November 2026

The Messenger

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

A Harvest of Hearts:

Giving Thanks for the Body of Christ



By Pastor J.T. Kim

Dear First UMC of Riverside Family and Friends:

As the leaves turn and the autumn air cools, November naturally pulls our hearts toward a season of deep reflection and thanksgiving. In the United Methodist tradition, we frequently talk about the connection—the beautifully woven network that links our local congregation to the global church body.

But this month, my heart is centered entirely on our local connection: the incredible community that gathers, serves, and shines right here in our building.

When I look at our church, I am reminded of Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, NRSVue).

This season, I am filled with overwhelming gratitude for three specific groups that make our ministry possible:

Our Lay Leadership: To our Lay Leader Kris Lovekin, Church Council, Trustees, Finance Committee, Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), and all the ministry team leaders and members — thank you! You carry the logistical and spiritual weight of our church administration and hard work. Your vision, stewardship, and willingness to make hard decisions ensure that we remain steady and focused on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our Church Staff and Volunteers: Both our visible staff and those volunteering tirelessly behind the scenes deserve our deepest appreciation. From coordinating complex schedules and managing our finances to leading our music, children, and youth ministries, your daily dedication keeps our church alive and thriving. You do not just do a job or perform tasks; you live out a calling.

Our Entire Congregation: A church is not a building; it is a people.

(cont. on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

Volunteer Opportunities - Page 2

Organ Concert - Page 3

Halloween Hop - Page 4

Announcements - Page 5

Youth and Family Ministry - Page 6

United Methodist Men - Page 7

United Women in Faith - Page 8

Prayers and Praises - Page 9

Advent Begins - Page 10, 11

Calendar of Events - Page 12

First United
Methodist Church
of Riverside

(cont. from page 1)

To everyone who sits in the pews, joins us online, gives generously to our ministries, drops a check in the offering plate, or prays for our community—you are the heartbeat of this church. Your steadfast faith, warm hospitality, and love for one another are a living testimony of God's grace in our neighborhood.

As we look toward the upcoming season of Advent, let us carry this spirit of mutual appreciation forward. I challenge each of you to take a moment this month to personally thank a church leader, a staff member, a volunteer, or a fellow congregant who has blessed your faith journey. Together, we are a beautifully functioning Body of Christ, and it is the joy of my life to serve as your pastor.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your loved ones.

With a grateful heart,

The Rev. J. T. Kim, Pastor
First United Methodist Church of Riverside

Welcome New Members!



From left: Austin Chandler, Michael Chandler, Sean Lomax, Michael McDonald and Tara Powers



from left: David Cardenas, Heather Cardenas, Ben and Yvette Lomax and Byron Traynor

Volunteer Opportunities

Shopping for the Children



Wesley UMC & FUMCOR elves are beginning their Christmas shopping for the children in need of help.

FUMCOR's gift tree will be up in the narthex starting Nov. 8 and Lee Ann Salmon will add names as they are confirmed. It is okay to include a greeting card with your gift, but don't wrap them. All gifts are handed over to the families in a solid blue bag along with food items and clothing needs.

Turn in your gifts in the narthex or the office by Sunday, Dec. 6. Make it clear on the register near the tree if you are buying for a specific child or family so we will know who still needs a gift.

Thank you to all who have made this joint project possible for the past seven years. It puts a smile on a child's face on Christmas morning!

Lee Ann will be out on the patio. Or call her at (951) 906-6452 with questions.

Two See's Candy Fundraisers

FUMPS preschool has a See's Candy fundraiser from Nov. 2 to 19. Call the preschool for details.

Also in November, David Fraser said he will again be selling See's candy boxes on the patio after church. Each box has an assortment of delicious chocolates, and they make great stocking stuffers!

Sales of the candy will begin after our church service Nov. 23 and will end Dec. 21. Orders can be purchased via email to David Fraser at stephenministry@firstchurchriverside.org. For an order of four or more boxes, he will deliver for free.

