

The Messenger

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

Building the Beloved Community

By Kris Lovekin

It is the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which tells us that "all men are created equal." We haven't lived up to that promise yet, but I still think that with God's help, we will get there. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "we as a people will get to the promised land."

Just like in the Civil Rights era, we are at another inflection point. We stand in need of grace and justice that flows down like a mighty river.

On Monday, Jan. 19, I celebrated MLK with a chorus of women in white, singing for the marchers in Riverside. On Friday, Jan. 23, I was back on the street in downtown Riverside and I had a bullhorn in my hand leading the chanting in response to the death of Renee Good in Minneapolis. We did not know that there would be another death in Minneapolis the next day, Alex Pretti. Both Renee and Alex were 37, and from the reporting I've read, the federal agents celebrated their deaths.

This is the opposite of good police work.

I have been careful to keep my church life and my protest life separate, because I want my church to be the kind of big tent United Methodist congregation that welcomes everyone. There is no political litmus test.

But I do know that we are being tested about how well we follow Jesus.

Sometimes my protest signs are based on faith, for example "Jesus said welcome the stranger." I'm also following some of our clergy members in the act of street protest, like our Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank.

In a statement earlier this year, she wrote: "Tonight, I am calling on all Christ-following people, and on all tenderhearted people, to stand with those who are being ripped apart from their families. Speak to your politicians. March in peaceful protest. While you are there, make sure everyone is safe and responds in peace. Be witnesses on the streets so that the horror does not happen under cover. Pray for those whose cries you hear. Pray for the ICE agents to lay down their weapons. Pray for the leaders of our world, asking that they would seek peace above all. Pray for justice to prevail, because we all know that without justice, there is no peace. Attend prayer vigils. Hold one in your church or your neighborhood. Act, pray, and rise up where you see injustice and harm." (cont. on next page)



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Beloved Community (cont.)

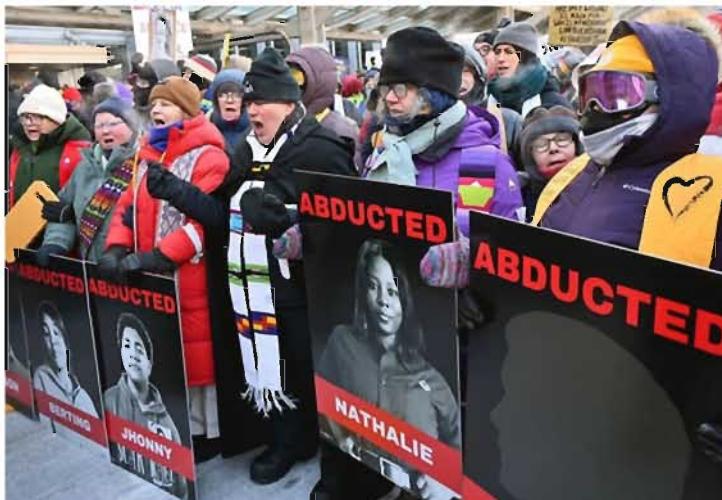
If that call from our Bishop feels uncomfortable, just know that there are many roles in a movement. Make a meal and take it to someone who is hungry. Join an organization that supports immigrants or those who are hungry or in prison. Write letters to the editor or postcards that express your opinion to those who have the power to change things. Donate to a cause that you admire (and of course that can include your church.) Teach a Sunday School class. Even reading about our colonial history as a nation can be a good start.

Together, we can help create a world that is more loving. Bishop Tracy S. Malone, who leads our Council of Bishops, wrote a letter recently that states our mission as United Methodists. This statement was approved in our social principles by delegates to the Annual Conference.

"We reject governmental use of threats, extortion, unlawful detentions, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of coercion to silence political opponents and those objecting to unlawful or immoral government policies and practices." The church, Bishop Malone explains, has both the right and the responsibility to educate and equip its members to be advocates for justice in the wider world.

Be the light!
Be the salt!
See you in church,

Kris Lovekin
Lay Leader



Volunteer Opportunities

Teach the Children Well

Our youth and children's programs are getting bigger and Christina Graves needs help.

"I need about six more adults to keep two people in each Sunday School class," she said.

You just need to have patience and love, and Christina will find the curriculum.



We Need Boxes

For the event called Boxcars at the Movies on March 14, we need large cardboard boxes, big enough for a child to sit in like a car. Bring them to the church office and the Outreach Committee will get them ready for the event.



Preschool News



Pasta Fundraising Makes it Snow!

Lisa Skiver, director of FUMPS, described a successful family Pasta Night fundraiser in January that raised enough money to pay for a fun snow day activity for the children.

"Thank you to the church and board members for attending and supporting us," Lisa said. "We have used those funds for our snow day this week Jan 29! In February we have a See's Candies fundraiser starting Feb 23. Lastly, our registration begins Feb. 3 for the following school year, please spread the word."



Katie Inman and Lisa Skiver enjoy the day almost as much as the children.

Hearts and Hotcakes

Feb. 15



Come enjoy a pancake brunch after church on Sunday, Feb. 15 in the Fellowship Hall. This will be a freewill donation to raise money for the Church and Society committee to continue to fund good causes around the community and around the world.

