



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 7

July 2025

## PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: A Dispatch at Year One...



Pastor Darren

Well..., one full year! I've been with UMCWV for a year now. What a whirlwind! It's interesting to take yourself back to those initial feelings when I first got here.

It was mostly questions at that stage. Who are these people?

What are their hopes and dreams? What feeds their faith? I remember starting with a series on hope for worship. I think we've found our way to a certain amount of that; a vision for a future with God, working on a role to play in the community. We are blessed!

In that vein, I've been working with church leadership on a restructuring. I think there are some ways we can streamline our overall church decision-making as well as get some key people in the room together to map out ministry. Keep your ears (and minds) open as we start to put some of this in front of the larger leadership this summer.

This July is a mix of summer chilling and wild activity! Pizazz, our music camp, is always the high point of the summer at UMCWV. We love when the buildings get full of young spirit and energy! If you haven't found a role to play and a reason to be there, talk to the leaders about getting one. *I hear they need volunteers.*

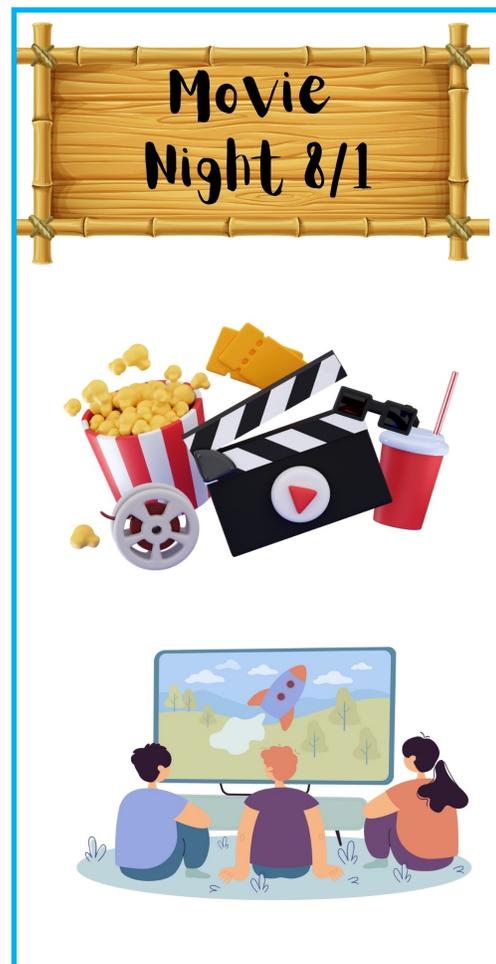
In worship we'll have a short series with Galatians - including a patriotic nod on July 6. It's in this early letter of Paul's that his thoughts on grace are forming. You may also appreciate his focus on the "fruits of the spirit."

You won't want to miss worship on July 13, with our guest preacher working from the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. Pastor Gary Keene is originally from Michigan. He's served in the UMC as a pastor in a variety of churches, and for over two decades as a regional church executive in Montana, Colorado, and California. Active in camping and outdoor ministries, he also served as an author, teacher and seminar leader at the national level. He is retired and currently lives in Ventura.

Finally, Charissa and I have set a date for a summer movie night, August 1. This one is for young families (and everyone else). We're screening Disney's "Lilo and Stitch." You may have seen the animated version from 2002. You may have also seen the live action version that was released this summer. Both are good. I've loved its focus on what we Christians call grace. I think you will, too. We'll serve a simple dinner with some movie treats as well. *Be sure to join us!*

*Grace and Peace,*

*Pastor Darren*



Save the Date!! Details coming soon !!

# MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Carol Ames, Communications Coordinator

With end-of-school activities and the beginning of summer, June is always a busy month – including in the life of the congregation at UMCWV. The highlight of worship on June 1 was **honoring graduates** in the congregation and **giving out scholarships** (for \$1,000 each) from four funds that have a long history within the church. Three of the four scholarship recipients were present in the worship service to be congratulated; Eder Poot was unable to attend but a recent photo of him is included in the collage. If you missed that service, be sure to watch it on YouTube to hear about these amazing scholarship recipients and their future plans. There were probably more graduates from elementary, junior high, high school or college, but their families need to notify the church office for them to be included.