Skeleton Keys a Spooky Success











Our church's carillon tolled ominously as guests gathered for "Skeleton Keys," our Oct. 24th Halloween organ concert. The sanctuary was adorned with ghosts, glowering pumpkins, eerie lights, and skeletons, both human and canine, as smoke wafted from an ancient cauldron. Many audience members arrived in costumes that cast doubt on whether they were still among the living. All attendees, animate and otherwise, were treated to a huge variety of spectral sounds.

Saxophonist Jeff Benedict opened the concert with a soulful rendition of "Bewitched (Bothered and Bewildered)." Soprano Yvonne Flagg intoned a chilling Gregorian chant about Judgment Day and offered a solemn Shakespearean song about certain advantages of being dead.

After intermission, a cluster of crazed cockroaches burst out of the choir room to the tune of "La Cucaracha" and scurried about for several minutes before swarming in the chancel to provide backing vocals and bizarre dance moves as soprano Kris Lovekin sang, "Creep the Tragic Cockroach." Josh Ponnuraju acted out the lamentable life story of Creep, whose budding romance with fellow bandmember Ethel Vermin was cut short by a deadly pesticide. In addition to Josh, the cockroach band (known as Pestilence) consisted of Steve Kerrick, Greg Laird, Christina Maddox, Jennifer Walker, and Sophie Weiss. I am grateful to Pestilence for their cheerful willingness to humiliate themselves, much to the delight of the audience.

Organ solos about Harry Potter and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" complemented classics by Hendrik Andriessen and Johann Sebastian Bach, and a few people actually danced to "Thriller" this time around.

Special thanks are in order for the Décor Team, whose tireless efforts provided just the right ambience for the concert, and who then had to redecorate the sanctuary for the following morning's worship service.

Donations to the freewill offering were still arriving as of press time, but the final tally, including the matching contribution from the exceedingly generous anonymous donor, will be around $3,400. Thanks to these gifts, we will continue the repair and restoration of our magnificent pipe organ so it can serve this congregation well into the future. -- Robert Phillips, organist



Photos from the top down: The eerie smoke floats over Robert Phillips as he narrates our experience; the cockroaches prepare; Teri Whieldon adds cookies to intermission; Sophie and Michael are a Bible reference, the witch of Endor with Saul. Look it up in 1 Samuel, chapter 28!



Pizza and Dancing at Halloween Hop



A tradition of dancing and pizza and candy continued on Oct. 25 with disc jockeys and lots of conga lines.

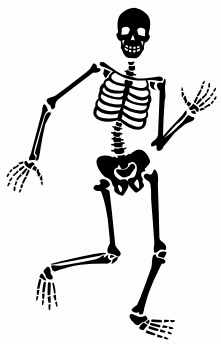
Photos by Lucinda Edmunds











More T-Shirts!

Sunday, Nov. 15

Family Promise of Riverside will come by after church to hand out t-shirts to the congregation as they thank us for hosting them in our Sunday school rooms and helping with food and other expenses. Family Promise works with families to provide stable housing for families who need help. The t-shirts are an annual thank-you gift.



Camp Anza Collection



Church and Society has partnered with Camp Anza, a residential facility for disabled veterans and their families. At the end of the month, food supplies can run low. We want to help our vets by keeping their food pantry supplied.

In honor of Veterans' Day, won't you help fill the pantry? We are asking for donations of canned goods and other shelf-stable items. When you go shopping, will you add an extra food item to your cart and bring it to the narthex? Camp Anza is operated by Mercy House and it is located in a renovated building in Riverside that was actually used for military housing during WWII.

Church Conference

3 pm Sunday, Nov. 15

This year's Church Conference will be in the Fellowship Hall with Rev. Roy Riggs presiding. Committee chairs and ministry leaders will be presenting reports about the year's activities, including the church budget. All are welcome. Our office manager Crystal is busy preparing reports and budgets for this meeting.



Children and Youth Ministry News





Youth Group Friendsgiving!

Join us on Sunday, Nov. 22 at 5 pm
for a special Friendsgiving celebration!
Come enjoy a fun evening of dinner, friendship, and fellowship
as we celebrate the season of gratitude together.
We hope to see you there!

