



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 12

Dec. 2025

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: "All the World Waits"



Pastor Darren

While doing some reading for fun... yeah, I do read for fun sometimes, I came upon an article explaining what people used to do before we had cellphones. Some of you might remember those times. Today we work real diligently to remember our phones, just in case we end up having to wait somewhere.

Heaven forbid we end up somewhere, waiting for an appointment or a ride with nothing to do but... wait. The list of things we used to do isn't very long, though. Usually something like, carry a book. What I came to realize is that we often just figured out what to do when we ended up waiting. Maybe we looked around some shops or got a snack and drink somewhere. Maybe we just "people-watched." The point is, when the time came to wait, we just waited.

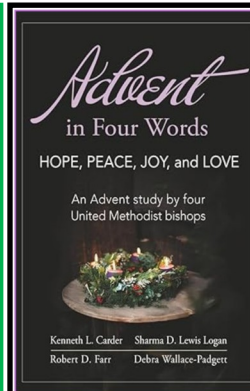
As we enter advent, this idea of waiting as a part of life is much more foreign. We have ourselves organized really well, so we don't end up waiting. This begs the question, what do we do with a season in which we're supposed to 'wait;' and even 'wait' really well?

Our theme in worship is "All the World Waits." We'll be using different scriptures to help us prepare for Christ's coming, but also to wait well. If we want this birth that anchors our faith to have weight in our lives, we should craft time in our lives and hearts for God to fill. So we look, with intention, for the signs of Christ's presence, both now and in the presence to come. Make sure to join us on Sundays to make this advent journey all that God would have it mean for you.

Finally, our book study this year is called "Advent in Four Words." It's a daily devotional as well as a weekly gathering in which we walk through the traditional words of Advent that mark each Sunday: hope, peace, joy, and love. The devotions are written by our own UM bishops and should add a deepening to the journey this advent. *(I apologize for the confusion with the advent study book. I have no other excuse besides making a mistake.)* I like that we've found a book with a daily as well as weekly devotion for us. I hope you'll join us this year.

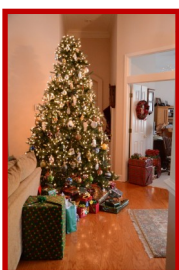
Peace and grace,

**CHRISTMAS
MOVIE NIGHT**
Friday Dec 5
Dinner at 5:00pm Movie at 5:30pm

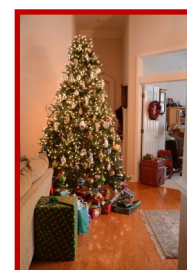


Advent Book Study!
Started Sunday 11/30 after Service, Classes meeting Sunday & Wednesday.
Class meets Mon 12/8 in place of Wed 12/24

You can purchase the book on Amazon for or in the church office for \$20.
The office will order 20 books. This hybrid study will in person and on Zoom.



The Church Office Will Be Closed
Thur. Dec. 25 and Fri. Dec. 26
for the Christmas holiday



UMCWV END-OF-THE-YEAR BUSINESS

Pledge Report for 2026

Greetings from the finance and stewardship teams! Here's a quick report on our 2026 pledging and budget setting for 2026. At this point we've matched last year's pledging for the Church's main budget at \$362,000. With a few more pledges still to be turned in, we have hope for a bit more increase before it's all said and done. As we look to get more right-sized, we look to grow a little past the cost of living realities each year. At the same time our pledging toward apportionments for the conference is up. This is a good sign of support for the organizational and missional work of our denomination. We thank you all for your heart for UMCWV and we continue to encourage you with the words "People, Get Ready," as we look to the new year!

Charge Conference Report

Our Charge Conference on November 22 turned out to be a really nice opportunity for the mission area churches to gather. It is nice to remember one of the high values of our particular brand of Christianity: Our connection to our sister and brother churches. For UMCWV in particular, we tabled a number of issues related to our budget and our leadership structure until this January. The budget projections will be more accurate once we have 'year-end' data to work with. Our movement to a "Leadership Council" model got off to a fast track. So, ironically, we want to slow it down and make sure all have learned what they want to learn and can then vote in good conscience. Please keep your eyes open for an extra Charge Conference to be called in late January to complete our work.

Stewardship 2026 continues! If you have not yet pledged, below is the 2026 pledge card, if you need one. As well, there are pledge cards in the Narthex and in the church office. You may also pledge by emailing your pledge information to the church office: Vinia@umcwv.org.

