

MARCH 2026

The Messenger

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

An Amazing Opportunity Coming Soon!

Dear Family and Friends:
Lenten Greetings!

I would like to share with you some exciting news about our new small group Bible study opportunities! I have been praying for a new opportunity for us to connect more deeply as a church, and I believe God is bringing us a new season of discipleship. Soon after celebrating Easter, we will be launching new small study groups designed to help us grow closer to Jesus—and to each other.

I know that taking that first step into a new group can feel intimidating, but I promise that our groups are designed to be safe, welcoming places to ask questions, share life, and study the Bible. These groups will not just increase your knowledge; they will strengthen your walk with Christ. We are truly blessed to have five small group Bible Study leaders in training now through our leadership development sessions. I am pleased to announce these wonderful leaders to you: Richard Rajaratnam, James Herron, Lucinda Edmunds, Brent Levine, and Sophie Weiss. Each has new insight and new life experiences and ways to interpret and discuss the Bible in private homes or in small groups at church.



Five new Bible Study leaders: Top L to R: James Herron, Richard Rajaratnam, Lucinda Edmunds; Bottom L to R: Brent Levine, and Sophie Weiss plus Pastor Kim

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Coming Soon (cont.)

These amazing and faithful leaders and I, Pastor, have been meeting since January this year, hoping and planning that, by the time of Easter Sunday, five small groups, including an adult Sunday School, will be introduced and will be offered to you so that you can sign up for one of these groups. Jesus emphasizes the importance of our spiritual growth.

Please keep your eyes open for the official launch date and more details coming very soon. I encourage you to pray about who you might invite to join you!
Love and Blessings,

The Rev. J. T. Kim, Pastor

"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me"

- John 15:4

Please invite a neighbor family to our outreach event on March 14!



Boxcars at the Movies
March 14th, 10am - 12 Noon

Bring a box that your child can sit in. It will become their ride to the movies. We provide supplies for children to decorate their boxcars, a movie, and a snack.

Join us in the Fellowship Hall at 4845 Brockton Ave. Riverside, CA



Volunteer Opportunities

Family Promise is Back

First UMC is partnering with Family Promise of Riverside, a nonprofit organization that coordinates shelter and food for homeless families with children.

They always need gift cards, dinners, reading buddies and help in moving. The organization is having good success transitioning families to stable housing. We will host them in our education wing starting in May.

Contact Kris Lovekin if you are called to work with homeless families in some way.

Easter Candy Needed



Faith and Fellowship is starting to collect Easter candy for the egg hunt on Sunday, April 5. Give to Kelly Weakly or drop at the office after March 15. This is a great time to help us make our young families feel welcome.

Thank You!

Church and Society brought in \$567 with our Hearts and Hotcakes brunch on Feb. 15. That money will help us support people in need in the upcoming year. Thanks to Lyn Knowles and all the helpers for the hard work and delicious food.



A Hard Goodbye



Becky Ruiz, our longtime financial secretary, has just accepted a new job with Riverside County, one with benefits and a retirement package.

As sad as we are to lose her, we must wish her well with this exciting new challenge. Her last day will be Friday, March 13th.

"Becky has worked for us for 15 years and her warmth has made our church office a wonderful, welcoming place," said Steve Kerrick, chair of Staff/Pastor Relations Committee. "Her skill, dedication, and professionalism have kept the gears spinning smoothly. We will miss her terribly!" SPRC will begin searching for a replacement immediately, and in the meantime, Stephanie Chandler has agreed to come back for a few days each week while we search. Drop Becky a card or send an email to say thanks for 15 wonderful years.

Dance Changes Start Time

English Country Dance will start at 1 pm in the Fellowship Hall on the first and third Sundays of the month. On March 1, Teri and Dennis Whieldon are bringing sandwiches to make it easier to just stay after church on a Sunday. No partner required. Just come dance! If you have ever enjoyed square dancing, you will probably enjoy English Country Dance.



Easter Eggs Extravagantly Dyed

The Youngish group (ages 20 to 40) will dye Easter eggs at Sophie's place at 6:30 pm Sunday, March 8.

First UMC Hosts CROP Walk March 22

The Riverside CROP Hunger Walk is a community event sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations to raise money and awareness for community and worldwide hunger relief efforts. FUMCOR will again host the walk, to be held on Sunday, March 22, starting at 1:30 p.m. at the church. For more details and to sign up as a FUMCOR team participant, see Kevin Simpson (kevin.simpson@me.com) on the patio after church, visit our team page at <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/chw/team/first-united-methodist-church-riverside-ca> or use the QR at the right.





Lenten Soup Suppers Continue

Our Lenten soup suppers continue in March, showcasing the leaps of faith that we make at important moments in our lives. What times in your life have you closed your eyes and leapt into a new opportunity with trust in God? We will also sing together and enjoy delicious soups brought by members of our fellowship groups.

