



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 9

Sept. 2025

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: "Just One Thing"



Pastor Darren

Can we say "Fall Greetings" yet? Someone check to see if Starbucks has its pumpkin latte out now.

As we approach the fall I've been focusing on this phrase, "Just One Thing." The thought is that fall is getting started. Maybe it's not the official new year... but it often feels like it. And I'm thinking about where God might have us headed this year. Most of the time the real question is about what we're up for. God can call, but we need to respond. So, what do you think? Is there "Just One Thing" you might consider to stretch your faith this year? Is there "Just One Thing" you can offer the church as we look to continue to set course for a better life (to use our own vision statement)?

This is largely an individual question, but the church is looking to stretch it in a couple of different ways. An important one is Outreach. Evangelism is a word that can make us a little squirmy. It conjures up visions of people pressuring us. But the word actually

just means 'to witness,' or 'to talk about and share the good news of your faith.' Hopefully that sounds a little more comfortable, as we'd like to get better at how we do that on Sunday mornings.

There are three parts to the process. We have to 'invite' people well. We have to 'welcome' them. Then we need to 'connect' those who are interested somewhere in the church's activities. It seems simple. But we're talking about a lot of layers: good internet presence, communicating our identity and mission during worship and on the property, and helping the church move toward ministries that fill needs people have. So, it's a pretty important leadership role.

Do you think you might be called to all or some part of that process? Maybe you should consider our Outreach Team. We'll be at the Ministry Faire on September 21 to tell you more. Be sure to stop by!

Grace and Peace,



Sunday 9/21 After Church

UMCWV MINISTRY FAIR

WHAT JOURNEY OF FAITH WILL YOU TAKE THIS YEAR?

Missions

Music - Choir & Bells

Social Concerns

Prayer Group

Women's & Men's Ministries

Children's Programs

Evangelism

Home Communion



Children's Activities in the Youth Building

"JUST ONE THING"

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Carol Ames, Communications Coordinator

Pastor Darren likes movies, so he decided to have some summer fun with **movie-themed messages** for three of the four Sundays in August. He started with **Lilo & Stitch** and a movie night in Alton Hall to watch it on Friday, Aug. 1. The movie's message is about grace and love. On August 3, also Communion Sunday, Joseph sang a solo for special music, and there was **water fun** for a hot day on the Youth Building's lawn after worship.



Lilo & Stitch emphasis on Aug. 1 & 3



*Water fun for all who didn't mind getting wet,
including Pastor Darren*

The movie theme for August 10 was **Superman**, with Pastor Darren even putting on a superman cape as he introduced it. He related this movie to truth, justice, and the American way. Candi carried out the movie ideas with the altar décor, in addition to the traditional flower arrangements, Bible and candles. Rick talked about the Mission of the Month for August, the Many Mansions Youth Club. Tracy sang special music, and Darren recognized and thanked the Pizazz Leadership Team for the 31st successful year of Pizazz Music Camp, July 21-25.

Save the Date now for Pizazz 2026 - July 20-24!



"Superman" Sunday worship, Aug. 10

UMCWV's Westlake Village Music Society hosted a concert in the sanctuary at 3 p.m. on Aug. 3. This **Summer Afternoon Concert** was well attended to hear 14-year-old concert violinist Leonora Vukovitz perform a violin concerto, accompanied by Christine DeKlotz. Attendees also enjoyed hearing Seraphour, a women's vocal quartet comprised of Heidi Vass, Melissa Birch, Emma Grace Roche and Dana Rouse.



Leonora, Christine and Seraphour

Training sessions for **acolytes & ushers** were held after worship on Aug. 10 and Aug. 17, respectively. The children are so eager and proud to take turns being an acolyte. It was nice to welcome four new people who trained to be ushers - to help out the three others who have been regulars for a while. By the way, ushers don't just pass the offering plates and guide people on communion Sunday. They also stand at the sanctuary entrance and warmly greet people to worship on Sunday mornings, so this is an important welcoming ministry.



Training for acolytes and ushers

Sunday, Aug. 17 was **Appalachian Service Project** (ASP) Sunday, taking a break from the movie themes. Katie Comparato joined members of the Simi Valley UMC to go on this work trip in June. *In case you don't know, the Comparato family has a strong connection with that congregation, as Amy grew up in SVUMC and her mom, Leslie Frank, has been the organist there for a long time.* There are other connections between these two churches as well, some of which were mentioned during the service. The ASP team showed a video from their trip, did Children's Time about "magic pennies," and Katie spoke about her wonderful experiences. Hymns and special music were camp songs, led by a 3-generation trio of Tom, Christy and Laney. *By the way, UMCWV has done its share of work trips through the years, so maybe it's time to get involved again!*



