

The Messenger

Love

First United Methodist Church of Riverside
4845 Brockton Ave. Riverside, CA 92506

A Baptism by Fire for SoCal

By Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

California wildfires destroyed two United Methodist churches and upended the lives of leaders and congregation members in Pacific Palisades and Altadena. Our Cal-Pac Bishop explains more about how the church is helping with meals, supplies, prayer and shelter.

Jan. 11 -- "I just got home after being out and about with churches and people who are surviving, helping, and showing Christ's love in action. I made a cup of coffee and put up my feet and noticed how dirty they were. "Gross!" I thought. These feet need a washing, maybe even a baptism. Two things came to me. First, the scripture "Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." My feet don't look too beautiful today. Those of you who know me well, know I'm most comfortable in Birkenstocks. I'm one of those who will put on socks with my Birks if it's cold. (I know, not the best look). Today my feet walked through streets, church halls, and church parking lots filled with ash. The ash isn't so visible now, but my feet knew it's still there.

Californians have been walking in ash for days. It's our reality. Los Angelenos have been out and about delivering goods, and the good news of togetherness, en masse. They have reminded each other, "You are not alone."

Jan. 13 -- "Collar Day. Sometimes it's the little things. Like wearing your collar when your community is in crisis so that your identity as clergy is known. If you have energy to meet people as you are out and about today, the simple act of letting yourself be recognized as a faith leader is calming. Someone may need an encouraging word, and maybe even a prayer. Clergy: collar up!"



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Rev. John Shaver (left) and his friend, Rabbi Mark Blazer, look out at the rubble left of Community United Methodist Church in Pacific Palisades, Calif., where Shaver is pastor. The community of Pacific Palisades was mostly destroyed by the Palisades wildfire. Photo courtesy of Shaver, California-Pacific Conference.

Bishop's Fire Response (cont.)

Jan. 25 -- "This past week I drove into Altadena to see the church, Altadena UMC. As I walked around the front edges of the property, I saw the devastation that comes when a town is burned down. My heart paused at grief for a bit as I stood there. So much ministry and so many gospel messages have been proclaimed from this place. I did my best to hold back the tears.

A guard came by and asked if we were ok. I let him know this was my church. I told him I was the bishop, not the pastor, but that didn't seem to matter, just holding on to the words: "This is my church."

And he said, "I'm sorry for your loss." He stood near and listened, and comforted, and kept us safe. He gave us as much time as we needed.

As we were getting ready to leave I noticed a sign that was hung on the wall to the side parking lot entrance. It said: Chartered 1886. "By faith, we've come this far.

With hope we are trusting in God's promise for the future."

The sign survived the fire. It is a message of hope for the future of this church to the people who lost their town. We trust. We know of God's promises. And we know Who holds the future.

How we can help

We are collecting gift cards to Target for clothing and other immediate needs items. Please send gift cards of any denomination to the conference office for distribution:

Denyse Barnes
c/o California-Pacific Annual Conference
PO Box 6006
Pasadena, CA 91102-6006

Best way to deliver funds

Send a check to the church office made out to FUMCOR and write "fire relief" in the memo line. It will be sent to the right place.

Thank You to All Who Donated

Our church in Riverside has sent in \$7,100 to help with fire relief. That includes what was collected and matched by the UMM at the lunch in January. Thanks be to God!

Volunteer Opportunities

Dinners at Family Promise

Church and Society/Missions has voted to make Family Promise of Riverside the focus of our "hunger ministry." Would you like to be a part of it?

Contact Kris Lovekin if you are called to take a meal, or read to children, or help in other ways. For instance, here is a fundraiser event on Feb. 11.



Mamma & Mia  **Family Promise**
RESTAURANT & BAR of Riverside

FUNDRAISER

at Mamma Mia Restaurant & Bar
10971 Magnolia Ave., Riverside CA 92505
(951) 729-5555

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025

11:00am to 8:30pm (in-person & phone orders only)

15% of food/beverage sales return to
Family Promise of Riverside

ENJOY DELICIOUS FOOD!

Invite friends; help raise funds for a good cause
Must mention fundraiser to server, no soliciting on-site day of event.





Finance Report

How Are We Doing Financially?

Rollin Edmunds, Chair Finance Committee

As the new Chair of the Finance Committee, I would like to update the church's faithful on the financial status of the church as of the end of 2024. First, in 2024 our total giving through pledges, special offerings, gifts, and other donations was the highest in the past five years at \$419,356.26. Our members rose to the challenge of addressing our increasing expenses with incredible generosity. Still our expenses exceeded our income by \$12,153.42. We were able to cover this deficit by using income and dividends from our Merrill Lynch Trust Account. We did not have to use any of the principle in the Trust Account.