The Christian Education group will set the tables. It all starts at 6 pm. On Feb. 25, Claire Jefferson-Glipa of Family Promise of Riverside got us started talking about the leap of faith she takes every day with families in crisis. (Kris Lovekin was the singer.) We wrote letters to our city council representatives about our support for fair housing.

Upcoming speakers:

March 4: **Josh Ponnuruju** will share about his journey to become a nurse and ways that faith plays a role. He is musically gifted and he sings in our choir. Phil Bremenstuhl will be our musical guest.

March 11: **Beverly DeFrance** will tell us about second chances in her faith journey as she lived all over the world. Yvonne Flagg will sing a solo.

March 18: **Christina Graves** will talk about the leap of faith required in working with our children and youth. Our singers are Jennifer Walker and Leslie Tomlinson.

March 25: **Yvette Lomax** will talk about the leap of faith required when raising a talented son with autism. Her son Sean Lomax, who sings in our choir, is the featured musical guest.



Claire Jefferson-Glipa



Sophie Weiss with the letters



Baked Potatoes and More



Faith and Fellowship will host the ever popular St. Patrick's Day potato bar after church on Sunday, March 15. Join us in your best shamrock greens!

Enrollment is Open for FUMPS

Our First United Methodist Church Preschool is taking registration for enrollment now. Founded in 1947, the preschool offers social, emotional, spiritual and developmental growth in a carefully planned program. It has always been an important outreach of our church. This program is child centered, licensed and accredited. The staff fosters and appreciates the individual child's natural curiosity, creativity and ability.

More here: <https://www.fumps.org/>



We are currently looking for new Sunday School volunteers and teachers. If you feel called to serve and help guide our children as they grow in their faith, we would love to have you join the team!



WHO ME?



Yes, please!



St. Patrick's Day YOUTH GROUP FUN!!!

Join us on Sunday,
March 15
at 5 PM

for a fun St. Patrick's Day-themed youth group night! There will be pizza, fellowship, games, and lots of fun.

Don't forget to wear your green!

Nurturing New Life to Release on Easter Sunday!

We are so excited to share that we will be raising butterflies again this year! Watching them grow and change reminds us of God's amazing creation and the new life we celebrate at Easter.

We can't wait to release them on Easter Sunday. It's always such a special and beautiful moment!



Save the Date - VBS 2026! Vacation Bible School will be held June 8th-12th.

Mark your calendars now...
You won't want to miss this exciting week
filled with faith, friends, and fun!

AND...

We are also looking for volunteers to help make VBS an amazing week. If you're interested in serving the youth and children, please contact **Christina** childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org or call **951-212-5725**

United Methodist Men

Sunday, March 8



Cal Baptist: Past, Present and Future

David Leonard, president of the United Methodist Men, will talk about the rich history of California Baptist University and its location at 8432 Magnolia Avenue. Topics will include signs on the land from indigenous people, from the 1870s citrus boom and lower canal, the mansions erected in the 1920s and the Neighbors of Woodcraft Retirement Home. In 1955, the university came to the site and has been growing ever since.

The cost for a delicious lunch is \$6 per person or \$20 per family.

If mornings are your thing, the UMM is meeting at 7 am each Friday morning for a Prayer Breakfast. Gather in Mary's Kitchen for coffee, pastries, sharing news about those who need prayer, and fellowship. All men are invited to join.

Plans for the future include a program about La Sierra University and a talk from Bob Nelson.



David Leonard will speak

See's Candy Fundraiser to Start March 4

Look for David Fraser and See's Easter boxes at the March 4 Lenten dinner and after church Sundays until supplies run out. David is raising money for the church budget. This time look for:

Cheery Chick Box with seven pieces of chocolate for \$12

Marshmallow and Scotchmallow Eggs (four eggs). \$11.

Bordeaux Egg \$9.

Chocolate Butter Egg \$9.





United Women in Faith

Events and Meetings

March 3 - Executive Meeting (Zoom) - 1 pm
 March 12 - Lunch Bunch: Morena's Mexican Restaurant, 3457 Arlington Ave, Suite 106. (Tava Center on the left side) - 11 am
 March 18 - UWF providing soup for Lenten Soup Supper (FH) - 5:30 pm
 March 21, 2026 - 11 am Connie Taylor's Memorial Service/Reception.

*Wednesday Mornings Walk About 8:30am at Ryan Bonaminio Park.
 We meet in the back parking area near the playground.

March Lunch Bunch

In February, thirteen women gathered at Flo's Farmhouse! In March we will go to Morena's Mexican Restaurant.

Please RSVP to Pam 951-237-5470.

Maybe we can top February's attendance!



Thank you!