Whether this is your first time pledging or you have been pledging for years, know that your pledge is essential in helping the church develop an attainable budget for 2026! A pledge is meant as an "Estimate of your Giving" and may be revised or cancelled by request at any time, if needed.

Support the ministries of the United Methodist Church Westlake Village here in the Conejo Valley by pledging!

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WESTLAKE VILLAGE
ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD 2026

Stewardship: *People get Ready!*

I will stand with the church Today...And Tomorrow with this gift to the
Annual Operating Budget:
\$ _____ per week, month, quarter, year. (circle one.)

I will also step forward and help our congregation better cover our
Apportionment & Benevolence obligation with a **second, additional pledge:**
\$ _____ per week, month, quarter, year. (circle one.)

Name _____ Date _____
Address _____ Phone _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

This commitment may be revised or cancelled at any time at my request.

FOR YOUR RECORDS

My support for our ministries for 2026 is

Annual Operating Budget:
\$ _____ per week,
month, quarter, year. (circle one.)

Apportionment & Benevolence:
\$ _____ per week,
month, quarter, year. (circle one.)



MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Carol Ames, Communications Team Coordinator

November was another very busy month in the life of the UMCWV congregation! From the **paint crew of men** who worked to renovate Rm. 2 in Alton Hall for use as a Sunday School classroom, the completion of the “What is the Bible?” study, to opportunities for fellowship and eating or to serving a turkey dinner to Many Mansions’ families, there are always many activities and opportunities for involvement beyond Sunday morning worship services.



The paint crew and the renovated classroom

Worship on Sunday Nov. 2 was filled with remembrances, celebrations and communion. Candi created a special altar arrangement for Dia De los Muertos and **All Saints Sunday**. She also placed a rose in a vase as each name was read of a church or family member who had died in the past year, and Gloria rang a bell. During the opening announcements, Pastor Darren also celebrated the Dodgers being the World Series Champions. His message later in the service was titled “Remembering the Saints.” Candice was the liturgist and communion was served at the end of the service.



Worship on Sunday, Nov. 2

The second Sunday of November was just before **Veterans Day**, so there was a time to recognize and honor all who had served in a branch of the military, as well as their family members. Nov. 9 was also the kick-off Sunday for the Christmas Market, so Cathie gave the Mission Moment about the different giving opportunities that will be available every Sunday through Christmas on the patio, or in the church office during the week. The altar decorations had a Fall and Veterans Day theme.



Worship on Nov. 9

Following worship on Nov. 9, the **Crafty Ladies Sale** offered holiday items on the patio and Women’s Ministry had the annual **Soup & Pie Lunch** in Alton Hall. With approximately 10 types of delicious soups and 10 pie flavors to choose from, plus rolls and beverages for \$15, this lunch is a fundraiser for the scholarship they give each year in June.



Crafty Ladies Sale and Soup & Pie Lunch

A **Children's Bell Choir** for grades 2-6 was started in September, with Nick directing and his son Kyle assisting him. This group will be playing for the first time during the Advent Celebration Concert on Dec. 7. Katy directs the **Sunday School Singers** and they sang "Your Way's Better" during worship on Nov. 16.



Ringin' & Singin' for Kids

Worship on Nov. 16 included another Fall-themed altar backdrop as the acolytes lit the candles, and the children also sang. A pitcher of water was present and used for the baptism of the Rosenfeld family before a "Word for Kids" by Charissa. Nancy was the liturgist and the title of Pastor Darren's message was "Nothin' Wrong with Keeping Hope," based on Isaiah 65:17-25. The Chancel Choir sang, as it does each Sunday during the school year, and new teenage Tech Team members were recognized.



Worship on Nov. 16

A call for volunteers to help cook a turkey or a side dish for 20 people, and to serve a turkey dinner, was made by **Many Mansions** to serve its residents on Nov. 19. Ken answered the call and cooked a BBQ turkey for this **Thanksgiving meal**. Others from UMCWV may have also helped. *Thank you to Agnes for this photo of Ken.*



Ken with his pan of turkey

The **Annual Charge Conference** was hosted at UMCWV on Saturday, Nov. 22, with representatives from five local UMCs present and the North District Superintendent, Rev. Garth Gilliam, presiding. Refreshments were served, with thanks to Brenda Cowdrey and her helpers, and Candice provided yummy cookies with the cross and flame logo on each one. Lay Leader Jeanie opened the session with a meditation and Pastor Jim Powell played guitar and led singing. Each church had provided a video report that was shown of what their church has been doing this past year. Many thanks to Paul Fey who created the UMCWV video; the link for it will be sent out by email so you can all watch it. About 20 members of the congregation were present and helped in some way that day.