Scholarship recipients & presenters; graduates

UMCWV was well represented at the **Flag Day and the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Army** at the **Janss Mall** in Thousand Oaks on June 14. A quartet from our Chancel Choir (Tim Bonds, Tom Sutphen, Joyce Petersons & Linda Archie) sang *You're a Grand Old Flag* and *God Bless the USA*. Former pastor Gary Dickey also participated.



Christy, Laney & Macey enjoying Flag Day program



Saturday Night Suppers in Alton Hall

**Saturday Night Suppers** on June 7 was hosted by Brenda Cowdrey and Linda Northrup, with a summer picnic food theme. Included in the well-attended event were fun, food and fellowship. Pastor Darren led the group in a game of Bible trivia, with each table participating as a team. A tie-breaker question (how many verses are in the Bible?) was needed for two tables who got 100% initial scores. *Can you answer that question?*



**Pentecost Sunday** was filled with activities during worship! Candi created a beautiful altar arrangement for the day, the choirs and a few other people were dressed in red, the children sang – with Katy directing, Linda accompanying on piano and Kayla playing flute. With Linda Northrup and David Schlueter moving to Wyoming the following week, she gave the message and he was liturgist. Five new members were welcomed into the congregation, with Pastor Darren's wife Brenda and mom Jerry among them. The other three are introduced in the photo collage. At the end of the service, there was a time of blessing and prayer for Linda and David as they start a new chapter in their lives. They will be missed at UMCWV!

(Photos on next page)



Lots of Music on Pentecost



Congregation greeting time & farewell blessing



UMCWV Family Welcomes...  
**Amelia Ammons**

She is an avid Pickle ball player.  
Loves doing Jigsaw puzzles.  
She Volunteers at TO Senior Center

UMCWV Family Welcomes...  
**Theresa A. Gonzalez**

She is a Nurse with Kaiser in Los Angeles.  
Plays Pickleballer in her free time.  
Is the daughter of Amelia Ammons

UMCWV Family Welcomes...  
**Susan Huseonica**

She is retired, has traveled to over 30 countries  
& enjoys reading, food and wine.  
She is interested in our Outreach ministry.

Welcoming new members

On **Father's Day**, June 15, Pastor Darren interviewed Tim Bonds in a conversation format as his message. Tim was asked to answer four questions to help the congregation get to know him better. Agnes talked about the All-Church fundraiser Western Night Dinner & Auction, now rescheduled for Saturday, Sept. 6 from 5 - 10 p.m. Chancel Choir members sang and will now be on their summer break until late August.

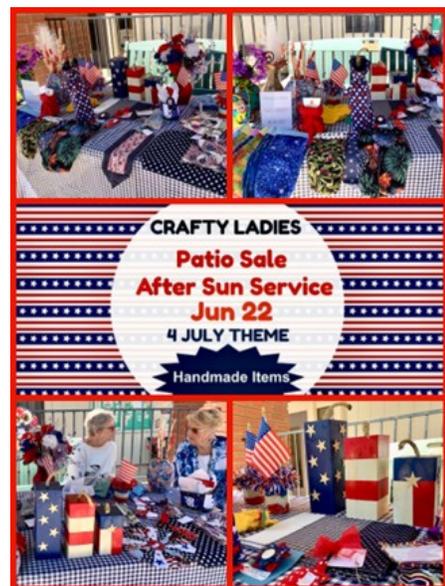


Father's Day Worship in the Sanctuary



Worship & Sunday School on June 22

Four lay delegates and Pastor Darren from UMCWV attended the **Cal-Pac Annual Conference** in Indian Wells from June 11-14. John & Candice, Kallie, Boyd and Darren gave a report from its *Cherish* theme during worship on June 22. Nick sang *You Raise Me Up*, Katy was the liturgist, Charissa's *Words for Kids* was about how we are all beautifully different, and in Sunday School the children made fingerprint art. On the patio after the service, the Crafty Ladies had a sale of handmade items with a 4<sup>th</sup> of July theme, in memory of long-time participant Esther Mayer's favorite celebration (she passed in May 2024).



Crafty Ladies' Sale on the patio

# Church Fundraiser

## UMCWV WESTERN NIGHT DINNER & AUCTION

FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY CENTER

SAT. SEPT. 6, 2025 - 5-10



All proceeds will support the  
Ministries of UMCWV in the  
Conejo Valley!

**\$70 PER PERSON  
INCLUDES..**

- A GLASS OF WINE
- SILENT AUCTION
- BBQ DINNER
- LINE DANCING LESSONS

Attire: Cowboy/girl chic!

