



# Westchester

## United Methodist Church Newsletter

VOLUME VI, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2025

### April is Stress Awareness Month



April is recognized as National Stress Awareness Month to bring attention to the negative impact of stress. Managing stress is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle.

When the body senses a threat (or stressor), it goes on high alert, and once the threat passes, the body quickly recovers. At least that's the way it's supposed to work. Stressors can include health matters, work, money, family issues, racism or gender inequality, and regular daily hassles. With unrelenting or too many stressors, your body might be on a constant state of high alert, leading to poor concentration, bad moods, professional burnout, and mental and physical health problems. When stress becomes chronic, the body cannot return to normal functioning. Chronic stress can be linked with health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and anxiety.

Here are two simple breathing exercises to combat stress and improve your mood:

**Cyclic Sighing**, often referred to as the Physiological Sigh or Double Inhale, is a breathing technique that combines two sequential inhales followed by a long exhale. This pattern is particularly effective in alleviating stress and improving mood.

**How to Practice:**

Begin with a normal inhale through your nose.

Immediately follow with a deeper inhale before you exhale.

Exhale slowly and passively through your mouth.

Repeat this cycle for about five minutes.

Ensure you are seated or lying down in a safe environment to prevent any risk if dizziness occurs.

curs.

**Box Breathing** is a method used by Navy SEALs for its calming effects. The technique involves four key steps: inhaling, holding, exhaling, and pausing, each for an equal duration.

**How to Practice:**

Inhale slowly to a count of four.

Hold your breath for four counts.

Exhale smoothly for four counts.

Pause for four counts before inhaling again.

Repeat for several minutes, ideally in a calm environment.

**Seek Help.** Talk to a health professional if stress is affecting your well-being. National Disaster Distress Helpline (Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TALKWITHUS" to 66746). If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text: **9-8-8** (24/7, free & confidential).

**"HERE IS THE WORLD. BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE THINGS WILL HAPPEN. DON'T BE AFRAID."**

**- FREDERICK BUECHNER**

### Dates to Remember . . .

**04/02—Dinner Church**

5:00 p.m.—Soul-Full Soup

**04/03—**

6:30 p.m.—Zoom Lenten Study

**04/06—5th Sunday of Lent**

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 a.m.—In-Person Worship

**04/08—11 am—Rhythm & Food**

9a—9p—Truxton's Restaurant Fundraiser

**04/09 - 7:30 am—Zoom Prayer**

12n—Crafters Group

**04/10—6:30 pm—Zoom Lenten Study**

**04/13—Palm Sunday**

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—In Person Worship—The Passion of the Rebel Jesus

**04/16—Dinner Church**

7:30 am—Zoom Prayer

12n—Crafters Group

5 pm—Hearty & Holy Dinner Church

**04/17—Maundy Thursday**

5:00 p.m. Service & Lenten Meal

**04/20—Easter!**

10 a.m.—Easter Worship

**04/22—Earth Day**

**04/23—7:30 am—Zoom Prayer**

12n—Crafters Group

**04/28**

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 a.m.—In-Person Worship

# Holy Week at Westchester UMC



Happy Easter from  
Puppy Pastor Molly

During Holy Week, we offer the following experiences:

## Palm Sunday

On Sunday, April 13th, you are invited to witness The Passion of the Rebel Jesus during worship. The Passion of the Rebel Jesus is a Reader's Theatre experience based on the Gospel of Mark. Ret. Pastor Hilly Hicks will join Pastor Lyda and Kimberly Emerson in bringing The Passion of the Rebel Jesus to life.

## Maundy Thursday

On Thursday, April 17th at 5 p.m., you are invited to a Maundy Thursday meal and a time of reflection. We will gather

around the table to enjoy a simple meal together. During the meal, we will offer reflections, readings and conversation. We request that RSVPs for the Maundy Thursday meal be received by Monday, April 14th. To RSVP, please email Pastor Lyda at [Lyda@wumcla.org](mailto:Lyda@wumcla.org).

