



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 2025, Issue 1

January 2025

## PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: New Year's Resolutions!



Pastor Darren

Greetings of the new year to you! I pray that God's blessings find you throughout 2025! I know that God has been blessing me as I journey with you in faith. I've also felt God's presence with our church as we look to a future in the Conejo Valley. You may be the type to look at new year's resolutions each year. In that spirit

I've been reflecting on the ways that we can support the church in its journey forward. Maybe there's room for a resolution or two in this area?

Yes, I know that we often talk about support in terms of financial gifts. But we should also think in terms of time. As we reflect on our presence in worship, at events, and with commitments to social justice; we should see that these are gifts of time and energy that we offer to God through the church. It's just nice that this presence blesses us, too. So, with the new year at hand I thought I might map out some of the ways to live out our faith in ways that bless our church.

First of all, you may be thinking that the best ways to support the church are community based. I might argue that the more important support is personal. A key way to be supportive of the church is in praying for us. That time in reflection helps us to clarify in our minds the direction where God is actually calling us to share our hearts. I can't over-value that kind of regular soul nourishing.

Second, be intentional about your own walk with God. We seek deeper connection to the creator of the world around us. This is not a relationship that tends itself. We need to be intentional about living out, as best we're able, the life and love we've been given to live out. Yes, I would expect that much of that faith gets lived out here at UMCWV. But the integrity of our faith actions goes right to our own spiritual health. We need to be who we say we are!

A third way to be supportive *is more community based. We often dismiss sharing our faith as manipulative. But we do that at the expense of our own message to share. There's nothing wrong with a humble explanation of what has brought meaning and love to your life. Granted, we should recognize that not everyone is interested in our particular pathway to God. At the same time, not to share for fear of manipulating others has its cost, too. The key word here might be humility.*

Again, I pray that you're looking with eager anticipation for the ways that God will engage us this year. Not only that, I hope that you're excited to share about all that God is already doing! Have a blessed 2025!



# Welcome 2025

# MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

By Carol Ames, Communications Coordinator

December seems to always be a busy month in our lives – as individuals, families and the UMCWV family. Last month during the **Advent and Christmas season** was no exception, as these photo collages and descriptions show. Thank you to all who helped set up the creche, decorate the church, support mission outreach, share their music talent, and/or came to enjoy concerts, the *Appalachian Winter* cantata and worship services on Sundays and Christmas Eve.



The **Hanging of the Greens** on Nov. 30 had another small group of people decorating the church for Christmas. Shown here are “in progress” and “finished” photos of the narthex tree, Tech Team area, choir loft and altar areas.



The Covenant Ringers played in the Village Voices Concerts on Dec. 6 & 7 at the Scherr Forum. Gloria Hilliard directs this community chorale and invites Nick and the handbells to participate every few years. They played at the beginning of the program and right after intermission.



The Missions Committee had its Christmas Market Super Sale on the patio after worship on Dec. 8. Funds raised go to support Church World Service.

The children’s and adult vocal and chime/bell choirs participated in the **Christmas Concert & Advent Celebration** the afternoon of Dec. 8. Four soloists also sang and the audience had the opportunity to sing carols as well. Refreshments and craft activities were available on the patio before the program. Following the concert, the creche on the corner was ceremoniously lit and a lasagna dinner was served in Alton Hall. Many thanks to all who helped setup, clean up, shop, decorate, provide crafts, serve refreshments and dinner, bake lasagnas, and bring food to go with the lasagna. *It takes a village to make this event happen!*



Tom was brave to climb a tall ladder and change a spotlight bulb in the sanctuary. Tim also got up high on the roof to hang the star for the **creche scene**. Others in the photos helped set up the rest of the creche’s pieces on Nov. 29.



Katie’s As One Harmony Children’s choirs sang, Katy’s Chimes Choir and Nick’s Tintinnabulators bell choir participated in the concert.

The Covenant Ringers, Fisherman, Chancel Choir and soloists Joseph, Nick, Simone and Katie participated in the Christmas concert.