UMCWV is hosting its inaugural Country Western Night fundraiser on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025, from 5 p.m.-10 p.m. at the First Neighborhood Community Center in Westlake Village. Ticket price is **\$70 per person**, which includes a ticket for a glass of wine, a silent auction, catered BBQ dinner and line dancing instruction!

Some Auction items that will be available:

- ◆ A stay at a house in Wyoming
- ◆ A stay at a house in Tucson
- ◆ Dinner at various restaurants in Westlake Village
- ◆ Health and beauty items
- ◆ A Stay in a luxury condo on the big island in Hawaii!

**Don't miss out and Save the Date!**

\* If you have items or talents you would like to donate for the silent auction, please contact our chairperson of donations, Mario Santos (787) 365-8034 Or contact Vinia in the church office.

## Church Pictorial Directory—Summer Project

**SUMMER PROJECT**

# CHURCH DIRECTORY!

TAKE YOUR PICTURE & EMAIL IT TO  
THE CHURCH OFFICE  
[VINIA@UMCWV.ORG](mailto:VINIA@UMCWV.ORG).

WE WILL CREATE AN UPDATED  
PICTORIAL CHURCH DIRECTORY. HAVE  
FUN WITH IT! JUST MAKE SURE WE CAN  
SEE YOUR FACE!

**NEW DIRECTORY  
BY SEPTEMBER!**

The church needs a new pictorial directory and has the technology to create one in house! All you need to do is take or have a picture taken of yourself and/or family and email a jpg of it to the church office to [vinia@umcwv.org](mailto:vinia@umcwv.org) or [viniaumcwv@gmail.com](mailto:viniaumcwv@gmail.com).

This does not have to be a formal portrait. It can be a fun picture at your favorite location, with your pet - whatever you like - as long as your face is clearly visible.

The office will upload your picture with the contact information it has on file and create a pictorial directory!

If your contact information has changed, be sure to include your updated information when you email your picture!

### Contact information needed for the directory

- ⇒ **First and last name**
- ⇒ **mailing address**
- ⇒ **phone number**
- ⇒ **current email address**

*Looking forward to receiving your photos!*  
Vinia, Church Office

Coming Soon!

## UMCWV New WebSite

The church is doing a complete redesign of its eight-year-old website! The new site will be easier to use and have a lot of new and improved features - such as better graphics, an interactive home page, a new calendar interface and much more! The hope is to have it up and running by fall 2025!

[www.umcwv.org](http://www.umcwv.org)



The **Growing Place Summer Camp** started on June 30 and will continue until August 7. Camp runs Monday thru Thursday, 9 a.m.- noon.

# Happy Independence Day!

Church office Closed Fri 7/4

# FOURTH *of* JULY

Celebrate freedom, unity,  
and the American spirit!



## *A Celebration of Life*

### *In Loving Memory*

Please join us in honoring the life of

**David Keddle**

A loving soul dearly missed  
& forever remembered.

Come with your love &  
memories as we gather to  
remember, share stories &  
honor David's life & legacy.  
A light reception will follow.

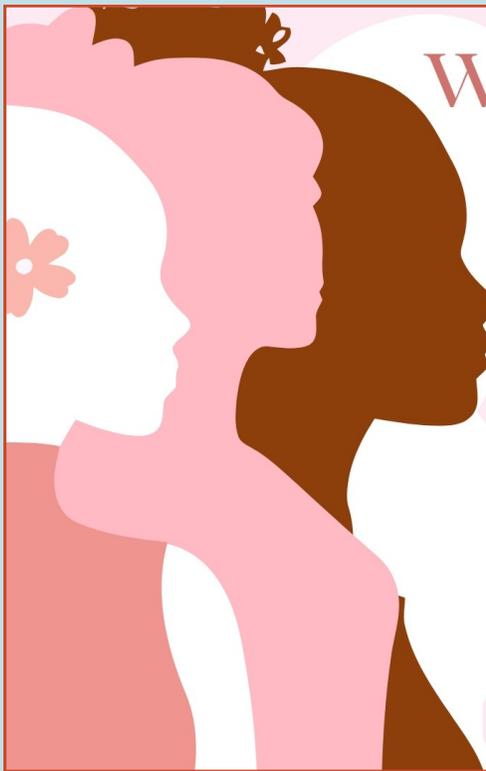


*Jan. 27, 1951 - Jun. 20, 2025*

Saturday July 5 1 pm

United Methodist Church  
of Westlake Village  
1049 S Westlake Blvd.  
Westlake Village, CA 91361