Rollin Edmunds, chair of the Finance Committee

Casualty Insurance increased over our budgeted amount, and we lost income from facility rentals and other sources. Thank goodness for the generosity of our congregation which helped close the income/expense gap. Here is a summary of our income and expenses for the past five years. I think it shows that we continue to meet the financial challenges of increased costs and highlights the importance of your gifts.

☰

	FUMCOR				
	Income vs Expenses				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
All Giving	\$377,619.47	\$353,146.93	\$398,304.25	\$411,131.21	\$419,356.26
Total Income	\$485,563.58	\$508,155.57	\$597,850.16	\$641,548.95	\$633,535.25
Total Expenses	\$513,605.11	\$536,027.85	\$590,270.07	\$617,419.35	\$645,688.67
Income/Expenses	\$(28,041.53)	\$(27,872.28)	\$7,580.09	\$24,129.60	\$(12,153.42)

Again, 2025 will present a challenge. Sodexo had been renting space for several years but ended the contract at the end of 2024. Cell tower revenues have fallen with companies cutting rental fees. The Board of Trustees and the Finance Committee will continue to work together to find potential tenants to replace those revenues, as well as to find ways to save. We will continue to explore saving money on landscaping or investing in solar panels for the roof to save on future electric bills.

Giving will continue to be a significant source of income. Our most recent pledge drive produced 57 members who pledged a total of \$271,260 for 2025. This compares with 52 pledges for a total of \$234,680 last year. So we are grateful. Thank you all for your generosity. My thanks to David Fraser for his leadership of the finance committee in these past few years. He accomplished a great deal.

Gifts & Graces

Funding our Mission



Generous Legacy Gifts

Bessie Ridley lived a long and full life, to 104. She died on April 19, 2024, and she designated \$5,000 to the education programs of the church. Our education committee, chaired by Loretta Cudney and Regan Pope, will be in the lead on deciding how to spend the money.



Bessie Ridley



Louise Santino

Louise Santino served on the board of trustees with her husband Tom, working on keeping the property maintained. When their only son Jim died, they dedicated a rose garden near the front lawn of the church to his memory. Lou died on September 2, 2024, after moving to be closer to a daughter. In her estate, she designated \$10,000 to the needs of the church. Trustees will suggest possible uses to see how the family would like to designate the funds.

Patricia Williams sang in the Aldersgate Chorale for 50 years. After her death on Dec. 31 at the age of 89, her family decided to suggest memorial gifts to the choir fund. The choir director will have access to the funds for new music, brass groups at Easter or other musical needs. Already two gifts have arrived, with more to come as the celebration of life is 11 am Saturday, Feb. 1. All are welcome.



Patricia Williams

If you give to church
on a credit card,
remember to cover the
3 percent fees!



Parents' Morning Out

Available on Tuesdays from 9 am to 12 pm for just \$25.
Need to run errands or take some time for yourself?
Let us help! (Ages: 18 months to going into kindergarten)



We cherish our Children!

We are looking for Sunday School teachers!
If you're passionate about helping children
grow in their faith, and we would love
to have you join us!

U.P.L.I.F.T. Youth Group

Sunday, February 16 at 5 pm

Join us for pizza, fellowship, and a great time together!
All youth are welcome! Bring a friend!
RSVP w/Christina to make sure we have plenty of snacks!
951-212-5725

Join us for a fun-filled winter camp!

**Camperships are available,
and everyone qualifies.**

We'd love for the kids to experience the joy of camp,
make new friends, and grow in their faith.

**ALL THINGS
YOUTH AND CHILDREN...**

Contact Christina for more information.

951-212-5725

childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org



**1ST-12TH
GRADE**

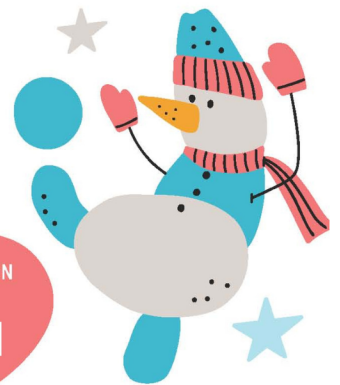
**CAMP WRIGHTWOOD
PRESENTS**

WINTER CAMP 2025

**FEBRUARY
15-17**

COST: \$150

REGISTRATION
IS NOW
OPEN



ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP, SMALL GROUPS,
SNOW PLAY, GROUP GAMES,
ARTS AND CRAFTS, AND SO
MUCH MORE!



@CAMPWRIGHTOOD

**WWW.CAMPWRIGHTWOOD.ORG
CANDERSON@CALPACUMC.ORG**

Upcoming Events



Young Adults to Plan Activities

We are starting a Young(er than the average) Adult group! Sophie Weiss will lead the discussion for now, about what people 21 to 39 might want out of church life. Is it service, or trips, or shared meals? If you are in the church books, look out for an email about joining the group for a monthly meeting, possibly on a Sunday afternoon. If you are not a member and want to be involved, please email Sophie Weiss at sophieweiss23@gmail.com (or contact the church office).