People gathered to watch the Ceremonial lighting of the creche and then enjoyed dinner in Alton Hall.



Crafts and refreshments on the patio before the Christmas concert, while various groups were rehearsing



The Chancel Choir and instrumentalists presented the *Appalachian Winter* cantata during 10 a.m. worship on Dec. 15. Don and Linda were the narrators, Linda and Simone sang solos, Jenny accompanied on piano and Pastor Darren thanked Gloria for a job well done.



**As One Harmony** presented its first concert the afternoon of Dec. 15. The participants' parents did an amazing job of decorating just about every space in Alton Hall. Tim was the drummer and a small group sang a few songs from the recent Village Voices concert in between the different groups of kids singing. Donations were requested at the door.



Gloria, Carol, Jan and Phyllis went caroling for three former choir members the afternoon of Dec. 21. Barry joined us as we sang for his wife Sandra and others at her Board and Care residence. The small group then sang for Jane B. and others at her Board and Care house. The last stop on the itinerary was

Laurel Heights Assisted Living in Moorpark where Jane C. joined the singers and several residents gathered to listen and sing along.



The 4 p.m. Family Service on Christmas Eve: Lighting the Advent Wreath candles, children singing, and the children's nativity tableau. The Cowdrey's son Joseph portrayed Joseph & their daughter Miranda was Mary in the tableau.



Music and candlelight were featured at the 7 p.m. service on Christmas Eve. The Chancel and Covenant Ringers participated, as well as Nick singing *O Holy Night* with Kayla signing; Kayla also played flute with the choir. Linda & Katy were liturgists.



The casual worship service on Dec. 29 was attended by about 45 people who enjoyed **Cocoa, Cookies & Carols** in Alton Hall. Joseph Cowdrey also sang *O Holy Night*.

*Thank you to Brenda and the Cowdrey family for all of the goodies!*

The **Crafty Ladies** meet at 10:30 a.m. on Thursdays in Alton Hall's Wesley Fireside Room. They not only work on craft projects, but visit and share fellowship with each other. *These ladies would love to have you join them, even if you don't think you are very crafty!* This group has gotten smaller as some former members have moved away or are no longer able to participate for other reasons. For more information, email Abbie Fenton: [abbiefen22@gmail.com](mailto:abbiefen22@gmail.com).