## Easter

This Lent, we have journeyed together, reminding ourselves that life and the world is full of awe. We have seen beauty, we have opened to wonder, we have searched for meaning with curiosity, we have delighted in the gifts of the Divine One, we have reconnected

with each other and remembered the joy of self-giving on behalf of a better world. Easter morning is the most awe-filled of all. Our faith story is ultimately about the victory of life over death, love over hate ... with a lot of awe and wonder thrown in!

After our celebratory Easter worship, we will gather in front of the sanctuary and enjoy an Easter Pinata—fun for both young and old—full of treats for everyone!

**100%** of our **Easter offering** is donated to **Suicide Prevention & Awareness** programs at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services.

*“In our end is our  
beginning; in our time,  
infinity; in our doubt  
there is believing, in  
our life eternity; in our  
death a resurrection;  
at the last, a victory,  
unrevealed until its  
season, something  
God alone can see.”  
- Hymn of Promise*

## National Autism Acceptance Month

Governor Gavin Newsom recently issued a proclamation declaring April 2025 as Autism Acceptance Month.

The text of the proclamation is as follows: “This month, California joins communities around the world in recognizing April as Autism Acceptance Month. We celebrate the many ways autistic individuals add to the diversity and strength of our state, while raising awareness of the challenges faced by children, teens, and adults on the autism spectrum in living to their full potential.

In California, one in 22 children have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Our state's 21 regional centers provide community-based developmental services and supports

to over 194,000 autistic individuals. We are proud to honor the many individuals with autism enriching our communities with their perspectives, talents, and achievements.

This year, California's Health and Human Services Agency released its Master Plan for Developmental Services, outlining recommendations that will impact the rapidly increasing regional center caseload of individuals with a diagnosis of autism. The Master Plan is shaped by the community itself, expressing a vision for how California supports people with disabilities like autism into the future, and recognizing the connections between the developmental disabilities services system to other employment, health, and social services systems. This vision

will inform existing and future efforts to enhance state services in the days and years ahead, and reflects the state's commitment to supporting, empowering, and celebrating people on the autism spectrum.

This Autism Acceptance Month, we share our deep appreciation of individuals, families, and many others who are dedicated to uplifting the experiences of autistic people. We reaffirm our commitment to supporting and including individuals with autism in our schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Together, we will continue to build communities where everyone belongs.”



## Know Your Rights

As United Methodists, we have firmly declared through our Social Principles that we are called to actively welcome the migrant, immigrants, and refugees among us. As people of faith, we do not agree with the actions taken against immigrants, asylum seekers and migrants under the current administration. **Everyone has rights under the U.S. Constitution regardless of immigration status:**

You have the right to remain silent.

You have the right to speak with a lawyer. If law enforcement shows up to your house, **DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR**. Ask them to slide the warrant under the door. The warrant **MUST** be signed by a judge, and have your name and address on it. If the document is **NOT** a judicial warrant - and is only issued by ICE - you do not have to let them in. Never carry false documentation with you - it is a crime. Do not carry documentation from other countries with you. If you are detained, only

say your name and date of birth.

Seven student-scholars have disappeared off the streets by this administration for exercising free speech. Four are being held in brutal for-profit ICE detention centers. None are charged with a crime. None of the prisoners that the administration sent to El Salvador received due process. If you notice any ICE activity, call: Los Angeles Rapid Response Network—888-624-4752.

## Introducing The Sound Sanctuary

*Come home to yourself in sound.*

We're excited to introduce a new offering: The Sound Sanctuary—a gentle, monthly sound bath experience designed to nourish your body, calm your mind, and reconnect you with your spirit.

A Sound Bath is a practice which allows the healing sounds of instruments to “bathe” you. You hear the sounds, but more importantly, feel the vibrations. It is said that the vibrations are received in all parts of the being, all the way to the cellular level.

This isn't a concert or a performance. It's an immersive experience of rest and reflection using sound as the guide—

think of it as a chance to exhale, soften, and simply be.

As you lie or sit comfortably, you'll be surrounded by soothing tones from crystal singing bowls, chimes, gongs and other harmonic instruments.

The Sound Sanctuary isn't about “fixing” anything. It's about creating space. It's a reminder that we already carry deep wisdom and peace within us. Sometimes, we just need a soft place and sacred sounds to hear it again.

No experience is necessary. Just come as you are—with your curiosity, your questions, your need for stillness. This is a space of welcome, wherever you are on your journey.