When the HOPE room at Wesley needs pants or socks, we respond. When Family Promise of Riverside needs a church partner, we respond. When disaster hits somewhere in the world, we want to be ready with quick donations.

David Fraser and Lyn Knowles will team up on the cooking and the rest of the committee will make sure you have eggs and sausage, pancakes and syrup, some good coffee and even some strawberries. Proceeds will go to the Church and Society account.



Dance Like Nobody's Watching

English Country Dance will continue on the first and third Sundays of each month at 3 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Don't miss out on this historical dance. No partner is needed, just join the fun. Teri and Dennis Whieldon our our local experts. Bring a friend to share in the fellowship.





Upcoming in Lent

Lenten Soup Suppers To Be a Leap of Faith

We start our Lenten journey at 7 pm on Feb. 18 with ashes on our foreheads in the sanctuary. And then every Wednesday night after that we gather for soup, music and a speaker on the theme "Leap of Faith." The dinner starts at 6 pm.

The following groups are hosting the Soup Suppers, but anyone can sign up for one or more of the nights. Loretta Cudney will make sure we have a sign up table on the patio after church until March 16th.

- Feb 25 – United Methodist Men (soup contact: Dave Leonard). Our speaker is Claire Jefferson-Glipa who takes a leap of faith everyday as she leads Family Promise of Riverside.
- March 4 – Musical Groups (soup contact: Yvonne Flagg) Our speaker, Josh Ponnuraju, will talk about his journey into nursing and what experiences he has had along the way.
- March 11 – Broken Sheep Committees (soup contact: Lee Ann Salmon)
- March 18 – Women of Faith (soup contact: Lyn Knowles)
- March 25 – Congregation members (soup contact: Loretta Cudney). Our speaker will be Yvette Lomax, who will take us on the journey of parenting an exceptional singer, her son and a tenor in our church choir, Sean Lomax. He will be the featured singer at this dinner.

At 10 am on Sunday, April 5 we will gather for a celebration of Easter with brass, lilies and butterflies.
He is Risen!

Walk for Hunger Relief on Sunday, March 22



Save March 22 for the CROP Hunger Walk, a community event sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations to raise money and awareness for hunger relief. FUMCOR is the host for the Riverside walk. Kevin Simpson has set up our team so you can already sign up.



Get to Know Your Bible

Christina will lead a three week Bible class for elementary age children that will result in the presentation of a new Bible in church. It all starts on Sunday, Feb. 22



Sunday Mornings

Each Sunday, younger children attend worship in the sanctuary with their parents/family, enjoy the "Children's Moment" with Christina, and then, go to **"SUNDAY SCHOOL"** in (Preschool Rm. 2) at 10:15.

"YOUTH WORSHIP" is offered every 2nd and 4th Sunday for 6th to 12th grade students, in the upstairs **Youth Room**, following "Children's Moment."

**ALL THINGS
YOUTH AND CHILDREN...**
Contact Christina for more
information.
951-212-5725

childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org

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.

Winter Camp Grades is for grades First Through 12th
| Feb. 14-16, 2026

Get ready for a weekend packed with fun, faith, and friendship at Winter Camp: Breaking the Ice!

Campers enjoy winter games, campfire worship, creative challenges, and meaningful small group time, all focused on breaking down barriers and building connections that last.

Come warm your heart, even if the weather's cold, it's the perfect mid-year camp adventure!

Learn more & register at: www.campwrightwood.org

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

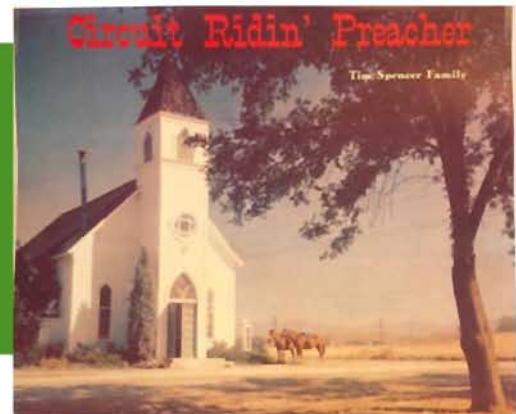
Sunday, February 15 at 5 pm

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.

United Methodist Men

Sunday, Feb. 8



A Fire That Leaves a Scar on History

Carolyn Greywood, a relatively new member, will be the speaker at our United Methodist Men luncheon on Feb. 8 at 11:15 am after morning worship.

The community of Murrieta was a small rural town in 1963. A quaint Methodist Church had served as the location for countless services, baptisms, weddings, and funerals extending back to 1886. In the early morning hours on April 10, 1963, a local fire alarm went off; the church was on fire. Like the original First Methodist Church building in downtown Riverside, the Murrieta Methodist Church building burned to the ground.

Carolyn Greywood and her family were members of that church. They watched helplessly as it burned. Her brother captured the moment in photos that she will share during her talk.

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.

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



Carolyn Greywood



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



Scan for more information!