## Women's Ministries



**Women's One Day Retreat**  
**"All About Prayer"**

**Sat. Oct. 4, 2025, 9-4**  
**In Alton Hall**

**Cost - \$50**  
**includes Breakfast, Lunch,**  
**Massage and Much More!**

*Guest Speaker*  
*Melissa MacKinnon,*  
*Director of Change Cal-Pac UMC Conference*

## Children's Ministries



**CELEBRATE THE**  
**4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY**  
**IN SUNDAY SCHOOL**  
**JULY 6**

**Crafts and Treats!**

**SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE**

**CALL FOR USHERS!!**

BE PART OF A MOVEMENT DEDICATED TO CREATING A POSITIVE AND WELCOMING SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE FOR UMCWV ATTENDEES!

**EMAIL PASTOR DARREN: [REVDARREN.UMCWV@GMAIL.COM](mailto:REVDARREN.UMCWV@GMAIL.COM)**

**Click on graphic above to email Pastor Darren.**  
**Ushering is not a weekly commitment. You can help out one or two Sundays a month!**

**First Aid/ CPR**

**Training - \$25**

**In Youth Bldg**

**Thurs July 10, 7 p.m.**

To RSVP: Email Carol Ames  
[irngsing@gmail.com](mailto:irngsing@gmail.com)

**first aid SAVES LIVES!**

**Click on the above graphic to email Carol Ames.**  
**CPR/AED/First Aid training is recommended for most volunteers, and required for ushers & all church staff.**

## The Family Lounge

# We've Renovated Our Family Lounge

A dedicated space for caregivers with infants



The Family Lounge, located right behind the Kids Zone, provides a place for families with very young children to take a break when at church. There are rocking chairs, a changing table and a calming space for soothing our littlest ones and their caregivers.

MUSIC CAMP 2025

# PiZAZZ

ANIMAL ANTICS

MUSIC CAMP

July 21 - 25



[www.PizazzMusicCamp.org](http://www.PizazzMusicCamp.org)

Pizzaz is finally here this month!! The camp is full and it will be a busy week here at UMCWV! The camp ends by 12:30 p.m. M-Th and 2 p.m. on Friday, so if you have church-related business, it may be a good plan to drop by later in the day!



## SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

LIVING FAITH. SEEKING JUSTICE. PURSUING PEACE.

### CONEJO INTERFAITH REFUGEE TEAM (CIRT)

The Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team is so grateful to all of you at UMCWV for the continued support of the many dozens of families that have been helped in so many ways. Your generosity has been essential in helping refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries as they start their new lives in the United States. *We wish to thank you for all you have done, including:*

On Graduate Sunday, June 1, **Behishta Safi**, a member of one of the Afghan families we have helped, received the Women's Ministries and the Z. Frann Krajeski Memorial \$1,000 scholarships. Behishta, her mother and sister escaped Afghanistan after her father was killed. She is a firm believer in education, especially for women, having lived in a country that has repeatedly banned women's education. She is an honors student and completed many college units while still in high school. Behishta has worked to help girls succeed in Afghanistan, as well as her fellow students in high school. She founded her high school's Robotics Club, volunteers at Valley Presbyterian Hospital and so much more. She will be attending UC Irvine in the fall to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor. *Behishta is so grateful for these gifts toward her future.*

**The Refugee Team also thanks you for all of your donations to support refugees**, both monetary gifts to the CIRT Fund at UMCWV and in-kind gifts such as furniture and items to fill Welcome Kits with kitchen, bath and cleaning supplies. Many apartments for refugees have been furnished with these Welcome

Kits, couches, tables, chairs, lamps, dishes, rugs, bicycles, toys, Chromebooks and more. New mattresses and bedding has also been purchased for families who needed them.

While the United States has now halted and defunded the refugee program, there are still refugee families in need who had arrived before that happened. We are currently helping two large Afghan families who had no furniture, household items or supplies.

The Refugee Team has **a continuing need of monetary donations** to allow us to purchase mattresses and bedding, portable shopping carts and grocery gift cards. Donations of kitchen supplies are also needed.

*Thank you again for all you do to welcome the stranger.*

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Chris Soltow at [Chrissoltow3@hotmail.com](mailto:Chrissoltow3@hotmail.com).



