



# Westchester

## United Methodist Church Newsletter

VOLUME IV, ISSUE 8

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### Monarchs Remain in Trouble



The Center for Biological Diversity shares, “The annual count of migratory monarchs who winter in Mexico brought more bad news: A 22% decline from 2022, leaving the butterflies highly vulnerable to extinction. Help can’t come soon enough. The butterflies are on the waiting list to be protected under the Endangered Species Act, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has until 2024 to make a decision.

After the latest counts, the total number of monarchs is 63% **below** the minimum threshold scientists say is necessary for the migrating pollinators not to be at risk of extinction in North America. Monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains—once a common sight—have declined by around 90% since the mid-1990’s.

Monarchs are threatened by pesticides, climate change, loss of U.S. grasslands, and illegal logging of their overwintering forests. They’re also threatened during their migrations by mortality from roadkill and habitat fragmentation.

Monarchs have lost an estimated 165 million acres of breeding habitat in the United States to herbicide spraying and development in recent decades. Their caterpillars only eat milkweed, but the plant has been devastated by increased herbicide spraying in conjunction with corn and soybean crops that have been genetically engineered to tolerate direct spraying.

Most monarch butterflies west of the Rocky Mountains over-

winter on the central coast of California. Their numbers rebounded this year to more than 330,000 butterflies during Thanksgiving counts. But deadly storms led to a 58% drop, with only 117,000 butterflies surviving into January. Overall the western population is down more than 95% since the 1980’s.”

Here are some things you can do to help Monarch butterflies:

Avoid using pesticides in your garden and on your lawn. Many pesticides contain glyphosate, an herbicide that kills milkweed. Without milkweed, the monarch butterfly would cease to exist.

Plant native milkweed to promote biodiversity and enable the natural migration pattern of the monarch butterflies.

For more information, visit [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

**“I NEED NOT BE GREAT. ON THE CONTRARY, I MUST REMAIN LITTLE.”**

**- ST. TERESE OF LISIEUX**

### Dates to Remember . . .

**08/02**—7:30 am Prayer Check In  
12n—Crafters Group

**08/06**—8 am Breakfast Church  
10 am Worship

**08/09**—12n—Crafters Group

**08/13**—8 am Breakfast Church  
10 am Worship

**08/16**—12n—Crafters Group

**08/20**—8 am Breakfast Church  
10 am Worship

**08/23**—12n—Crafters Group

**08/27**—8 am Breakfast Church  
10 am Worship

**08/30**—12n—Crafters Group

**Save the Date!** Our next restaurant fundraiser to support missionary Rev. Krista Givens is September 12th and 13th at California Pizza Kitchen in the Marina. More information will be sent out in September.

**Rhythm & Food** will not gather in August—we will see you on Tuesday, September 12th at 11 am for our wellness drum circle followed by a delicious meal.

**Prayer Check In** is taking the rest of August off from our weekly meetings. We will start up again on Zoom Wednesday mornings at 7:30 a.m. beginning September 6th. During the fall, we will use the book, “Ladder to Light: an Indigenous Elder’s Meditations on Hope and Courage” during our prayer time.

# Dinner Church

“August of another  
summer, and once  
again I am drinking  
the sun ...”

- Mary Oliver

The Gospel of Luke is full of stories of Jesus eating with people—“Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal” (Robert Karis).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus came eating and drinking. It’s not complicated, even though it’s not always easy. Being in community together involves people invading your space or going to places where you may not be comfortable.

At the meals of Jesus, we discover: God graciously includes those the world excludes; we reflect God’s welcome of us in the way we welcome others; and meals express grace and community (“A Meal with Jesus” by Tim Chester).

Meals have the power to shape and reshape community. The gatherings of the early church were shared meals. Not an occasional meal being offered before or after their gatherings—their gatherings were meals. When we eat a meal together, we are all equal. We share together. We affirm one another and enjoy each other’s company. When we eat together, we build relationships and we build community. Two of my favorite Rachel Held Evans quotes are: “The church is God saying: ‘I’m throwing a banquet, and all these mismatched, messed-up people are invit-

ed. Here, have some wine.” and “This is what God’s kingdom is like: a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered at a table, not because they are rich or worthy or good, but because they are hungry, because they said yes. And there’s always room for more.”

Beginning November 15th, and on 3rd Wednesdays of the month, we will gather together for monthly community meals—not because we are rich or worthy or good, but because we are hungry ... and there will always be room for more.

## On Purpose: Finding God’s Voice in Your Passion

### Be part of something more.

We are longing for a sense of purpose, direction, and calling in our lives. That’s as basic an ingredient to the human experience as they come. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We want to participate in something that has eternal merit and lasting impact. We do not want to live a shallow, hollow existence. We yearn for deeper meaning, for deeper purpose within our lives. We want to be more than we are.

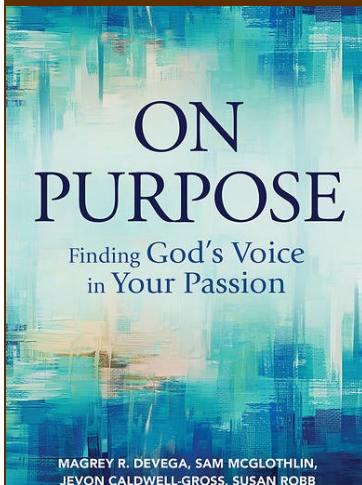
In *On Purpose: Finding God’s Voice in Your Passion*, authors Magrey de Vega, Sam McGlothlin, Jevon Caldwell-Gross, and Susan Robb help us see God’s purpose for our lives, how to open ourselves to God’s voice, and how to take the first or next step to follow God’s call.