United Women in Faith

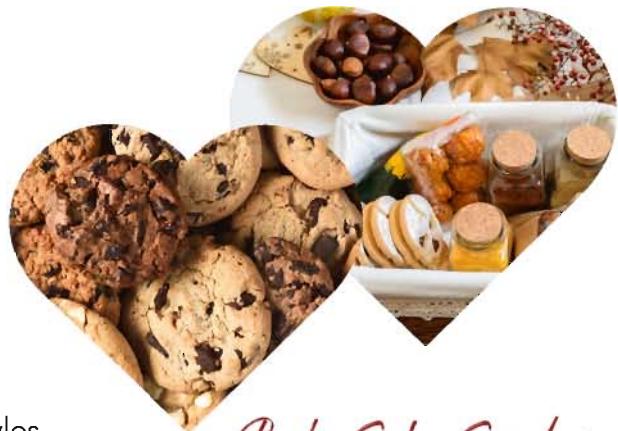
Sunday, Jan. 18, United Women of Faith

recognized and honored Lynn Wright and Don Knowles for the many ministries, gifts, and graces that each offer to individuals, our congregation, and the community.

East District Meeting



Marilyn Robinson, Lyn Knowles, Pam Conlin, Carol Cipra and Patti Gardenias attended the East District UWF meeting at Ontario First UMC on Saturday, Jan. 21. Our unit received two certificates and Pam Conlin received a certificate for completing level four of the UWF Reading Program. An officer training session followed.



Bake Sale Sunday, Feb. 8

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.

Events and Meetings

Feb. 5 6:45 pm - Final Zoom Bible Study for Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools

Feb 12 11 am - Lunch Bunch

Flo's Farmhouse, 5620 Van Buren (at Philbin Ave.)
Come join us for good food and good company.

Feb 4, 11, 18, 25, 8:30 am - Walkabout at Bonominio Park.

Meet at the back parking lot near the playground.

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



January's meeting memorialized four members who died in 2025: Chandra Roberts; Robin Renteria; Connie Taylor; and Mimi Luker Grimes.

Prayers and Praises



Prayers of Concern

Please be in prayer for

Lyle Adams, Ronnie Tovar, Rev. Bev Devine, Roger Murray, Lolita Manacop, Grace Reyes, Sharon Henry, Carolyn and Don Greywood, Lupe Vela, Timothy Speck, Wayne Speir, Rebecca Konegen, Dewey Edmunds, Jun Valino, Marie Madden, Gitanjali Spencer, Liz Jennings, George Callow, Bill Ashworth, Norma Nelson, Ed Lamers, Mack Davis, Pat Beals, Michael Thompson, Marge Wolter, Mary Boon, Melissa Williams, John and Susan Logger, Mary Herrmann, Bill and Helen Nuchols, Jim Ashworth, Melva Cooke, Michelle Arguelles, Robert and Benita Roberts, Scott and De'Ann McWilliams, the family of Connie Taylor, the family of Mary Bidwell



Our Prayer Chapel

Children of God,

who has God called you to be?

A light to all the nations!

When confusion, disunity, and misinformation threaten to undo us, who are you called to be?

A light to all the nations!

When wars and rumors of wars in our communities and around the world overwhelm us, who are you called to be?

A light to all the nations!

When the vulnerable are left without care or hope for flourishing, who are you called to be?

A light to all the nations!



We pray:

Guide our feet, Lord. Show us the light of grace when we would judge others too harshly. Warm our hearts with the glow of your love when we would spew icy words of spite. Illumine our souls with joyful delight when sadness tries to take over the day. Shine brightly on us today, Lord, until we reflect your glory as a witness to this world. Amen.

Written by Kwasi Kena, The Africana Worship Book Year A (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 84.

We give thanks for the birthdays in our congregation.

February Birthdays

- 1 Nancy Neumann
- 2 Clayton McEvoy
- 6 Rory Haught
- 7 Heather Cardenas
- 9 Alex Othon
- 10 Noemi Bueno
- 11 Linda Hice
- 11 Jeff Ashworth
- 15 Dan Cork
- 16 Ron Bayer
- 17 Peggy Haught
- 18 Tina Rajaratnam
- 18 Kwang Jin Kim
- 20 Charlotte Stevenson (96)
- 22 Pam C. Conlin
- 23 Kim Leonard
- 25 Mary Herrmann
- 26 Jennifer Walker

Happy 25th Anniversary to:
Jesse and Becky Ruiz 2/24/26

What God Requires

"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

-Micah 6:6-8

Highlighted Events

- **Feb. 8:** UWF Bake Sale - 11 am
- **Feb. 8:** United Methodist Men Luncheon - 11 am
- **Feb. 14-17** Camp Wrightwood
- **Feb. 15:** Family Sunday with The Response
- **Feb. 15:** Pancake Brunch after church
- **Feb. 16:** Campus Closed for Presidents' Day
- **Feb. 22:** The Habit Fundraiser
- **Feb. 22:** English Country Dance
- **Feb. 28:** Empty Nester's Potluck - 5 pm



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 in Mary's Kitchen

Need to Reach Us?

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