

DECEMBER 2025

The Messenger

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

A Good Year

By Pastor J.T. Kim
Delivered to the Charge Conference



It is my joy and blessing to continue serving this church as the Pastor. By the grace of God, as of July 1, 2025, I entered into the 10th year of my ministry here with the amazing and faithful congregation.

The aftermath of the pandemic and the UMC disaffiliation seriously impacted The United Methodist Church not only globally but also locally. Nevertheless, the congregation of First UMC of Riverside has been truly resilient and actively faithful in accomplishing our mission of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" by cherishing one another despite all kinds of challenges and hurdles.

Recently, with the new emphasis and guidance of The UMC's "New Vision," we are called to "love boldly, serve joyfully, lead courageously" in every aspect of our missions and ministries. I am wholeheartedly grateful to God for the amazing congregation, its committed leaders and faithful staff, and everything God has given us so that we can continue to be a growing and fruit bearing church.

Now it is time to remember that we are called to love and thrive through our best in evangelism, discipleship, and stewardship - together! As the pastor, I see no other better ways to become a flourishing church than excelling in these three main areas in more fruitful ways. I am excited to start embarking on a new journey of developing our church's Small Group Bible Study leaders. So far, four committed members have signed up to take the training program so that, upon their completion, each of them will be ready to lead their Small Group Bible Study in 2026. I am excited to see what new things we will have in store from this project.

As part of my call to serve the local community and the world. I have been serving as the Leader of the Riverside Mission Area Pastors (Corona UMC, Wesley UMC, and First UMC of Riverside) of the East District.

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First United

Methodist Church of Riverside

A good year (cont.)

I have been engaging in community through participating in the Downtown/Magnolia/Brockton community fellowship, which is an interfaith clergy group in Riverside. I am also in the Police and Clergy Partnership program, hosted by Riverside Police Department, to work together in making our community better and safer.

Furthermore, I have been serving as one of the clergy voting members of the Committee on Investigations (COI) of the California-Pacific Conference.

Since the All Saints Sunday in 2024, we have lost eight beloved and faithful members due to their death. However, this year, we are grateful that we have welcomed fifteen new members through baptism, confirmation, reaffirmation of faith, and transfer. Moreover, four children were baptized.

For the spiritual growth of the congregation, I have shared multiple sermon series on John Wesley's "Three Simple Rules," "Rise Again!" (Lent), "Five Marks of a Methodist," "Our New Vision" (UMC), "Life Is Better Together!" (Back-To-Church Campaign), and "A Journey of Hope" (Stewardship).

I never stop learning through books and other pastoral resources, including educational and leadership programs.

One of the this year's highlights was the 2025 Leadership Institute, with the overall theme of "RISE," hosted by ShareChurch, sponsored by the Church of the Resurrection, in early October.

I also enjoyed my learning opportunities through several webinars provided not only by the Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church but also by the UMC's Wespeth Benefits and Investments.

I am looking forward to joyfully serving God and people with the congregation by God's grace again. Thanks be to God!

Blessings,

Pastor J. T. Kim



Volunteer Opportunities

Offer Gifts of Love

Wesley UMC and First UMC will team up to buy Christmas gifts for families. You can donate cash or do the shopping.

Volunteers are still needed to deliver food and set up for the gift giving to families at Wesley. Contact Lee Ann Salmon (951) 906-6452 if you want to help with the project.



Make it a Habit

Every month we make it easy to have some dinner at The Habit to raise money for missions at our church. Join us on Dec. 28 from 11 am to 9 pm. Twenty percent of what you buy is sent back to the church. Just take a flyer with your from the narthex.



Camp Anza Food Haul

Thanks to all who donated food to Camp Anza in November. We will continue this mission. Santa's elves Cindy Marr and Lee Ann Salmon (and Lyn Knowles too) delivered the food to the pantry.

Are You Blue? Are You Grieving?