**JULY MISSION MOMENT**



As we celebrate the birthday of our nation this month, the Missions Committee is lifting up **Gold Coast Veterans Foundation** as our way of supporting all those men and women who have sacrificed so much for us and our country.

Gold Coast Veterans Foundation is Ventura County's leading nonprofit organization exclusively devoted to serving local veterans. GCVF offers a one-stop center model that addresses the diverse needs of veterans: mobile outreach, housing, healthcare, employment and career programs, legal services and much more. This integrated and personalized approach sets GCVF apart, ensuring veterans receive timely, effective, and compassionate care.

The impact on Ventura County is impressive:

- over 4,000 veterans served annually through in-person and outreach services,
- 60% reduction in veteran homelessness since its founding, and
- over 90% success rate in transitioning homeless veterans into permanent housing.

GCVF has partnered with local businesses, nonprofits, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to create a collaborative and sustained support network. You can learn more about this extraordinary organization during our Mission Moment at church on July 13.

Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July! Enjoy Family, Fun, Fireworks and please consider supporting the Gold Coast Veterans Foundation as our July Mission of the Month.



**A thank you note from Gold Coast Veterans Foundation.....**

“On behalf of our entire team, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your generous support of our Annual Memorial Day Food Drive.

Because of your kindness, nearly 1,400 pounds of food was collected to benefit food-insecure veterans in Ventura County. That’s more than **half a ton of food**– an incredible gift that will go a long way through the GCVF Food Assistance Program and Manna Food Bank of Conejo Valley.”



**Thank you!**

**How to Donate:**  
**Church website, Mission of the Month**

**or**

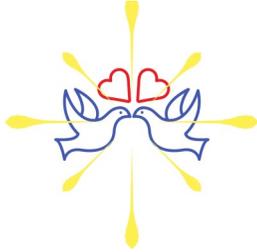
**By check made payable to UMCWV – Memo line:**  
**Gold Coast Veterans Foundation**

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



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

SUTPHEN, Tom & Pam 07/03  
 PEMBER, Charley & Sharon 07/09  
 HERBST DE CORTINA, Galen & Katy 07/12



## TREASURER'S REPORT

<b>May 2025 Income:</b>	\$40,111
<b>May 2025 Expenses:</b>	\$49,538
<b>Fiscal YTD Income:</b>	\$236,705
<b>Fiscal YTD Expenses:</b>	\$270,791

## ATTENDANCE

	In-Person	YouTube	Total
May 4	97	78	175
May 11	120	44	164
May 18	115	57	172
May 25	108	62	170

May YouTube totals are taken as of 6/30/2025.



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

DAHLGREN, Andrea 07/01  
 FRIEL, Leroy 07/04  
 RICHARDS, Shirley 07/07  
 TRILLING, Catherine 07/07  
 ALBERTSON, Gary 07/12  
 FISHER, Myra 07/18  
 LAMPE, Steve 07/22  
 CHAVOY, Cyra 07/24  
 STOLL, Jane 07/24  
 STONE, Brittany 07/24  
 STONE, Bryan 07/24  
 SOLTOW, Kitty 07/25  
 MARQUART, Larry 07/26  
 KRACKER, Bob 07/27  
 ROGERS, Brenda 07/27  
 BIRMINGHAM, Ashlyn 07/28



## Finance Corner

**Q.** Our church has worked hard to support missions such as feeding the hungry, housing the unhoused, supporting disaster relief domestically and internationally. Is there an additional way to support these efforts aside from my pledges and donations this year?

**A.** Yes! UMCWV is hosting a fundraiser Western night event on September 13 at First Neighborhood Community Center. Purchasing tickets (\$70) and/or Event sponsorships ( fund no. 251) will go a long way towards helping this year's operations!



*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:..... Cindy Faccone  
Stewardship ..... John Shehorn  
Trustees ..... Candice Shehorn (interim)

**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 Committee..... 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



# 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  
Doug Menges  
Polly Tattersall Martin } 2025

Roz Thebaud  
Candi Wilcox } 2026

Janet Todd  
Wayne Loeb  
Phyllis Marbach } 2027

**COVENANT DEADLINE**  
For August is Noon July 15

**Senior Pastor:** Rev. Darren Cowdrey  
*revdarren.umcww@gmail.com*

**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*

**Children's Sunday Music:** 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 from our website or on YouTube.*

*Check the 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