Annual Charge Conference for five local UMCs on Nov. 22



Annual Charge Conference for five local UMCs on Nov. 22 (continued)

Thanksgiving and Christ the King Sunday were both celebrated during worship on Nov. 23. Rick was the liturgist and Candi created another Autumn-themed altar display. “Woe to those Shepherds” was the title of Pastor Darren’s message, based on prophet Jeremiah 23:1-6. (*THIS Jeremiah wasn’t a bullfrog – as in the opening line of the popular song “Joy to the World” by Three Dog Night, a hit in 1971.*) The children’s craft in Sunday School was making a Tree of Thanks, with words written on each leaf of what they are grateful for. *Thanks to Charissa and Pam for the photos.*



Worship and Sunday School craft on Nov. 23

The **Conejo Valley Interfaith Association** held its **Thanksgiving Service** at Temple Adat Elohim on Nov. 23 at 7 p.m. Pastor Darren participated with religious leaders from several other local faith communities. The UMCWV Confirmation Class attended with Pastor Darren and Charissa, pictured below (minus one) with some of their family members. There are six students in the Confirmation Class that meets once a month: Sara, James B., James E., Natalie, Jayden and Janelle. *Thank you to Charissa and Julie for taking the photos in the collage.*



Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on Nov. 23



The 2026 flower chart is now available!

Commemorate a birthday, anniversary or honor a loved one by purchasing altar flowers.

The cost is the same as last year.

Dates fill up quickly, so sign up soon!



The Growing Place Preschool



BOOK FAIR

@ THE GROWING PLACE

Saturday, Dec. 6,
M - F Dec. 8-12
8:30- 12:45

Paperpie Books
includes:
Usborne Publishing
Smart Lab Toys
Barefoot Books



www.reallygreatsite.com

THE GROWING PLACE PRESCHOOL
12TH ANNUAL


Gingerbread Pajama Jam




SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6
8 AM - 10 AM

COST: \$30 PER FAMILY OF 4 (\$5 ADDITIONAL PERSON) \$15 PER ADDITIONAL KIT

COME IN YOUR HOLIDAY PAJAMAS, ENJOY A
PANCAKE BREAKFAST THEN DECORATE SOME
GINGERBREAD COOKIES
PURCHASE TICKETS BY 12/4



Poinsettia Dedications





Decorate the Altar & Chancel for Christmas

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

Dedication forms are in the Narthex or email Vinia@umcwv.org

Submit your dedications by Wed Dec. 17.

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



Christmas Music at UMCWV

Christmas Concert & Advent Celebration

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

December 7 4:00–6:00p.m.

Dinner Served in Alton Hall at 5:15pm

Following the ceremonial lighting
of the outdoor nativity scene

To go with the lasagna dinner on 12/7, if your last name begins with A-N, please bring a salad or side dish. If your last name begins with O-Z, please bring a dessert. A freewill offering will be taken to cover the cost of lasagnas, beverages and paper products. Cathie Loeb also sent out a SignUpGenius email showing other ways you can help.

Annual Cantata

“The Living Light”

UMCWV Chancel Choir

presents this dramatic musical

experience by Ruth Elaine Schram

during the 10 a.m. worship service, Dec. 14

Presentation will be accompanied by a small orchestra
of woodwinds, strings, piano & percussion.

United Methodist Church Westlake Village
1049 S. Westlake Blvd., Westlake Village

Visit our website - umcwv.org

Christmas Eve Services



Christmas Eve Services

4:00 P.M. Family Service

7:00 P.M. Candlelight Service

**CANDLELIGHT SERVICE IS WITH THE
CHANCEL CHOIR & INSTRUMENTALS**

Cocoa and Carols



COCOA & CAROLS

**SUN DEC 28 @10 IN
ALTON HALL
CASUAL ATTIRE**

**Come enjoy cocoa, cookies and other goodies,
and sing some popular Christmas Carols.**

DECEMBER MISSION MOMENT – MISSIONS' MISTLETOE MARKETPLACE



Hope for the
Holidays



Help support the work of Church World Service (CWS) on Sunday, Dec 14 after the service, on the patio. For every \$5 donation you make, you can choose from a variety of handmade ornaments, gift tags, sweet treats and more! Let's see how much we can raise for this vital faith-based organization that sends Hope to those in need around the world!