We provide comfortable mats, blankets, eye masks, and everything you need to feel cozy. You're welcome to bring your own blanket or pillow if that makes you more comfortable.

Space is limited to **12 participants**, so we recommend arriving a few minutes early to get settled and ensure your spot.

**For Tickets: Visit Eventbrite [Eventbrite.com] or use this link:**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-sound-sanctuary-sound-bath-tickets-1312117381409?aff=oddtcreator>

**Join us on the first Sunday of the month at 4:00 p.m. in the chapel.**

*The Sound Sanctuary: a space to breathe, listen, and feel.*

## The Cup of Freedom Worship Series

Welcome to an Easter Season in which we will focus on “freedom,” whatever that may look like for you and your respective community. The resurrection is but the beginning of living as “Easter People” who proclaim freedom from the limitations of death-dealing entities.

As disciples of Jesus who are called to freedom in so many ways, we are called to work to eradicate anything that leaves people less free to be fully who they

were created by God to be. It is a journey towards the celebration of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost that will help fuel us, and it is a sense of the abundance we experience “overflowing” from the cup of salvation that is our hope.

Psalm 116 says, “The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: “Lord, save me!” It goes on to say “I will lift

up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.”

Freedom does not exist without freedom for EVERYONE, and for this creation. After Easter, we will take our cup of freedom and call on the name of God!

Our new Worship Design Studios Worship Series, The Cup of Freedom, begins Sunday April 27th.

**Westchester United Methodist Church**  
a place where love works

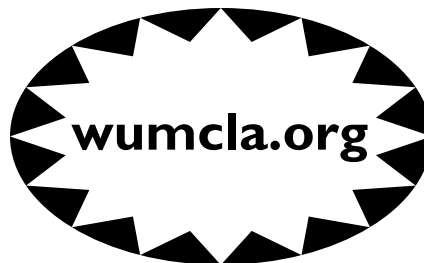
[www.wumcla.org](http://www.wumcla.org)

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Church: (310) 670 3777

Pastor's email: [lyda@wumcla.org](mailto:lyda@wumcla.org)



**We are a Reconciling church!**  
**ALL are welcome here.**



## From Pastor Lyda . . .

Over the past few months, I've had conversations with a lot of people that have left my heart both heavy . . . and hopeful. A common thread I hear again and again is this: a feeling of hopelessness. A sense that the problems around us—the cruelty, the division, the injustice—are simply too big to face. And alongside that is the aching question: "What can I do?"

I wish to share a reflection inspired by Dr. Steven Charleston, Native American Elder and Episcopal Bishop, from his book, "Ladder to the Light."

He writes, "Hope is not a wish, but an intention. Most of us do not think of ourselves as heroic agents of change, but if we have enough hope in what we see, then we find the strength to make change happen. When our hope is linked to the hope of others, we become even stronger. Hope builds on it-

self. It grows."

These words remind us that hope is not passive. It is not just a feeling we wait for. Hope is something we practice. Something we choose. And something we share.

Even in the midnight hour of our world—when immigrants are punished for seeking safety, when people are detained simply for speaking out, when peoples' rights are being taken away, when compassion is cast aside for control—**hope can still rise**. Not always in grand gestures, but in the quiet acts of resistance and love. So what can we do?

We can speak up when others are silenced. Write a letter to your representative about the inhumane treatment of immigrants. Share the truth in your circles, even when it's uncomfortable. Show up for justice-oriented events. Pray publicly and persistently for a world that reflects God's welcome.

We can support organizations that offer legal aid, shelter, and compassion to

those who are most vulnerable. We can teach our children to question cruelty and to value kindness.

And we can keep gathering. Keep eating together, singing together, and lifting one another up in joy and struggle alike. Because shared hope—like shared bread—feeds us all.

As we move through this season of Easter, may we remember: love is on the loose again. Resurrection isn't just something we remember. It's something we live. Every time we choose hope over despair, welcome over fear, action over apathy—we are proclaiming the risen Christ.

You're not alone. We are not powerless. And the more we link our hope together, the more we will see the light—even in these shadowed days.

Love IS on the loose again. Love ALWAYS wins. Happy Easter!