Come to a "Blue Christmas" Worship Service

Tuesday, Dec. 2 12 noon or 7 pm on

Led by Rev. Beverly Devine



"It's the most wonderful time of the year!" Or is it? For many people, the approaching Christmas holiday does not bring the joy and happiness that many experience. We may be facing this holiday after the death of a loved one, friend or neighbor.

We may have suffered through emotional trauma, loneliness, physical pain, or disease. What do people who are "blue" at Christmas need? Some, living through dark times, may need to find some distance from the holly jolly festivities in order to reflect, and to seek hope and healing.

Come experience our "Blue Christmas" Worship Service at 12 noon or 7 pm on Tuesday, Dec. 2, led by Rev. Beverly Devine. We will provide a peaceful experience for people who feel such burdens. Together, we may acknowledge the deep darkness and we may look for the light. The Christmas hymns, scriptures, silence, and a message of hope may remind us of what Christmas is all about. We will focus on the nativity and our own new reality just ahead of the busiest time, brimming with expectations; theirs and ours. May Jesus be our peace.

Shop Local at Gift Fair Sunday, Dec. 7



This year's Alternative Gift Fair, which focuses on handmade goods and good causes, is set for 11 am to 3 pm Sunday, Dec. 7.

Music, soup and good fellowship is the draw, along with crafts from Ten Thousand Villages, handcrafts made by the United Methodist Women; as well as cards and gifts from Heifer International and many other booths. The local literary hub Inlandia Institute sells books about the Inland area. The Riverside Food Co-op will have a booth, with jams and candles. Pencils and Dreams will be back this year. Find out more on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/alternativegiftfair>



The kitchen crew includes Sue, Jenn and Val. They stir up batches of delicious soup.





Santa's Workshop is Dec. 13

Invite your kids, your grandkids, and your neighbors, because Santa Claus is coming to First UMC from 10 to 12 noon on Saturday, Dec. 13. We'll be decorating cookies, playing Christmas games, making crafts, listening to carols and visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus! This is a free event offered as an outreach to our community, so please help spread the word.



Christmas Cantata on Sunday, Dec. 14



On Dec. 14 the Aldersgate Chorale will sing "God Came Near," a Christmas cantata by Tom Fettke and Max Lucado, during the church service.

Yvonne Flagg will direct and organist Robert Phillips will accompany the choir as they sing a continuous flow of carols that pairs with readings that narrate a journey of the miracle and majesty of Christmas.

Narrators are Loretta Cudney and Jeff Ashworth. Our featured singers include Jennifer Walker, Valerie Othon and Kris Lovekin.

Parents Night Out

Friday, December 12

5 pm to 7:30 pm

Drop the kids off at the Preschool Room 2 (nursery) for a fun-filled evening where they'll enjoy pizza, crafts, and exciting games. Our team will make sure they have a fantastic time while you get a well-deserved break.

Cost is \$25 per child/\$35 for two siblings, cash or check.

Contact; Christina Graves at 951-212-5725

childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org



Christmas Party



*Wishing you a joyful time with
family and friends during
this holiday season!*

Advent Anticipation... Sunday, December 21 10 am

Children and Youth will be serving and singing.
Bells will be ringing and hearts will be warming as we
anticipate the coming of Christ the Lord!



Our United Methodist Youth U.P.L.I.F.T Fellowship

is for youth in
5th through 12th grades,
and family members are
welcome to stay!

Youth, bring your friends!
We are meeting once
this month for our
Christmas party.

**December 14
at 5 pm**

**RSVP to be sure
we have plenty of pizza.
Christina Graves at
951-212-5725.**



Gifts and Graces

Funding our Mission



Charge Conference Crowd

The Financial Year Past and Future

By Kris Lovekin

On Nov. 16 at the annual Charge Conference, FUMCOR leaders reviewed the committee reports from last year and the budget projections for the coming year. FUMCOR struggles to live within its means. Insurance is going up, the needs of an older building are expensive and a dedicated group of trustees are already doing a lot of the work themselves. Past members of our church have left endowments and that comes to the rescue when needed.