*Why not make a New Year's Resolution to try something new?*



# UMCWV MINISTRY 2025



## **2025 UMCWV MINISTRY SUMMIT SAT. JAN 11, 9-NOON IN ALTON HALL**

***A continental breakfast will be served.***

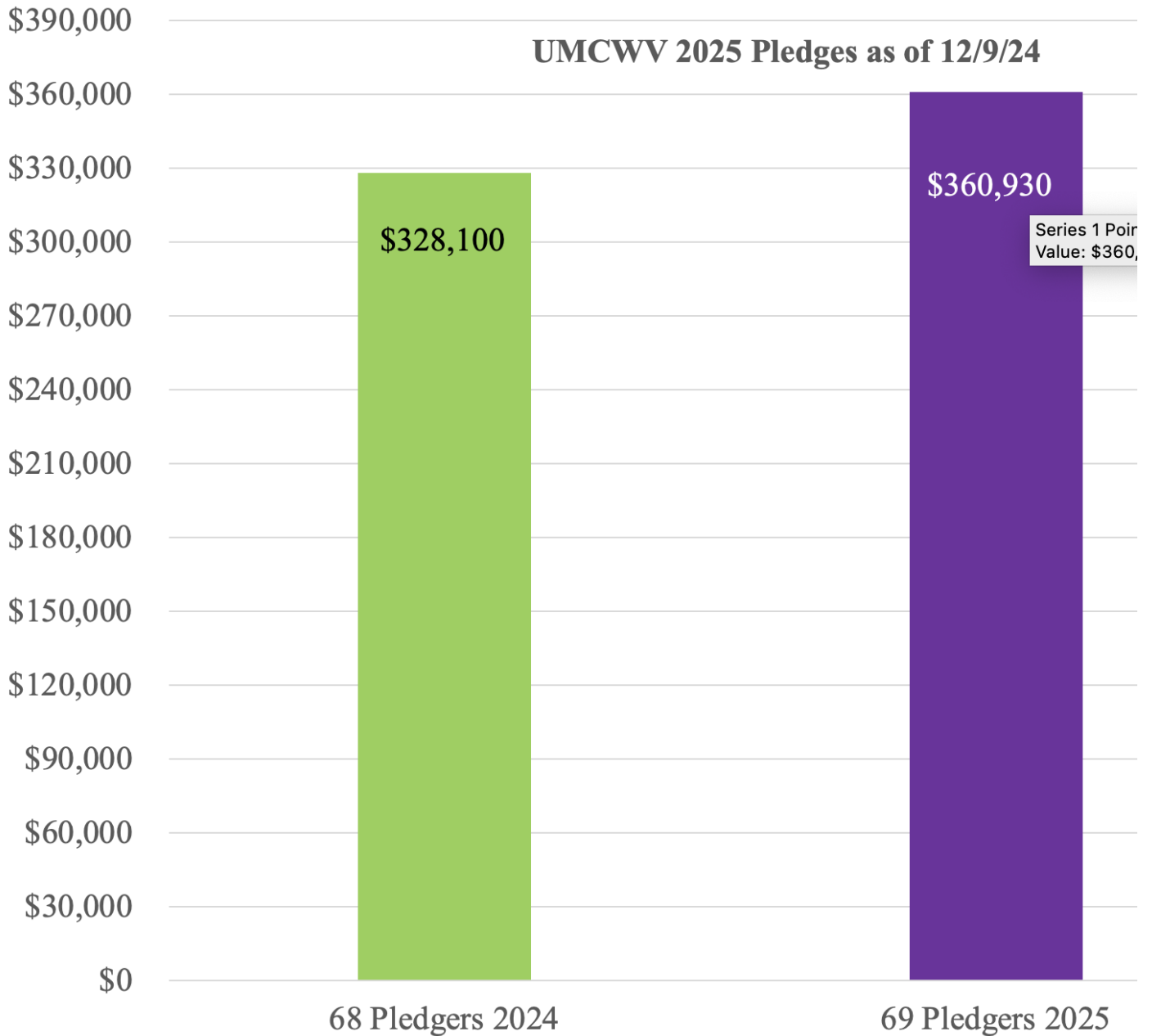
***Everyone is invited to participate***

LET'S MAKE 2025 GREAT!

Parent Planning Meeting  
for Families with Children in Sunday School  
Sunday January 12  
After Worship  
in Alton Hall

2025

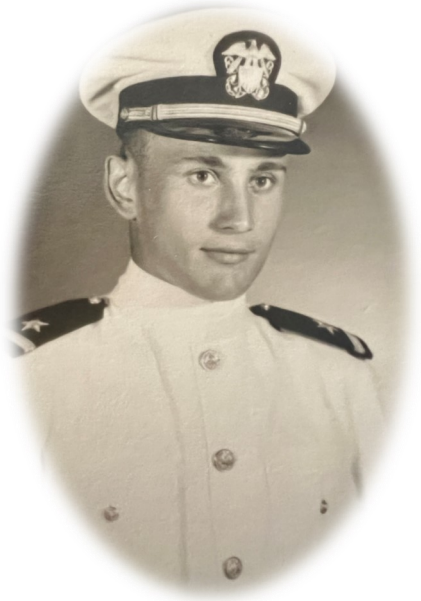
## Stewardship Campaign 2025



*We had a very successful Stewardship campaign with increases in number of pledges and in total dollars pledged, as compared to 2024! (The numbers above are current on 12/31/24.)*

*Thank you to all who were led to pledge your support of UMCWV's ministries in the new year!!*

*Don Chapman*



*July 25, 1934 - November 2, 2024*

*Celebration Of Life*

*Sat, Jan 18, 1 p.m., UMCWV Sanctuary  
Reception in Alton Hall  
After the service*



Martin Luther King Jr. was a social activist and Baptist minister who played a key role in the American civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. King sought equality and human rights through peaceful protest for African Americans, the economically disadvantaged and all victims of injustice.