Walk for Hunger Relief on March 23



First UMC has been actively involved in the local CROP Hunger Walk since 1976. For the third year, FUMCOR will host the walk, to be held on Sunday, March 23, starting at 1:30 p.m. For more details and to sign up as a FUMCOR team participant, visit our team page at <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/crophungerwalks/team/first-united-methodist-church-riverside-ca> or use the QR code above.

CROP Hunger Walks are community events sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations to raise money and awareness for community and worldwide hunger and disaster relief efforts. Contact info: Kevin Simpson (kevin.m.simpson@me.com)

United Methodist Men

Sunday, Feb. 9



UC RIVERSIDE Office of Foster Youth Support Services

UMM Will Highlight Guardian Scholars Feb. 9

The County of Riverside provides a robust foster care program for minor-age children throughout the County. But what happens when they age out of the program? Enter the Guardian Scholars program of UC Riverside.

Operated under the auspices of the Office of Foster Youth Support Services (FYSS) at UC Riverside, it is dedicated to supporting students transitioning from foster care to adulthood as they pursue higher education.

Their support includes academic resources, enrichment programs, housing assistance, mentoring, student programming, mental and physical health services, and financial aid guidance. Their goal is to empower students to reach their full potential and achieve success in all areas of their lives.

Steven Morales, Director of the Office of Foster Youth Support Services (FYSS)/ Guardian Scholars (GS) will be the speaker at our Methodist men luncheon on February 9 at 11:15 am following morning worship.

All men are welcome to join Methodist Men. They meet at 7 am every Friday for a prayer breakfast and sharing news about those who need prayer.



Stephen Morales



Join us in Fellowship Hall at 4845 Brockton Avenue for a potluck, games and conversation. Bring a dish to share to a free community event.



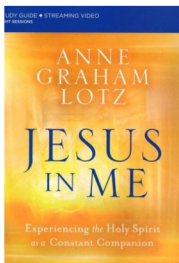
Scan for more information!





United Women in Faith

Sunday, January 26, United Women of Faith recognized and honored Sophie Weiss and Jeff Ashworth for the many ministries, gifts, and graces that each offer to individuals, our congregation, and the community.



Field Trip Feb. 20

- Meet at the Church at 10:30am to carpool to Redlands
- Lunch in Redlands followed by a
- 1pm tour of the **Kimberly Crest Mansion.**
- Tour tickets \$15/adults and \$12/ seniors.

Jewelry & Bake Sale Sunday, Feb. 9

United Women in Faith will have their annual bake sale and jewelry sale in Fellowship Hall after Church. This event coincides with the UMM Lunch.

We will have lots of tasty treats as well as a few healthy options.

UWV Bible Study

"Jesus in Me - Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion" by Anne Graham Lotz
Eight Sessions, Thursdays, January 9 through February 27, 2025
7 pm on Zoom



Events and Meetings



Feb 13 11:30 am - Lunch Bunch
at Fusion's 6749 Brockton Ave
in the Brockton Arcade.

Feb 20 10:30am Tour of Kimberly Crest Mansion
We will meet at the church to carpool to Redlands.

Feb 22 10am The Gathering in the Chandler Lounge.

UWV Bible Study will continue on Thursdays at 6:45pm via Zoom

For more information contact: Lyn Knowles 951-737-3541

There will be no Executive Committee meeting or UWV Meeting in February

1st Corinthians 13: 4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Highlighted Events

- **Feb. 3: Preschool Registration 9 am - Room 1**
- **Feb. 9: UWF Bake Sale & Jewelry Sale - 11 am**
- **Feb. 9: United Methodist Men Luncheon - 11 am**
- **Feb. 15: Empty Nester's Potluck - 5 pm**
- **Feb. 15-17 Camp Wrightwood (see flyer page 5)**
- **Feb. 16: Family Sunday with The Response**
- **Feb. 16: All American Potluck - 11 am**
- **Feb. 17: Campus Closed for Presidents' Day**
- **Feb. 23: The Habit Fundraiser**



Ongoing Events

- **Sundays:**
 - Chapel Prayer Group 1st - 9:15 am
 - Worship - 10 am
 - Sunday School for Children - 10:15 am
 - First Sundays-Holy Communion
 - Second Sunday-Men's Lunch after church.
 - Third Sundays - Faith and Fellowship Events 11:15am
- **Tuesdays:** Bell choir rehearsal - 7 pm
- **Wednesdays:** The Response band rehearsal - 6:30 pm
- **Thursdays:** Adult choir rehearsal - 7 pm
- **Fridays:** Men's Prayer Breakfast - 7 am

firstchurchriverside.org

Need to Reach Us?

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(951) 683-7831 (Mon to Fri 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.)
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First United

Methodist Church of Riverside