be upon us! We see it, feel it, hear it. But what about those who are struggling and don't see, feel, or hear the joy as we do? Perhaps they cannot pay for the medical care they need. Or they do not have income resources, food, shelter, clean water or access to education.

The **UMCWV Christmas Gift Market** continues until Christmas. It gives an opportunity to help families thrive here at home and around the world with gifts

of healthcare, farming needs, clean water, education, income resources, and so much more!

The organizations featured in this year's Gift Market include Westminster Free Clinic (it now has three

Locations, including Thousand Oaks), Church World Service (worldwide), and Heifer International (worldwide). New this year is Thrive Grove Navigation Center (Thousand Oaks). It is a collaborative project with Many Mansions, the City of Thousand Oaks, and Ventura County to get the unhoused off the streets and into dignified, individual mini-shelters with the goal of moving on to affordable housing.

The Mission Moment for December continues with the Christmas Gift Market. The shopping list was mailed to you in November. You can visit our table on the patio every Sunday after church. For each gift chosen, you will receive a holiday card with an insert that describes the gift. Family, friends and colleagues will be thrilled to receive the card with a unique "gift" inside!

On December 8 there will be the **Christmas Market Super Sale** on the church patio. At the Super Sale for every \$5 donation you can choose a hand-painted ornament, gift tag, baked goods and more! Proceeds go to Church World Service.

HOLIDAY HELPERS



Do you enjoy shopping for kids at Christmas time? Join **Many Mansions Holiday Helpers** program and make a difference in the lives of local families. There are two ways to shop:

1. Click on the *Children's Most Requested Gift* link, shop, and bring unwrapped gifts to church. Gifts will be delivered to Many Mansions for you.

[Children's Most Requested Gift List](#) for gift ideas.

OR

2. Go to *Amazon Wish List* link and purchase gift(s). They will be sent to Many Mansions directly. Shop early so gifts will arrive on time. [Amazon Wish List](#).

LIVING FAITH. SEEKING JUSTICE. PURSUING PEACE.

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

A letter from Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, UMC Church and Society

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

— Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

Dear Siblings in Christ,

With the election . . . (over) we once again reflect on what it means to live as disciples in a complex and diverse nation. Our communities are beautifully interwoven with individuals from varied backgrounds, perspectives, and stories. In such times, we are called not to retreat into division, but to step forward as agents of peace, advocates for justice, and builders of a beloved community grounded in equity, compassion, and understanding. This call to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God,” as the prophet Micah reminds us, transcends any political administration and challenges us to embody God's love in all we do.

Our mission to work for racial justice, intercultural understanding, and inclusion remains constant—not rooted in any political moment, but in the unchanging call of our faith. This journey brings us closer to the kind of world God envisions—a world where every person is valued and loved, where dignity is upheld, and where the full beauty of our diversity is celebrated. As people of faith, we recognize that building an inclusive society is not only our responsibility but a holy calling. . . .

We urge you, our United Methodist family, to stand together in the pursuit of a just world. May our churches be spaces of welcome, where each voice is

heard and where God's love is evident in our actions and advocacy. Let us build bridges that connect rather than walls that divide, honoring the God-given worth of every individual and embracing the beauty of our differences.

This work is challenging, but it is rich with the promise of transformation, hope, and healing. Let us keep our hearts set on Christ's example of radical love and inclusivity, allowing His Spirit to guide us as we move forward together.

May we continue to walk boldly toward justice, proclaiming in word and deed that all are created in God's image, deserving of respect, dignity, and care. May we reflect the hope and love found in Christ, who knows, understands, and loves each of us deeply. And may we find strength in God's call to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly,” allowing this truth to shape our lives, our communities, and our world.