King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and is remembered each year on [Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#), a U.S. federal holiday since 1986.

*Now you can donate with Apple Pay!*




**ANOTHER WAY TO GIVE...**

QR Code will direct you to [Tithley.com](https://tithley.com) our online donation service.

**GO TO Add Payments and you can donate via Apple Pay**




*Slide on Screen*



For your convenience .....

At UMCWV we believe Jesus came to teach us how to live, and live well. This is why we are "Setting Course" to the that better life; for our community and our church. If you'd like to join us and support this journey, you can use the above QR code, to donate as you feel led.

We thank you in Advance



*Donation card in the pews*

LIVING FAITH. SEEKING JUSTICE. PURSUING PEACE.

## SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The Social Concerns Committee would like to thank the congregation for your support for our classes and book studies in 2024, including Israel/Gaza, Christian Nationalism and the League of Women Voters. We look forward to offering more in 2025.

included furniture, Welcome Kit supplies, financial assistance and "muscle" in helping to collect and deliver furniture. You have enriched the lives of many families from Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries.

We also appreciate the support for refugees by your gifts to the Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team. These

Thank you and HAPPY NEW YEAR



You can also email the church office with the date you would like to reserve for flowers. You can pay with a check to UMCWV with Altar flowers on the memo line or pay online at UMCWV.org by going to donate and the fund name is Altar flowers.

If you have a special request for type of flower or colors, please let us know and we will try to accommodate.

The Flower Team!

*Cathie Seabury is moving to University Village. Below are pictures of the furniture she is selling to downsize. Contact her by email if you are interested in any of the furniture for you, your kids, grandkids.*

[Cseab1@roadrunner.com](mailto:Cseab1@roadrunner.com)





## January Mission Moment

### Casa Pacifica Transitional Youth Services

- In California, close to 31% of transition-age foster youth (ages 18-25) experience homelessness.
- One in five homeless youth is a human trafficking victim.
- Of the youth who age out of foster care, an estimated 25% will be involved in the justice system.

*These are some awesome statistics!* These young people often face daunting challenges as they strive for independence. Prolonged instability and a lack of strong family and community connections can leave many young people struggling to find their footing. The threat of homelessness and the fear of isolation, along with financial insecurity, can impact their ability to build a healthy future. Recognizing their unique needs, Casa Pacifica has expanded their programs to include stable housing and supportive services specifically tailored to aid in the journey to adulthood for transitional-age youth.

Your generosity is instrumental in making this possible. Casa Pacifica offers a newly refurbished place to live, access to education, employ-

ment training, mental health services and life skills development for these vulnerable youth so they will not be a burden on our community.

Casa Pacifica recently completed a 6-month renovation of three of its campus cottages to create 27 units specifically designed for at-risk young adults, ages 18-25, who have touched the foster care/probation system or are at high risk of homelessness. The new suites can accommodate both individuals and single parents and families. The fully furnished cottages feature nine bedrooms along with a shared kitchen, laundry and common area. Ask any of our congregants who attended the tour of these cottages in October about the warm and communal atmosphere that has been created there.

Each of the cottages' kitchens and common areas need to be outfitted with basic living essentials that will help the residents learn how to thrive in the community. Casa Pacifica believes it is important to create a clean, lovely, functional environment where youth can feel "at home." Help us fulfill this need. Casa Pacifica's TYS program is the vital step in the life of a young adult at-risk. Your generosity can help them succeed. They thank you for your consideration.