Reading this book and exploring life choices alongside others, we will learn how to channel our passions, hear God’s voice, and live the life we are meant to live.

The ideas we will explore: Overcoming Obstacles; Raising Awareness; Channeling Our Passions; and Journeying Together.

Our small group *On Purpose* will begin on **Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.** We will meet on Zoom at 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays, September 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th.

The church has a few books available for purchase at \$12.99. Books may also be purchased on Amazon.com, or at your local bookstore. No one will be turned away for a lack of funds.



# Help End Summer Hunger

The summer is a difficult time for families who cannot afford to replace the two meals per day their children were getting at school. 31% of children in the Westside Food Bank's service area live in low-income, working families that spend much more than 70% of their income on housing.

Local families need us more than ever while donations typically slow down over the summer. Visit the Westside Food Bank's website at

<https://www.wsfb.org>

You can make a single donation or pledge to help them on a monthly basis. Just \$35.00 provides 140 meals.

The Westside Food Bank and their network of food banks (including the Food Pantry LAX) provide families a \$300 savings on their monthly grocery needs. Even families receiving CalFresh benefits don't have adequate resources to meet their nutritional needs. Some families make too much to qualify for CalFresh, but not enough to buy all the food

they need.

These families have nowhere else to turn for nutritious food besides the Westside Food Bank's network of food pantries.

If you are able, please consider a monetary donation to the Westside Food Bank, or the Food Pantry LAX. You can donate to the Food Pantry LAX through the church website, or donate directly to the Westside Food Bank.



## The Benefits of Native Plants

A recent article by the California Native Plant Society shares that native plants evolved with our local climate, soil types and animals. This long process brings us several gardening advantages when we use native plants.

Once established, many California native plants need minimal irrigation beyond normal rainfall. Saving water conserves a vital, limited resource and saves money too. Native plants also require significantly less time and resources than common non-

native garden plants.

Native plants have developed their own defenses against many pests and diseases, so eliminating pesticide use lets natural pest control take over and keeps garden toxins out of our watersheds.

As development replaces natural habitats, planting gardens, parks and roadsides (and churches!) with California native plants can help provide an important "bridge" to nearby remaining wetlands.

Native plants, hummingbirds, butter-

flies, and other beneficial insects are "made for each other." California's wealth of insect pollinators can improve our gardens, while a variety of native insects and birds will help keep the landscape free of mosquitoes and plant-eating bugs. And remember—three out of four crops across the world producing fruits or seeds for human use as food depend, at least in part, on pollinators! And, replacing lawns with native grasses are easier to maintain and require less water.

## Sacred Earth, Sacred Worth Worship Series

During August, you are invited to our worship series, Sacred Earth, Sacred Worth at our in person Sunday morning worship service at 10:00 am in the sanctuary.

When God began to create the heavens and the earth—the earth was without shape or form... and God's wind swept over the waters... God saw everything God had

made: it was supremely good.

What if we lived life truly connected to the origins of Creation and the Creator? In the beginning God created all things and called them originally "good."

In this series we explore six essential ideas found in Creation Spirituality—a way of living within the community of

earth that deepens our reverence for life, participates in the creativity of the cosmos, and develops our passion for justice and human transformation. It compels us to lead lives of spiritual inquiry, creativity, and prophetic action as our sacred work in the world.

We look forward to seeing you!

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

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



## From Pastor Lyda . . .

California produces nearly half the country's fruits and vegetables, yet one in five Californians are food insecure, meaning they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food. The pandemic brought a massive influx of federal food aid to California. When the boosted benefits ended in April 2023, food aid to California dropped by nearly \$500 million a month. For some single-person households, CalFresh benefits dropped from \$281 to \$23 per month. Statewide, 20% of Californians are food insecure, and in Los Angeles County, the number is 31%.

As followers of Jesus, we think of love as an action, a verb, an act involving care and compassion for God, each other, and ourselves. Jesus tells us, "... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these..." (Mark 12.)

Love God with every part of you. How?

By loving other people like you love yourself. Loving God then is an act of co-caring for each other ... and co-caring for all of Creation—including the Earth.

An article by American Progress shares that, "America's hunger crisis is not due to a lack of food production or scarcity in food supply. Rather, hunger and food insecurity are symptoms of policy choices and an economic system that prioritizes the needs of corporations and the wealthy over those of the general population."

It seems overwhelming ... there are so many who are hungry, so much harm being done to our planet and all its inhabitants. How can one person, one faith community, one church make a difference?

We begin. Perhaps it's as simple as that. We begin. As an old saying shares, "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now." Start now with one small thing. Focus on loving God, each other and ourselves. Now. Co-care for each other by supporting a local food bank. Advocate for a living wage and affordable housing. Call government officials when they vote on

policies that make it harder to vote, or cut school lunch programs, or strip away environmental protections to benefit fossil fuel companies.

The faith community at Westchester UMC is taking a look at what they can do to build community, feed the hungry, and be co-creators with God in this world. We are using new and ancient ways to love God, love each other and love ourselves. We offer monetary assistance to those who need it—we provide food gift cards to those who are hungry—we help connect people to services—we offer community, mental wellness and food through our monthly Rhythm & Food drum circle & lunch—we are offering a monthly community meal beginning this November—we are working to make our landscaping environmentally sustainable and better for the planet. By itself, each action, each change, may not seem like much ... but each reflects the love of God and co-caring for each other and for the world. Together. Now.