In Christ's peace and justice,

Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo
General Secretary
General Commission on Religion and Race of The
United Methodist Church

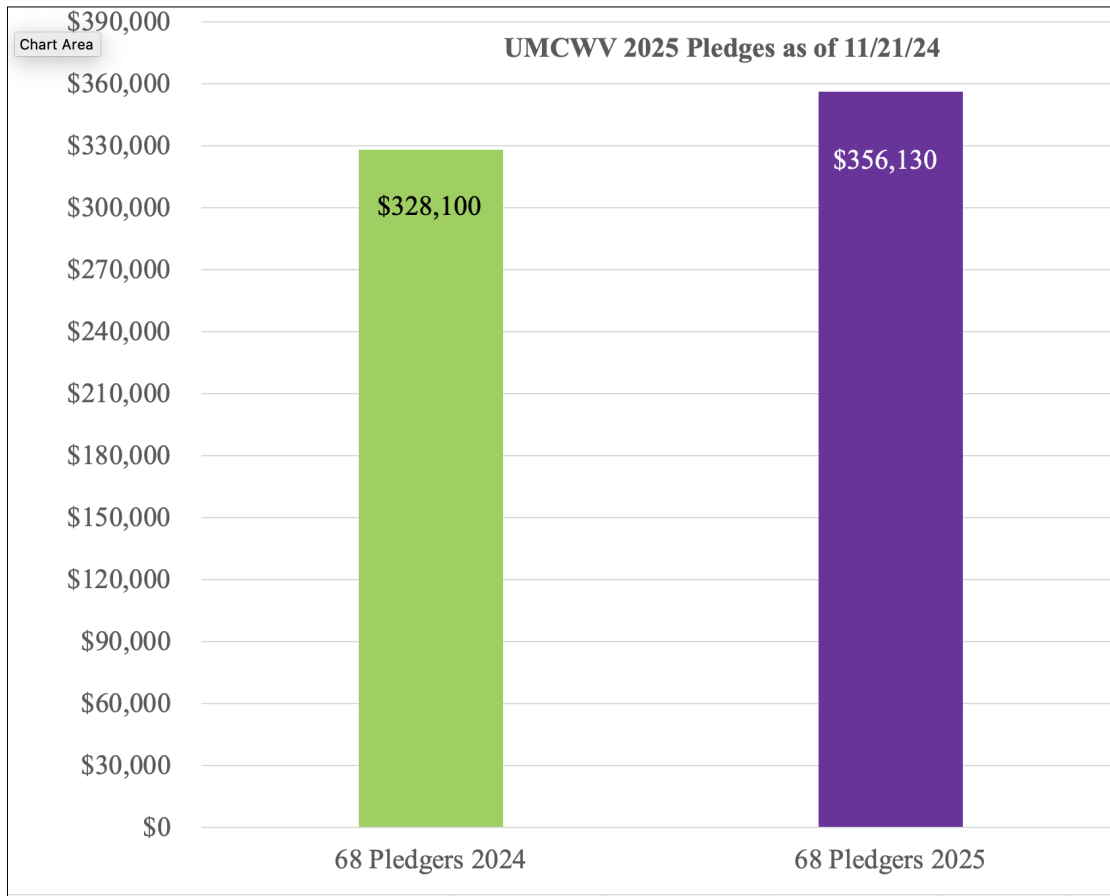


**Non-perishable
food
drop off available
every
Sunday!**

Stewardship Campaign 2025 Update



*It is not too late to pledge your support to the church and its ministries in 2025!
There are pledge cards in the Narthex and the church office.
You can also email your pledge to vinia@umcww.org.*



HOLIDAY CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

OFFICE CLOSED
WED. DEC 25 & THU. DEC 26
FOR CHRISTMAS
&
WED. JAN 1, NEW YEAR'S DAY



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

MORAVEC, Fred & Nancy	12/02
KATZ, Andrew & Caitlin	12/13
MEAD, Dick & Charlotte	12/19
STUART, Greg & Elaine	12/31

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

LOEB, Wayne	12/02
HENDERSON, Jane	12/05
HERBST DE CORTINA, Galen	12/07
MENGES, Michelle	12/09
HOLM-ARMETTA, Denise	12/12
BRANDON, Sylvia Ann	12/15
DOUGLASS, Laney	12/16
COOPER, Carolyn	12/17
FEY, Katie	12/20
KATZ, Andrew	12/24
DESANTIS, Samantha	12/27
HILLIARD, Gloria	12/27
VAN DYKE, Karleen	12/28
BRUBAKER, Roy	12/29
FACCONE, Cindy	12/29
PETRUSSON, Grant	12/30
STULL, Norma	12/31



TREASURER'S REPORT

Oct 2024 Income:	\$67,646
Oct 2024 Expenses:	\$92,918
Fiscal YTD Income:	\$500,193
Fiscal YTD Expenses:	\$555,662

Finance Corner

ATTENDANCE

	In-Person	YouTube	Total
Oct. 6	96	32	128
Oct. 13	85	49	134
Oct. 20	74	57	131
Oct. 27	102	62	164

October YouTube totals are taken as of 11/25/2024.