ASP Sunday, Aug. 17

Kick-Off Sunday was celebrated on Aug. 24, as the local districts have already started their new school year. Darren had another movie-themed message based on **How to Train Your Dragon**, by discussing "Training Our Dragons" by discussing "Training Our Dragons" in today's clashing of cultures, and how people wrestle with the idea of loving your enemies, as Jesus taught. There were several special activities for children, with age-appropriate Bibles given to each of them as well as a time of blessing their backpacks during Children's Time. During Sunday School, the craft was making tags for their backpacks. The Chancel Choir and Covenant Ringers were back from their summer break, and the congregation sang Happy Birthday to Jenny. After worship, the hospitality committee served an indoor picnic meal with hot dogs, lots of side dishes and desserts. *It was a hot, but fun day!*



Kick-Off Sunday Kids' Activities



The Chancel Choir & Covenant Ringers were back



Hot dog lunch, with lots of side dishes, in Alton Hall

Restructuring A Church - From Pastor Darren

We're looking to make some changes in UMCWV's leadership structure this next year. Nothing too extreme... just trying to be a little more efficient with decisions and people's time.

So don't be scared!

One of the main adjustments involves ministry teams. We want to give the existing teams more time to coordinate together. We also have a few other teams that should be initiated. *This involves five areas.* **Worship** planning exists largely through staff coordination, although adding some people to augment our worship creativity would be good. *Maybe this is you?*

Our **Adult Ministry** team is a collection of ministries that exist but often create programs and events for the same people: Missions, Social Concerns, Adult Studies, Women's and Men's Ministries. These teams will still exist, but a representative group will meet and plan together, being creative in the process. **Christian Education** serves our Family Ministry. We gather once a month to plan and stay connected. *Do you feel drawn to one of these areas?*

A core value of our church is in **Membership Care**, so our prayer group is taking on some extra projects. We're looking for Shepherds to have a flock of members that they keep an eye on. For the most part, people are active and the flock is easy to keep up with. But it's always good to have a watchful eye for when some extra care would be appreciated. These Shepherds will be our connection to the extended body. *Maybe this is your calling?*

Finally, the fifth ministry area is **Outreach**. This is largely a new team. It has a broad focus, going from how we invite people to how we welcome them when they visit. We can use relational people, creative people (for communicating our message), and tech folks for Sunday mornings and having an internet presence. *We'd love to have some new energy!*

All of these groups will have a presence at the Ministry Faire on September 21. Make sure to join us in worship, then come to Alton Hall and enjoy some fellowship as you check out what our ministries have in mind!

Western Night Fundraiser - Sat 9/6

Split the Pot Drawing

\$5 per ticket

or 5 tickets for \$20!

Opportunity Drawing- Church & you Win!!

You & UMCWV Split the Pot

TICKET

TICKET

TICKET

TICKET

TICKET

Church Pictorial Directory – Summer Project

A colorful graphic for the Church Pictorial Directory Summer Project. It features a purple banner with 'SUMMER PROJECT' in white, a yellow sticky note with the main text, and a white banner at the bottom right saying 'NEW DIRECTORY BY SEPTEMBER!'. There are also two photos of women on the left, a cartoon emoji holding a phone, and a red lightning bolt.

SUMMER PROJECT

CHURCH DIRECTORY! SEPTEMBER IS ALMOST HERE!

THERE IS STILL TIME TO TAKE YOUR PICTURE FOR OUR NEW DIRECTORY!

EMAIL IT TO [VINIA@UMCWV.ORG](mailto:vinia@umcwv.org)

CAROL AMES CAN TAKE YOUR PICTURE AFTER THE SUNDAY SERVICE!

THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU THAT HAVE SENT A PIC!!

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 or 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

A graphic for Labor Day. It features the text 'LABOR DAY' in large white letters on a dark background. Below it, it says 'Monday September 1 Church office Closed'. There is an illustration of three people working at a computer, and a red banner at the bottom says 'CELEBRATING THE BACKBONE OF SOCIETY'.

Celebration of Life for Sherry McBride

Monday, Sept. 8, 2025 - 10:00 A.M.



August 1, 1937- August 23, 2025

Children's Music

Sunday School Singers

Our Sunday School music program is starting up again!
Come make a joyful noise with Ms. Katy and learn fun new songs.

When: Kicks off Sunday, September 7th, during Sunday School

First Performance: Get ready to shine on October 19th!

LET'S SING!

Join The UMCWV Children's Bell Choir!

Have you ever wanted to make music? Now's your chance! Join our new, free bell choir. No musical experience is necessary!

For: Students in Grades 2-6

When: Wednesdays, 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. (starting Sept. 10)

Where: The Choir Room

Want to Join? Email Nick at nnewkirk49@yahoo.com

Growing Place Preschool



For Everyone!