Entrepreneurship helps, see the fundraiser for See's Candy below and how Robert Phillips stays on the task of keeping the organ maintained and how Church and Society pretty much raises its own money for missions. The Outreach Committee, UMM and UWF are also doing a significant amount of fundraising to keep programs going. We are renting church facilities to service clubs, recovering groups and even other churches. Welcome Quakers!

The church celebrated 15 new members last year, but about that many people died or left, so our membership number is staying steady. The Charge Conference voted to approve a 2.5 percent cost of living raises to our hardworking staff. We can still afford a full time pastor, so that is good news! In more good news, Sophie Weiss applied to be a Lay Servant Leader.

FUMCOR hosted five other churches for their charge conference. Rev. Roy Riggs presided over FUMCOR's, Wesley's and Corona's while three other churches held theirs in our sanctuary with another pastor. After both conferences finished, the church leaders gathered together around the tables for a potluck dinner.

FUMCOR has a projected budget of \$595,000 for the coming year, but only \$234,000 of that has been pledged. So if you can, turn in those pledges! It is not ideal to continue to eat away at our endowment.

"We hope to engage as a community to find ways to balance our budget and grow our church," said Rollin Edmunds, last year's chair of finance. This year David Fraser will take back the chairmanship. He said the Finance Committee is grateful to all those who pledge and give to the life of the church. "It really is how we run the place," he said.



Just in Time Stocking Stuffers

The finance committee will be selling small boxes of See's chocolate for \$11 each following church until supplies last.

About half of those proceeds will come back to the church budget shortfall. So help the budget and finish your shopping, all at one time.

For purchases of four or more boxes, David Fraser is willing to deliver. But get those orders in. David is selling at the Alternative Gift Fair so that will be one place to shop.

Be Wise and Angelic at Living Nativity



*The angels and shepherds gather at the manger.
Photo by Kirsten Snyder*

Have you ever wanted to be a shepherd? Come worship at the manger on Sunday, Dec. 21 in our traditional Living Nativity on the front lawn. The church has the costumes, and there are hot drinks and delicious cookies afterward. We start at 5:30 pm with costuming and the presentation is at 6:30 pm. This is a beautiful event. Invite a friend or a neighbor. Thanks to Sue and Brian Tomlinson for their faithful organization.

Faith and Fellowship Adds Sparkle

Crowns and candles, toasts and sweet desserts brought a festive spirit on Nov. 30, the first Sunday of Advent, courtesy of the Faith and Fellowship committee. Lynn and John Wright celebrate 42 years of marriage.



Reserve your Poinsettias



Given by _____

In Memory of _____

Honor of _____

Cost is \$20.

Deadline is Dec. 5 at the Church Office

Email: secretary@firstchurchriverside.org



United
Women
in Faith



Christmas Brunch & Cookie Exchange

Dear Ladies,
Please join us for our Christmas brunch and cookie exchange at 10 am Wednesday, Dec. 17 in the Fellowship Hall. This is not a potluck. The executive committee does the cooking. There will be a cookie exchange, so bring three dozen cookies if you want to participate. The 2026 officers will also be installed.

Key News & Notes

Dec. 2 - 1 pm Executive Meeting (Zoom)
Dec 6 - 9 am Alternative Gift Fair set up (Fellowship Hall)
Dec. 7 - 11 am Alternative Gift Fair (Fellowship Hall)
Dec. 17 - 10 am UWF Christmas Brunch (Fellowship Hall)

No Bible Study in December
No Lunch Bunch in December

Crafters...

Last call for your hand crafted items. We set up for the Alternative Gift Fair on Saturday Dec 6th at 9 am. Please bring your crafted items to Fellowship Hall while we are setting up. No items will be accepted on the day of the Gift Fair.

With all the activities and opportunities to eat in December we decided the Lunch Bunch will not meet. We will be heading out for lunch in January for sure.