Q: I would like to donate online and also set up recurring automatic donations to fulfill my pledge. How

A: There are 2 ways to donate online. You can set up your online account from your computer or you can install the App on your phone. From your computer go to UMCWV.org and scroll down to the Donate button. Written or Verbal instructions can be provided by the Financial Secretary upon request. Thank you for your ongoing generosity to the ministries of the United Methodist Church Westlake Village (UMCWV).



Ministries of the church happen through the faithful efforts of its lay people.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Chair: Rick Schroeder

OFFICERS

Lay Leader:.....Jeanie Severance
Lay Delegates to Annual Conference:..... Boyd Donavon, Candice Shehorn,
John Shehorn, Rick Schroeder
Treasurer:.....Lee Friel
Assistant Treasurer:.....John Shehorn
Financial Secretary: Agnes Dougherty
Church Historian Carol Ames

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Communications:..... Carol Ames
Finance: John Shehorn
Foundation: Don Phillipson
Nominations: Pastor Darren
Staff Parish Relations:..... Phyllis Marbach
Stewardship..... John Shehorn
Trustees Mike Stone

PROGRAMMATIC COMMITTEES

Christian Education.....Amy Comparato
Growing Place.....Tom Sutphen
Conejo ConnectRick Schroeder
Membership Care.....Jeanie Severance
Membership Growth
Missions Committee Cathie Loeb
Music..... Barbara Ghosh & Carol Ames
Social Concerns CommitteeChris & Kitty Soltow

AGE-LEVEL MINISTRIES

Family Ministries:
Men's Ministries: Tom Hopkins
Women's Ministries:..... Candice Shehorn

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Clergy..... Pastor Darren
Youth Rep
General Nancy Moravec, David Keddle, Boyd Donavon



STAFF - PARISH RELATIONS

SPRC is always interested in hearing from our Church Family. You may e-mail members at SPRC@umcww.org, contact the chair, Phyllis Marbach, through the church office or attend one of its upcoming meetings for a brief discussion time.

S
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Phyllis Marbach, chair
Doug Menges
Tom Sutphen

} 2024

Polly Tattersall Martin
Jan Sorenson
Cindy Faccone

} 2025

Roz Thebaud
Candi Wilcox
Linda Northrup

} 2026

COVENANT DEADLINE
For January : Noon December 15

Senior Pastor: Rev. Darren Cowdrey
revdarren@umcww.org

Director of Children & Youth Ministries:
Charissa Birmingham
charissaumcww@gmail.com

Administrative Director: Vinia Pavlath
vinia@umcww.org

Media Tech: Kallie Smith

Director of Music: Gloria Hilliard
gloria@umcww.org

Organist: Jenny Lee
jenny@umcww.org

Bell Choir Director: Nick Newkirk
NNewkirk49@yahoo.com

Chimes Choir Director: Katy Herbst de Cortina

Treasurer: Leroy Friel

Financial Secretary: Agnes Dougherty

Kids Zone Attendant: Aurora Smith

The Growing Place Preschool
Director: Jen Sorenson



Resident Bishop:
Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo-Frank

North District Superintendent:
Rev. Garth Gilliam

Office Phone:
805-497-7884



Welcome!

*Join Us For Worship Each Sunday
At 10 a.m.*

*In-person worship is available in the
sanctuary.*

Or

*Join us for the online service live at 10 a.m.
each Sunday at umcww.org - or watch it
later on our website or YouTube.*

*Check website for additional details or
changes in scheduling.*

*UMCWW continues to thrive.
To see ways you can be a part of our
community, go to umcww.org*



Setting a Course for a Better Life

United Methodist Church
Westlake Village