Our vision is to be a world where everyone has food, a voice and a safe place to call home. CWS has been working to make this a reality for more than 75 years, and we know it's possible. Thousands of refugees and other new neighbors have been welcomed into our local communities, countless families have had food put on their tables, and the voices of people

who have been left out have been lifted.

We know that we can always do more together than we can alone. That's why our work is for **everyone**. The CWS family stretches around the world and across the lines that divide us as a single force for good. Welcome to the movement. We're glad you're here!

**The Christmas Market Continues through December,
giving hope to our community with your \$25 purchase!**



H
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P
E



LIVING FAITH. SEEKING JUSTICE. PURSUING PEACE.

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

Farmworkers do difficult physical labor on behalf of all of us in Ventura County. Not only do farmworkers enable us to have food on our table, but in Ventura County farming also helps all of us by contributing over \$2.3 billion annually to our County's economy.

Ironically, while local farmworkers are essential for putting food on our table, they struggle to put food on their own tables.

Gratitude can be shown for what farmworkers do for us by making the **January food drive** a big success. All food and supplies collected each Sunday during the month of January 2026 will be delivered to **Friends of Fieldworkers**.

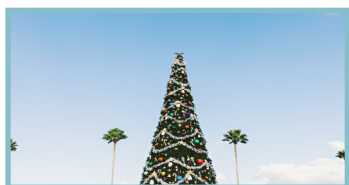
Items requested include:

Toilet paper/Paper Towels
Soap/Shampoo/Deodorant
Toothpaste/Brushes
Dish & Laundry Soap
Shelf-Stable Foods
Bagged Pasta
Bagged Beans and Rice
Tomato Sauce
Diapers
Feminine Hygiene Products



Please join us in expressing gratitude to farmworkers by sharing with them.

You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."



Non-perishable food drop off available every Sunday!



Many Mansions Holiday Helper



Give a Gift of Joy – Help make the holidays magical for a child in need! Select a toy from the Many Mansions [most requested gifts](#) or shop with ease through our [Amazon gift list](#) and have the gift shipped directly to us.

Happy Hanukkah



Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greek army, and the subsequent miracle of rededicating the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and restoring its Menorah, or oil lamp.

Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of [African-American culture](#) from 12/26 to 1/1, culminating in a communal feast called *Karamu*, usually on the sixth day.



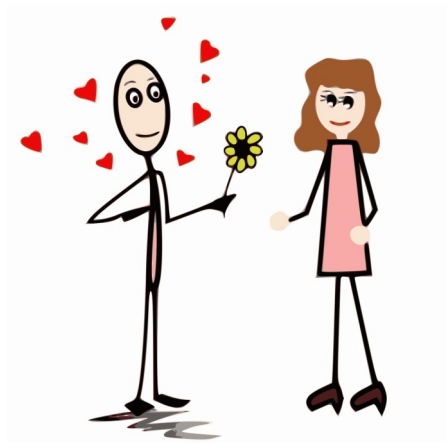
Save the Date Jan 31.2026



Blood Drive

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

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



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

DOUGLASS, Mackenzie 12/01
LOEB, Wayne 12/02
HENDERSON, Jane 12/05
HERBST DE CORTINA, Galen 12/07
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
HILLIARD, Gloria 12/27
VAN DYKE, Karleen 12/28
BRUBAKER, Roy 12/29
FACCONE, Cindy 12/29



TREASURER'S REPORT

Oct 2025 Income:
\$51,144
Oct 2025 Expenses:
\$66,476
Fiscal YTD Income:
\$452,592
Fiscal YTD Expenses:
\$536,158

ATTENDANCE

		In-Person	YouTube	Total
Oct	5	89	75	164
Oct	12	84	46	130
Oct	19	74	56	109
Oct	26	116	44	160

October YouTube totals were taken as of 12/01/2025.

Finance Corner

Q. I would like to increase and/or begin a pledge to help support the ministries of UMCWV, but I am afraid that if my circumstances change during the year, I will not be able to reduce my pledge and therefore I am reluctant to commit to a pledge.

A. A pledge may be changed at any time during the year and, as always, your pledge is confidential.



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
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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 January is Noon December 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