Parents' Morning Out ☀️

Parents, need a little break? We've got you covered!
Parents' Morning Out is offered every Wednesday
from 9 am to 12 pm for just $25 per child.
Enjoy a few hours to yourself while your little ones have fun playing,
learning, and making friends in a safe and loving environment!





Nursery Volunteers Needed! 💛

Our nursery is growing, and we couldn't be more excited!
With more little ones, we're looking for loving volunteers
to lend a helping hand. It's a wonderful opportunity
to serve our youngest members and make a difference!

Questions about or ideas for children and youth programs?
For more information or to volunteer.
please contact Christina:
951-212-5725
childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org
Call Christina Graves 951-683-7831

United Methodist Men

Sunday, Nov. 8



Going Out to the World

Dan Lonsbery, a member of the media team, is the featured speaker at the United Methodist Men's lunch on Sunday, Nov. 9. He will explain some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into broadcasting our church service to the outside world.

We meet after church in Fellowship Hall, and cook David Fraser promises food that reminds you of Thanksgiving, including pumpkin pie. Cost for a delicious lunch is $6 per person or $20 per family. All are welcome.

Dan Lonsbery stepped up to the plate for First UMC during the shutdown for the Covid emergency at a time when the church needed a solution to broadcast the service. His professional background and volunteer spirit have kept us online in more ways than one.



Speaker Dan Lonsbery

The United Methodist Men continue a Friday Prayer Breakfast at 7 am in Mary's Kitchen. All men are invited to join for fellowship, faith, coffee, donuts, and pastries.

The Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 3 drew people from inside and outside the congregation, with their dogs, cats, pictures of pets and even a bin of worms. Thanks to Rev. JT Kim and Rev. Roy Riggs for taking time out on a Saturday for all creatures great and small. The Outreach Committee said this will become an annual event.















United Women in Faith

We Look Forward to the Alternative Gift Fair - Dec. 6

If you have been making things for the Fair you need to get them to us by Nov. 30.
Contact: Pam Conlin
pjoffroad@gmail.com 951-237-5470

--Monday, Nov. 30, 9 - 1
prepare cookie mix, make candies, and cut fabric circles to decorate gift jars
(Fellowship Hall and Kitchen)
--Tuesday, Dec. 1, 9-12 Pricing gift fair items.
(Mary's Kitchen, Koinonia)
--Thursday, Dec 3, 9-12 Continue pricing items,
(Mary's Kitchen, Koinonia)
--Saturday, Dec. 5 10am - Set up until we've finished.

Events and Meetings

Nov. 11 - Executive Meeting
(Mary's Kitchen) - 10 am

Nov. 12 - Lunch Bunch
We are going Italian at Mamma Mia's
10971 Magnolia Ave. - 11 am

Nov. 28 - Festival of Trees. Meet at 10am at the Church and carpool to the Convention Center.





We sent Donna forth with love... to her new life in Utah!

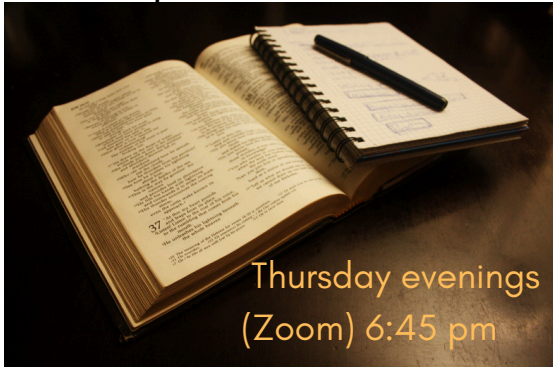
Walk About!



With the cooler weather, we are meeting at 7 am now! Meet at Bonamino Park in the back parking lot near the playground.



Stay Tuned for news of the upcoming Bible Study!



Prayers & Praises

We pray for...