We appreciate all who brought (and bought) baked goods for our **Valentine's Day Bake Sale.** (\$499 goes to our Mission Giving)

March 18 Lenten Soup Supper



United Women in Faith is scheduled to provide soup and bread for the

March 18 Lenten Soup Dinner

We will need 12 soups, bread or crackers. Look for the sign up sheet.



Join the "Bad Girls of the Bible" Study

April 9, April 16, April 23, and May 9

We meet via Zoom at 7 pm

Please Contact:

Lyn Knowles daselwonk@aol.com
 Karen Eagans kkeagans@aol.com

SATURDAY APRIL 25

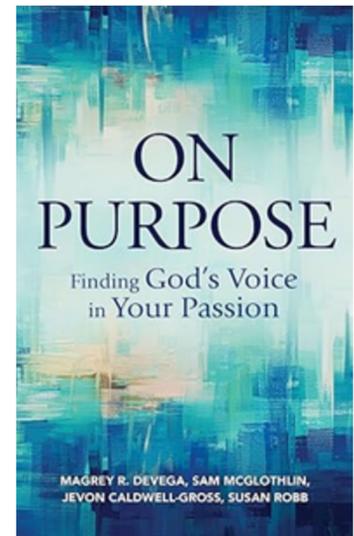
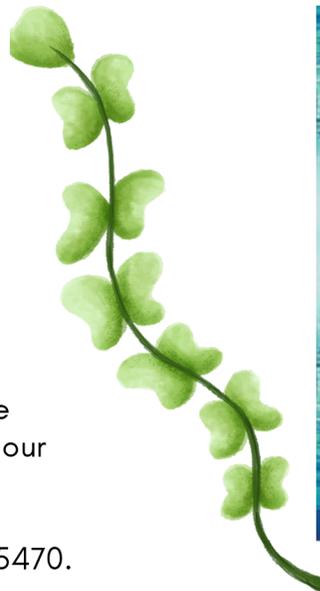


This is a great time to start cleaning out closets and the garage!

We are joining our neighbors from the Wood Streets by having our yard sale on our FUMCOR front lawn. You are invited to participate by bringing or buying treasures on our front lawn. Donations can be left at the Church Office between 10-2 Mon-Fri.

Call Pam Conlin if you need items picked up. 951-237-5470.

FirstChurchRiverside.org





Prayers & Praises



Celebrate

Anniversaries

- 3/1 Steve and Kris Lovekin
- 3/16 Stan and Jackie Cook

Birthdays

- 3/2 Bob Bahnsen
- 3/3 Joseph Haught
- 3/4 Janis Duke
- 3/6 Grant Hough
- 3/7 Christopher Davies
- 3/7 Ella Kimball
- 3/7 Michiko Reyes
- 3/8 Bill Ashworth
- 3/8 Sean Lomax
- 3/11 Amit Roberts
- 3/11 Samir Roberts
- 3/16 Dorie Grimes
- 3/19 Yvonne Peters
- 3/19 Dennis Whieldon
- 3/20 Cindy Marr
- 3/21 Ronald Purkey
- 3/21 Doug Robinson
- 3/23 Mary Boon
- 3/23 Carmen Lonsbery
- 3/23 Chris Tupou
- 3/25 Emilie Gorham
- 3/25 Carrie Renteria
- 3/27 Danielle Johnson
- 3/28 Michelle Arguelles
- 3/29 Peggy Stepe
- 3/31 Gavin Hough

Renewed in Mercy

The Lenten journey may seem overly familiar... Indeed, we have been here before. There is comfort in the familiar. Many of the rituals and practices of this season are comfortable. They give us a sense of place, like being home again.

This can be a good starting place for the season, an invitation to walk the paths we have walked before.

Yet, the Lenten journey and our discipleship path encourage us to grow, to go deeper, to climb higher, to reach further than we may have before.

Lent is a time of introspection, but also a call to action as we seek to be the pilgrim people of God, seeking God's kingdom and shaping God's kin-dom in worship and in service.

This Lent, may you to experience the renewal that comes from God's never-ending mercy and then to walk with our Lord on a journey to new life.

(Discipleship Ministries, 2026)

Let us
pray for...



Samuel Sawlikar and family, Rollin Edmunds, Tina Dungan, Lupe Vela, Lyle Adams, Ronnie Tovar, Roger Murray, Carolyn Greywood, Lolita Manacop, Grace Reyes, Sharon Henry, Wayne Speir, Rebecca Konegen, Jun Valino, Jon Dugan, Marie Madden, Norma Nelson, Gitanjali Spencer, Liz Jennings, Pat Beals, George Callow, Mack Davis, Bill Ashworth, Ed Lamers, Mary Boon, Michael Thompson, Marge Wolter, Mary Herrmann, Jim Ashworth, Michelle Arguelles, John and Susan Logger, Melissa Williams, Melva Cooke, Bill and Helen Nuchols, Robert and Benita Roberts, The families of: Connie Taylor, Mary Bidwell, Dewey Edmunds, our families, our neighbors, our country, and our world



It's a Women's March On The Organ

By Robert Phillips



Dr. Joyce Jones

March is Women's History Month, and to celebrate, the organ music of female composers will predominate in our worship services throughout the month.