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



**2025: The Year of The Snake**



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

SELLERS, Mike & Joyce 01/13  
 STULL, Richard & Norma 01/18



**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Nov 2024 Income:	\$56,343
Nov 2024 Expenses:	\$50,581
Fiscal YTD Income:	\$556,536
Fiscal YTD Expenses:	\$605,519
Retained Earnings YTD (Nov. 30):	<b>-\$48,983</b>

**ATTENDANCE**

	In-Person	YouTube	Total
Nov. 3	116	65	181
Nov. 10	132	50	182
Nov. 17	103	22	125
Nov. 25	85	**	85

November YouTube totals are taken as of 12/30/2024.

\*\* Technical issues so no livestream on 11/25

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

AMES, Carol 01/01  
 DISNEY, Linda 01/01  
 KULPACA, Nancy 01/01  
 HILLIARD, Mike 01/03  
 STONE, Michael 01/03  
 DONALSON, Joanie 01/08  
 MENGES III, John 01/08  
 COMPARATO, Charles 01/10  
 PHILLIPSON, Don 01/14  
 HARRISON, Carolyn 01/15  
 BONDS, Christine 01/16  
 CHAPMAN, Jane 01/16  
 LAMPE, Cindy 01/17  
 FREDERICKS, Carol 01/18  
 DOKKEN, Lynn 01/19  
 DOKKEN, John 01/20  
 MARTIN, Polly 01/20  
 SELLERS, Mike 01/22  
 YOUNG, Robert 01/22  
 JUDD-NEWKIRK, Susanna 01/23  
 WILCOX, John 01/24  
 HOPKINS, Tom 01/27  
 KEDDLE, David 01/27

**Finance Corner**

**Q.** What is a Qualified Charitable Contribution (QCD)? Can I specify which UMCWV funds I would like my QCD to be allocated to?

**A.** A Qualified Charitable Contribution (QCD) is a distribution made from an Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA) to an eligible charitable organization, such as UMCWV. The distribution must be made payable to the charity. If you receive your distribution check made payable to UMCWV before sending or giving the check to the UMCWV church office, you may wish to write in the memo section of the check all of the funds and amounts you wish your allocation to go to. For example, Operating Budget fund #101, Apportionments fund #112. You may also provide a note to the church office about your allocation wishes.

The QCD option is available regardless of whether an eligible IRA owner itemizes deductions on [Schedule A](#). The distributions are not taxable, and no deduction for it may be taken.

Please check with your tax advisor or financial consultant to ensure that you meet the requirements for giving a QCD.

*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,  
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:..... (Chair elected in Jan. 2025)  
Stewardship ..... John Shehorn  
Trustees ..... (Chair elected in Jan. 2025)

**PROGRAMMATIC COMMITTEES**

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



# STAFF - PARISH RELATIONS

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

**S**  
**P**  
**R**  
**C**

Cindy Faccone  
Jan Sorenson  
Polly Tattersall Martin

} 2025

Roz Thebaud  
Candi Wilcox  
Linda Northrup

} 2026

Janet Todd  
Wayne Loeb

} 2027

**COVENANT DEADLINE**  
**For February : Noon Janurary 15**

**Senior Pastor:** Rev. Darren Cowdrey  
[revdarren@umcww.org](mailto:revdarren@umcww.org)

**Director of Children & Youth Ministries:**  
Charissa Birmingham  
[charissaumcww@gmail.com](mailto:charissaumcww@gmail.com)

**Administrative Director:** Vinia Pavlath  
[vinia@umcww.org](mailto:vinia@umcww.org)

**Media Tech:** Kallie Smith

**Director of Music:** Gloria Hilliard  
[gloria@umcww.org](mailto:gloria@umcww.org)

**Organist:** Jenny Lee  
[jenny@umcww.org](mailto:jenny@umcww.org)

**Bell Choir Director:** Nick Newkirk  
[NNewkirk49@yahoo.com](mailto: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 Sorensson



**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](http://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](http://umcww.org)*



*Setting a Course for a Better Life*

United Methodist Church  
Westlake Village