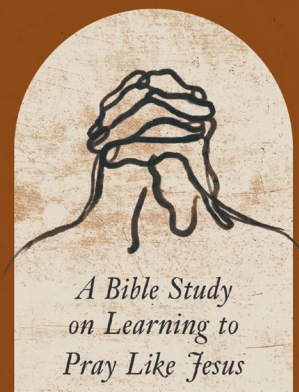
New Book Study January 8 to February 5

**IF YOU HAVE NOT ATTENDED ONE
OF THESE BIBLE STUDIES BEFORE,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

Karen Eagans (951-313-1017) or
Lyn Knowles (951) 737-3541
to receive a zoom invitation to this study

FIVE-SESSION BIBLE STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO

PRAYING LIKE MONKS, LIVING LIKE FOOLS



*A Bible Study
on Learning to
Pray Like Jesus*

BASED ON THE WRITING AND TEACHING OF
TYLER STATON

United Methodist Men

Sunday, Dec. 14

Methodist Men Offer Lunch

After the church service Dec. 14, the United Methodist Men will hold their monthly luncheon meeting with a holiday singalong. It all starts in the Fellowship Hall at 11:30 am. The cost of the lunch is \$6 per person or \$15 per family.

We hope that you can join us for this time of fellowship. The UMM Prayer Breakfast meetings continue at 7 am on Friday mornings in Mary's Kitchen at the church.



The Response at Last Year's UMM Christmas singalong.

Author Jo Scott-Co Enlightens on Public Violence and Private Pain

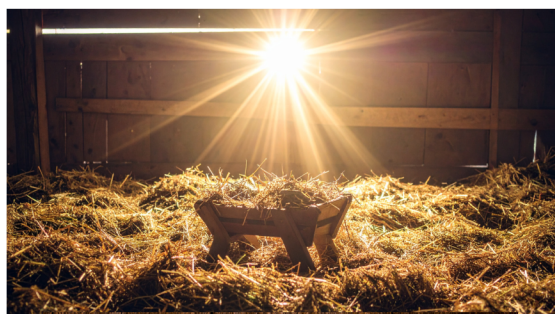


The buffet included creamed turkey, biscuits, veggies and pumpkin pie for dessert



David Leonard, president of UMM, invited Jo Scott-Coe to speak about her book on public violence and private pain during the November UMM lunch.

Prayers & Praises



Birthdays and Anniversaries

Please join with us in giving thanks for the birthdays and anniversaries in our congregation.

December Anniversaries

- 1 Christian Tupou/Elizabeth Tuihalamka
- 8 Sean and Teresa Clarke
- 19 Doug and Rebecca Slaughter
- 20 Rollin and Lucinda Edmunds
- 20 John and Susan-Page Logger
- 22 LJ and Joy Arguelles
- 22 Roger and Gail Murray
- 29 Kirk and Kelly Weakly

December Birthdays

- 5 Brandon Labrador
- 6 Barry Arnold
- 6 Mandy Johnson-Bottrell
- 8 Bertha Harris
- 9 Camille Arguelles
- 10 Angela Johnson
- 10 Sara Peck
- 11 Crisanjali Rajaratnam
- 12 Kennedi Williams
- 12 Julia Zeeb
- 13 Helen Nuchols
- 14 Charles McFall-Thompson
- 15 Fiedad Arguelles
- 15 Kristin Beals
- 15 Kirk Weakly
- 19 Stephen Turkson
- 23 Connie Taylor
- 29 William George
- 30 Carolyn Greywood
- 31 Jackie Cook

We seek the mighty God
in the most unlikely places
as a child in a stable,
and in an empty tomb.
May God hear these prayers,
which come from the unlikely
corners of our lives.
Give us ears to hear, O God,
and eyes to watch,
that we may know
your presence in our midst
during this holy season of joy
as we anticipate
the coming of Jesus Christ.
Amen.