Susan Vollucci, Terry Geiger, Crystal Foote, Rev. Bev Devine, Myla Holmes, Roy Riggs, Cheryl Riggs, James Herron, Isaiah Whisner, Cynthia Diaz, Jaque Vaca, Linda Rydzik, Christina Maddox's nephew Charlie, John McDonald,Julian Cardenas, Vivian Lowe, Neko Williams, David Cardenas, Patrick Russell, Ruth Martinez, Don Larsen, Susan Reardon, Rollin Edmunds, Gary Spencer, Dean Michalka, Eric Russler, Tom Kennedy, Christina Graves, Bob Bahnsen, Virginia Bahnsen, Regan Pope, Eduardo Reyes, Tina Dungan, Lupe Vela, Ronnie Tovar, Roger Murray, Lolita Manacop, Sharon Henry, Jun Valino, Jon Dugan, Marie Madden, Gitanjali Spencer, George Callow, Norma Nelson, Ed Lamers, Mack Davis, Pat Beals, Michael Thompson, Marge Wolter, Melissa Williams, Mary Herrmann, Jim Ashworth, Mary Boon, Melva Cooke, Michelle Arguelles, John and Susan Logger, Bill and Helen Nuchols, Robert and Benita Roberts, Scott and DeAnn McWilliams, the family of Grace Reyes, the family of Michael Thompson, our families, neighbors, country, and world

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, strengthen us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

November Anniversaries

12 Tim and Gretel Noble
26 John Fregeau and Lynn Wright
26 Doug and Marilyn Robinson
29 Don and Soraya Heidi Mooyman

November Birthdays

1 Eureko Williams
3 Carolina Renteria
5 Allison George
6 DeAnn McWilliams
7 Gabriel Arguelles
7 Hannah Arguelles
8 Richard Austin
9 Paula Kaufhold
9 Kevin Simpson
9 Katrina Zeeb
11 Roy Riggs
12 Ji Tai Kim
13 Jason Handen
13 Gayla Lonsbery
18 Gracie Hough
18 Kelsey Weakly
19 Daryl Salmon
19 Robert Ream
19 Beryl Corson
20 Andrew Gaumer
21 Melissa Williams
21 Lucinda Edmunds
23 Gregory Hough
23 Bill Nuchols
26 Jessica Bennett
29 Brent Levine

Absent from our midst - present with the Lord!

Lucille Perry

Theodore "Jim" Conlin

Mary Bidwell

Connie Taylor

Robert "Bob" Schiffer

William "Bill" Ashworth

Joan Brown

Grace Reyes

Comfort Essien

Laura Duane Harker

Michael Thompson

And all our loved ones who have gone before us.



Christmas Brunch

Nov. 29 11:15

Faith and Fellowship invites the congregation to a Christmas Brunch after church. This is a tradition that includes delicious food and sparkling cider and a celebration to launch the season of Advent.





Blue Christmas Peace

Dec. 8. 12 Noon and 7 pm

What do people who are "blue" at Christmas need? Reflection, hope and healing. The Rev. Beverly Devine will lead a peaceful experience for people who want to acknowledge the deep darkness while they look for the light. Give yourself and our world the gift of Christmas peace.

Alternative Gift Fair is Dec. 6

Save the date for a gift fair that supports a better world, including vendors such as Heifer International, Guatemala Project, Pencils and Dreams, Human Migration Institute, United Women in Faith, the Riverside Food Co-op, Soroptimist International, PEO and many more. The fair, which lasts from 11 am to 3 pm, is an interfaith and sustainable event that includes music, soup and community. Invite friends.





Poinsettia Dedications

Don't forget to dedicate your poinsettias to loved ones by Dec. 6. The cost is $20. Please put your request in writing. Checks should be made out to First United Methodist Church (or FUMCOR) and marked "Poinsettia." Donors may pick up their plants after the Christmas Eve worship services.



Music Calendar

Hark! I Hear Advent Coming

Come sing your favorite Christmas carols during the Advent season! Each of the four Sundays of Advent will feature selected hymns to help us prepare our hearts and celebrate the joy, hope, peace, and love of Christ's birth.