Historically, the pipe organ has been considered a "male" instrument. Since the early eighteenth century, a few women were employed as church organists, primarily because they could be paid less than men. By the nineteenth century, however, it was feared that playing the organ might be injurious to a woman's health and ability to bear children. An article in the *Girl's Own Paper* from 1893 stated, "Organ-playing is not considered advisable for women. Strong, unmarried, middle-aged women may play the foot-keys without

suffering from the unsuitable strain on the back and loins, but it is a risk if the instrument be a large one."

In addition, the work of female composers largely went unpublished, it was published under pseudonyms or their husbands' names, or they identified themselves only by their initials to mask their gender. Over the last several decades, the movement to promote diversity in the arts has created opportunities for women in the fields of organ composition and performance, and a broad spectrum of their creative mastery is increasingly available.

In our March 8 worship service, the "interlude" will be Dr. Joyce Jones's roof-raising set of variations on Paul Makai's well-known hymn "God Is So Good." Dr. Jones (1933-2022) enjoyed a seven-decade career, concertizing in all 50 states and abroad. She was the first woman to perform on the organ at the Crystal Cathedral. She was the Joyce Oliver Bowden Professor of Organ and organist in residence at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, from 1969 until her retirement in 2012. She devoted her life to educating the public about the pipe organ and received numerous awards and honors. To see her amazing technique in action, watch the YouTube video in which she plays "The Flight of the Bumblebee" on the organ pedals!

As a historical note, FUMCOR has had four organists who were women: Manta Love North (1909 to 1947), Donna Young (1957 to 1960), Dorothy Hester (1960 to 1977), and Melody Armstrong (1990 to 1995).

Our celebration of women's contributions to organ literature comes hot on the heels of Black History Month. Throughout our worship services in February, the organ music, choir anthems, and interludes were based on African-American spirituals and African music. Highlights included Jeff Benedict's jazzy saxophone on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"; "The Lord Is Beautiful," a choir anthem in Swahili featuring soloist Jennifer Walker; and some voluntaries using the organ's settings for string bass and vibes.

Highlighted Events

- March: Lenten Soup Suppers: March 4, 11, 18, 25
- March 8: Youngish group dyes Easter Eggs at Sophie's
- March 15: **Wear Green!** Baked Potato Bar! Faith & Fellowship is providing potatoes and fixings- 11 am
- March 22: Crop Walk - 1:30 pm
- March 29: The Habit Fundraiser - 11 am - 9 pm

Ongoing Events

- Sunday Worship: 10 am
- First Sundays-Holy Communion
- First and Third Sundays: English Country Dance, 1 pm
- Sunday School for Children: 10:15 am
- Second Sunday-Men's Lunch w/speaker after worship
- Third Sundays - Faith and Fellowship Events after worship
- Bell choir rehearsal: Tuesdays, 7 pm
- Response Band rehearsals: Wednesdays, 6:30 pm
- Adult choir rehearsal: Thursdays, 7 pm
- Friday Mornings - United Methodist Men's Prayer Breakfast - 7 am

Order your Easter Lily



Dedications are being taken now for the Easter Lily Plants, to grace our sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 5.

Please complete this form and return it to the church office by Friday, March 13 or email your request to: secretary@firstchurchriverside.org

Cost of a Lily Plant is \$15.00

Checks should be made out to:

First United Methodist Church (FUMCOR) and marked "Easter Lily."

Donors may pick up their plants after the Easter worship service, April 20.

Dedicated by: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

FirstChurchRiverside.org

Need to Reach Us?

First United Methodist Church of Riverside
4845 Brockton Avenue, Riverside, CA 92506
(951) 683-7831 (Mon to Fri 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.)
secretary@firstchurchriverside.org

Church Staff

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pastorjtkim@firstchurchriverside.org

Christina Graves, Children and Youth
childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Becky Ruiz, Office Manager
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Beverly Devine, Secretary
secretary@firstchurchriverside.org

Yvonne Flagg, Choir Director
choirdirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Gayla Lonsbery, Bell Director
belldirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Robert Phillips, Organist
organist@firstchurchriverside.org

Lisa Skivers, Preschool Director
fumps@sbcglobal.net

Jesse Ruiz, Custodial Manager
jruiz28880@aol.com

Brad Tomlinson, Campus Supervisor
bradtomlinson4@yahoo.com



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