***Saturday Night
Suppers-Fiesta!***
***Sept. 27, 5:30 @
Russ & Barbara Stone's home***

To RSVP email Barbara
Bstone1@earthlink.net

Women's Ministries



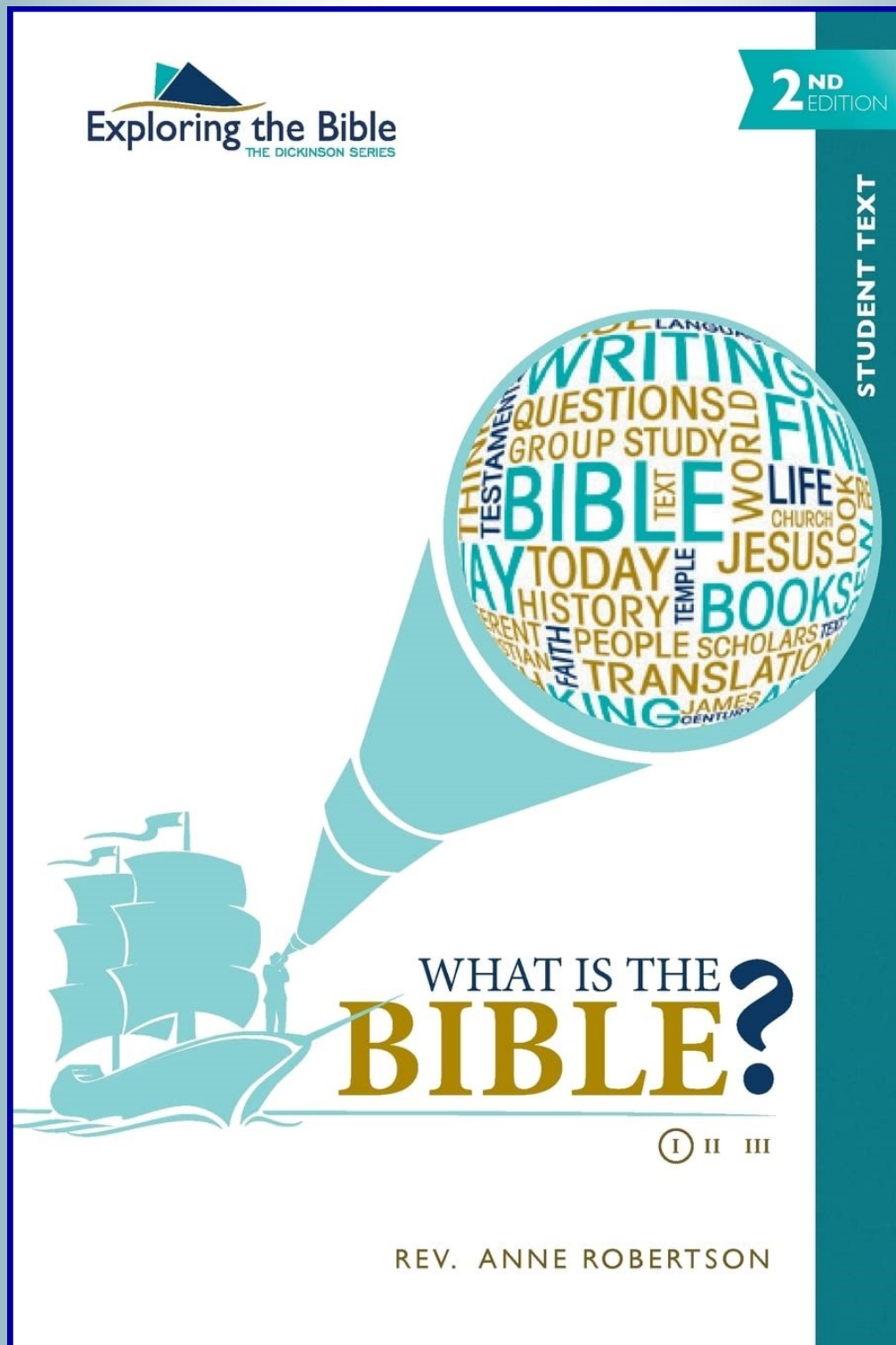
***Women's One Day Retreat
"All About Prayer"***
***Sat. Oct. 4, 2025, 9-4
In Alton Hall
Cost - \$50
includes Breakfast, Lunch,
Massage and Much More!***

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



Melissa MacKinnon

New Book Study Starts Wed., Sept. 24 – 10 a.m. In-person & on Zoom



A new book study led by Pastor Darren is slated to start in September. It will be a hybrid study, in person (Alton Hall, Room 1) and on Zoom. The Zoom link will be provided in the weekly email blast. The paperback book is available on Amazon and costs \$10.21.

SEPTEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH

Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team (CIRT)

The Mission of the Month for September is the **Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team** – or Refugee Team for short. UMCWV was the founding member almost 10 years ago and has participated in helping many dozens of refugee families, including from Syria, Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central America.

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. CIRT works with three refugee agencies in settling refugees who have been vetted and approved by the United States government to legally move to the U.S.

The Refugee Team helps to furnish apartments for newly-arrived families, including donated furniture, Welcome Baskets of kitchen, bath and cleaning supplies, new mattresses, Chromebooks, clothing and other essentials for a family to begin its new life in America. Lately electric scooters have been an important item to help those without a car to get to work.

Examples of families we have helped are Behista Safi who recently was awarded two UMCWV scholarships, and the Kovaleva family that performed a piano and violin concerts at UMCWV.

While the number of new families is less than last year and many refugee programs have been terminated, the refugee agencies have informed us that there are and will continue to be several families in the pipeline – families from Afghanistan who have helped the U.S. government and military and are targeted by the Taliban, Christians from Iran, and South Africans. In fact, the team just moved a South African family into its new apartment on August 7.

UMCWV has been generous to the Refugee Team and we thank you for your continued support.

Donations can be made online to UMCWV Refugee account or by check to UMCWV with Mission of the Month or Refugee Team on the memo line.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. Matthew 25:35



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



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

LAMPE, Steve & Cindy	09/01
FACCONE, Ben & Cindy	09/02
DONAVON, Boyd & Peggy	09/05
GRAY, Curt & Dina	09/06
ELGINER, John & Julie	09/14
DOUGHERTY, Ken & Agnes	09/19
WEBB, Tom & Terri	09/21
WILCOX, John & Candi	09/30



TREASURER'S REPORT

July 2025 Income:

\$42,427

July 2025 Expenses:

\$49,176

Fiscal YTD Income:

\$310,526

Fiscal YTD Expenses:

\$368,439

ATTENDANCE

		In-Person	YouTube	Total
July	6	97	75	172
July	13	96	59	155
July	20	84	75	159
July	27	80	70	150

July YouTube totals are taken as of 8/30/2025.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

GEHR, Terry	09/01
MACDONALD, Penny	09/06
HERBST DE CORTINA, Chiara "Kiki"	09/07
STEMEN, Betty	09/07
HELTON, John	09/08
LANGBERG, Susan	09/09
BIRMINGHAM, Jake	09/10
MENGES, Doug	09/13
SMITH, Kallie	09/13
NORTHROP, Linda	09/14
COWDREY, Darren	09/15
RICHARDS, Michael	09/16
WILCOX, Candi	09/17
ANDERSON, Marilyn	09/18
SEABURY, Cathy	09/18
WELLS, H. Neal	09/18
DOUGHERTY, Ken	09/19
HIMSL, Kyle	09/19
SEVERANCE, Phil	09/20
STONE, Christopher	09/20
NEWKIRK, Kyle	09/21
SHIHABI, Ryan	09/21
MORSE, Barbara	09/22
STONE, Barbara	09/24
HENDRY, Winter	09/25
BONDS, Tim	09/28



Finance Corner

Q. I cannot attend the Western Night Fundraiser on Sept. 6, but I want to support our church and bid on some of the amazing Live and Silent Auction Items. Can I appoint a proxy to bid for me? Where can I see all of the items for Auction?

A. Yes, you can ask a friend who is attending the fundraiser to be your proxy and bid on items for you. You will need to arrange for payment, if you are the winning bidder. The auction items are being shown in the Sunday & emailed announcements, and on other media outlets. They are also being shown during coffee hour on the patio after church.

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 HistorianCarol Ames

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Communications:.....Carol Ames
Finance:John Shehorn
Foundation:Don Phillipson
Nominations:Pastor Darren
Staff Parish Relations:.....Cindy Faccone
StewardshipJohn Shehorn
TrusteesCandice Shehorn (interim)

PROGRAMMATIC COMMITTEES

Christian Education.....Amy Comparato
Growing Place.....Tom Sutphen
Conejo ConnectRick Schroeder
Membership Care.....Jeanie Severance
Membership Growth
Missions CommitteeCathie Loeb
Music Committee.....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
GeneralNancy Moravec



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 through the church office or attend one of its upcoming meetings for a brief discussion time.

S
P
R
C

Cindy Faccone, chair
Doug Menges
Polly Tattersall Martin

2025

Roz Thebaud
Candi Wilcox

2026

Janet Todd
Wayne Loeb
Phyllis Marbach

2027

COVENANT DEADLINE
For October is Noon September 15

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

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

Administrative Director: Vinia Pavlath
viniaumcww@gmail.com

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 - 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*



Setting a Course for a Better Life

United Methodist Church
Westlake Village