Below are the hymns selected for each of the four Sundays in Advent. Join us in song as we celebrate this special season of anticipation and worship! Come share your voice, lift your spirits, and let the music of Christmas fill our hearts!

HOPE: November 29th:
1. O Come, O Come, Emanuel (#211)
2. Savior of the Nations, Come (#214)
3. Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus (#196)

PEACE: December 6th:
1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed (#203)
2. O Little Town of Bethlehem (#230)
3. Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (#224)

JOY: December 13th
1. Sing We Now of Christmas (#237)
2. Joy to the World (#246)

Plus the Aldersgate Chorale sings "Candles and Carols," a medley of carols.

LOVE: December 20th
1. Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (#240)
2. Love Came Down at Christmas (#242)
3. Angels We Have Heard on High (#238)

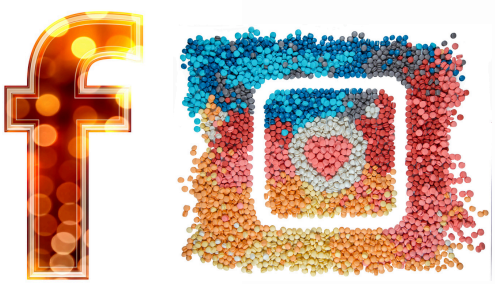


Open the Doors

ADVENT: Watch the Season Open Up on Social Media

The Communications Team is busy at work creating videos to post every day during the Advent season. The reels will feature an actual Advent calendar being opened each day.

We've had a number of volunteers help us bring this to life and we thank each of them for their participation. Don't miss a single day!



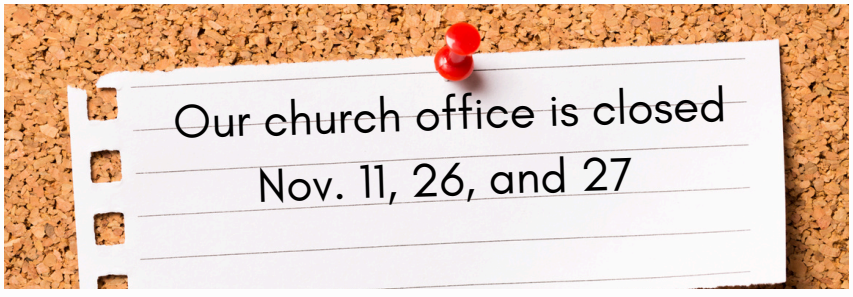
Ongoing Events

- Chapel Prayer Circle: 1st Sundays - 9:15 am
- Sunday Worship: 10 am
- Sunday School for Children: 10:15 am
- First Sundays: Holy Communion
- Third Sundays: Response Band leads worship
- Third Sundays: Faith and Fellowship Events
- Bell Choir rehearsal: Tuesdays, 7 pm
- The Response rehearsal: Wednesdays, 6:30 pm
- Adult choir rehearsal: Thursdays, 7 pm
- Men's Friday Prayer Breakfast: 7 am

Special Events

- Church Conference - 3 pm Nov. 15 (Fellowship Hall)
- Youth Friendsgiving - 5 pm Nov. 22 (Youth Room)
- Hanging of the Greens - 11:15 Nov. 29 (Sanctuary)
- The Habit Fundraiser - 11:15 to 9 pm Nov. 29 (The Plaza)
- Christmas Brunch - 11:15 am Nov. 29 (Fellowship Hall)
- Blue Christmas - 12 noon and 7 pm Dec. 8 (Sanctuary)
- Poinsettia Order/office: ($20 per plant), deadline: Dec. 4





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

Rev. J.T. Kim, Senior Pastor
pastorjtkim@firstchurchriverside.org

Crystal Foote, Office Manager
officemanager@firstchurchriverside.org

Beverly Devine, Secretary
secretary@firstchurchriverside.org

Christina Graves, Children and Youth
childrensdirector@firstchurchriverside.org

Yvonne Flagg, Choir Director
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
jruiz28880@aol.com

Brad Tomlinson, Campus Supervisor
bradtomlinson4@yahoo.com

First United
Methodist Church of Riverside