Celebration of Life

for

Jim Conlin

Thursday, December 4, at 1 pm
All are welcome to come to honor his life
in the Sanctuary
and reception in the Fellowship Hall.

Prayer Concerns

James Herron, Doug Robinson, Devyn Salmon, Josh Salmon, Rizzy Manacop, Margie Baillod, Lucille Novak, Jun Valino, Patrick Russell, Jon Dugan, Gitanjali Spencer, Derek and Robin Austin, Liz Jennings, George Callow, Bill Ashworth, Norma Nelson, Ed Lamers, Mack Davis, De'Ann McWilliams, Michael Thompson, Pat Beals, Mary Boon, Melva Cooke, Melissa Williams, Calvin Narayan and Shail Singh, John and Susan Page-Logger, Mary Herrmann, Bill and Helen Nuchols, Jim Ashworth, Marge Wolter, Robert and Benita Roberts, Josephine Essien and family, Cheryl and Roy Riggs and family, family of Jim Conlin, our families, our neighbors, our country, our world

FUMPS News

First UMC Preschool families donated over a 130 baskets of donated food to Meals On Wheels. The See's fundraiser was a big success as well. Director Lisa Skiver said: "We want to thank our FUMPS families for all the support they give us! All our stockings are hung and we can hear the jingle bells ringing. The Holiday Program is Dec. 16 and 17 at 11:30 in the sanctuary if anyone would like to come see the kids sing! Happy Holidays from FUMPS!"



Two Services on Dec. 24

Join us for a sacred time of worship as the family of God with traditional carols, Holy Communion and singing "Silent Night" by candlelight. The children are featured at the first service at 7 pm. The bells play at the 11 pm second service, along with a vocal ensemble.

Refill the Backpack

It is mid-year for the school calendar, and some students will be running out of school supplies. The Outreach Committee is going to host a "refill your backpack" event. There will be no bounce house, no face painting, no gift basket, just the opportunity for those students who need to refresh their supplies to do so at the church. The Koinonia room will be open on Saturday, Jan. 10 from 10 am until 12 noon for students who need new binders, dividers, notebooks, paper, pencils or erasers to gather new supplies for the new year. If you know someone who may need some help getting the extra needed school supplies as they start their new semester, invite them to visit us on Jan. 10.



Highlighted Events

Dec. 2: Blue Christmas Services 12 pm and 7 pm
Dec. 7: Alternative Gift Fair 11 am to 3 pm
Dec. 13: Santa's Workshop 10 to 12 noon
Dec. 14: UMM Lunch 11:30 am
Dec. 16, 17: FUMPS Christmas program, 11:30 am
Dec. 21: Living Nativity
Dec. 24: Office closes at noon
Dec. 24: Christmas Eve services 7 pm and 11 pm
Dec. Office closed 25th and 26th
Dec. 31: Office closes at noon
Jan. 1: Office is closed.

Ongoing Events

- Sunday Worship: 10 am
- First Sundays-Holy Communion
- First Sundays-Chapel Prayer Circle
- Sunday School for Children: 10:15 am
- Youth Worship (2nd & 4th Sundays): 10:15 am
- Men's Lunch Second Sunday after church.
- Adult choir rehearsal: Thursdays, 7 pm
- Bell choir rehearsal: Tuesdays, 7 pm

CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES ARE ON THE WAY...

**They will arrive at the end of December
and we will let you know when they arrive!**

Display Cases

Don't forget to visit the display case in the education wing. Barbara Jo Wilson has been busy changing them out for each season. What will it look like next?



Need to Reach Us?

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(951) 683-7831 (Mon to Fri 10am to 2pm)
secretary@firstchurchriverside.org

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choirdirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Gayla Lonsbery, Bell Director
belldirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Robert Phillips, Organist
organist@firstchurchriverside.org

Lisa Skiver, Preschool Director
fumps@sbcglobal.net

Jesse Ruiz, Custodial Manager
jrui28880@aol.com

Brad Tomlinson, Campus Supervisor
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