



Westchester

United Methodist Church Newsletter

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MAY 2025

May is Mental Health & Older Americans Month

May is Mental Health Month!

Westchester UMC is a proud partner of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. Westchester UMC raised \$640 on Easter Sunday for suicide prevention programs at Didi Hirsch. Great job everyone!

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services has provided free mental health care, substance use disorder treatment and suicide prevention programs since 1942. Dedicated to serving communities where discrimination and injustice limit access, Didi Hirsch envisions a future where everyone can thrive with access to high-quality care that treats mental health and physical health as inseparable.

Didi Hirsch is a national leader in mental health, crisis care and substance use services. They are also a pioneer in suicide prevention and crisis care for all ages, Didi Hirsch is home to the nation's first and largest

Suicide Prevention Center, is one of the operators of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in California, operates Teen Line, the leading youth peer-to-peer hotline, is one of several operators for the national Disaster Distress Helpline, and partners with the Los Angeles Police Department to divert mental health crisis calls from 911.

May is Older Americans

Month—and this year's theme is Flip the Script on Aging. This year's focus is on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. 1 in 4 older adults experiences issues with their mental health. The most common issues are depression, dementia, & anxiety. Older adults have the highest

rate of suicide when compared to other groups. People aged 85 and over have the highest rate, followed closely by adults aged 75-84. Social isolation and loneliness are contributing factors.

Working side by side with Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, offering Rhythm & Food wellness drum circle and lunch for adults, and two community meals each month at our Dinner Church experiences, are some of the ways that Westchester UMC is working to celebrate people of all ages, build relationships, offer community, and feed bodies, minds & spirits.

Remember, you are not alone.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call **988**.



**"LIFE STANDS
BEFORE ME
LIKE AN ETERNAL
SPRING
WITH NEW AND
BRILLIANT
CLOTHES"**

**- CARL FRIEDRICH
GAUSS**

Dates to Remember . . .

05/04: - 8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church (Zoom BC)

10 am—In Person Worship

4 pm—Sound Bath in the Chapel

05/05—Cinco de Mayo!

05/07—7:30 am Zoom Prayer

12n—Crafters Group, Rm 16

5 pm—Soul-Full Soup Dinner Church

05/11—Mothering Day!

8 am Zoom BC

10 am—In Person Worship—we will celebrate all who mother during worship!

05/13—Rhythm & Food at 11 am in Fellowship Hall

05/14—7:30 Zoom Prayer

12n—Crafters Group, Rm 16

05/18—8 am—Zoom BC

10 am—In Person Worship

05/21—7:30 am Zoom Prayer

12n—Crafters Group, Rm 16

5 pm—Hearty & Holy Dinner Church

05/25—8 am—Zoom BC

10 am—Worship

05/26— Memorial Day

The Church Office will be closed in honor of Memorial Day.

Celebrating Chris Mays!



Sunday, April 27th was Richard Chris Mays, Jr.'s last Sunday at Westchester UMC as our full-time organist, pianist, and general magical music-maker!

Chris has been a faith-filled member of this church since 1974—and has been playing the organ at worship services since he was 13 years old, beginning his music ministry at St. John's UMC in Memphis, Tennessee.

Shortly after joining the church in 1974, he began to sub-in as organist. In 1976, Chris was hired as organist by St. James Presbyterian in the valley, and that's where he met Linda, the Music Director at St. James, who would become his wife in 1980. In 1980, Linda became the Music Director at Westwood UMC, and Chris be-

came the organist here at Westchester.

Linda left Westwood UMC in 1989 and went back to St. James Presbyterian in 1991, and Chris became their organist.

While all this music making was happening, Chris was also a flight instructor at Flying Tigers. Flying Tigers was purchased by Federal Express, and they asked Chris to fly for them. He left his position as full-time organist at St. James due to his flight schedule commitments.

In 1995, Chris played the organ here at Westchester UMC as a substitute organist while he was still flying for Federal Express. During his frequent flying layovers, both in the U.S. and over-

sees, Chris always found a church willing to let him practice—he made friends wherever he went! Marta Lear was the full time organist at Westchester, until her retirement as organist in 2006, and Chris would sub-in when he was needed.

Beth, Chris' daughter, became the Handbell Choir Director in 2011, and Chris filled in as the church musician and organist – a lot!

By 2017, Chris was a regularly featured organist at Westchester. In 2020, the pandemic hit and the world shut down for two years.

When Westchester reopened, Chris graciously agreed to be our full-time music man, for which we are forever grateful.

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"Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment, until it becomes a memory."

- Dr. Seuss

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which celebrates all Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in the United States who have made the country what it is today. During this month, the country celebrates the achievements and remembers the struggles endured by Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

AAPI Heritage Month marks two important events in Asian American history: the arrival of the first known Japanese immigrants in 1843 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, which was built by Chinese immigrant workers.

The 2025 theme for AAPI Heritage Month has been dubbed "A Legacy of Leadership and Resilience" by the

Federal Asian Pacific American Council.

It is important to understand the differences between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In the 1970's, with fewer immigrants from these regions, it was important to band together. Recent years, however, have seen growing criticism of the usage of this umbrella term — and it's valuable to learn about that conversation as well. An article at [vox.com](https://www.vox.com) is a good place to start.

During May, it's important to give our attention to the concerns and needs of the AAPI community and find long term ways to support them. And it is especially important to do so this year, as recent rollbacks of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs aim to target all

marginalized communities across the U.S.

We must also recognize that throughout the United States' history, AAPI communities have been the target of violence, disenfranchisement, efforts to restrict immigration, and other xenophobic policies at the federal, state, and local level.

During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, California pays tribute to the irreplaceable legacy of our AAPI communities, their incredible strength and resilience, and their essential role in driving our state and nation forward. This month and every month, let us stand up for all members of our California family and work together to achieve the promise of a California for all.

Celebrating Chris (continued)

Chris was instrumental (pun intended!) in bringing our Rodgers T967 Organ to the church—and performed two concerts on this instrument. The first concert was on September 28, 2003, where Chris performed on the *rented* Rodgers organ. He performed with a string orchestra, conducted by his wife, Linda Duffendack Mays. The second concert was on September 25, 2005, which was held to dedicate the *newly purchased* Rodgers T967 organ. Also performing in the 2005 concert was Marta Lear, who performed

two pieces on the organ, and Francis Page, lyric soprano.

As Chris retires from his role as our organist, we celebrate not only the music he has made, but the spirit he has shared—faithful, joyful, humble, and kind. His music has lifted our hearts, deepened our worship, and carried us through both ordinary Sundays and extraordinary seasons.

We thank Chris for the countless hours, his steady presence, his quick wit, and his generous soul which he has offered so freely. Chris has blessed

this church beyond measure. May Chris' next chapter be filled with the same joy and grace he has given to all of us.



The Sound Sanctuary Opens May 4th!

Come home to yourself in sound.

This month, we introduce The Sound Sanctuary—a gentle, monthly sound bath experience designed to nourish your body, calm your mind, and reconnect 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.

Reservations are required—you can register for this event at **Eventbrite (Eventbrite.com)** and search for the **Sound Sanctuary event**.

The Sound Sanctuary—A space to breathe, listen and feel.



Easter Sunday!

With butterflies and flowers, Easter encouraged us to care for creation with the gift of a “plantable” butterfly to grow wildflowers for our pollinators, and windup butterflies to release in the sanctuary! With recent cuts to environmental protections, it's up to all of us to care about pollinators—many of which are now on the endangered species list.

We lived into our Easter theme that “Love is on the Loose!” as our younger

friends had an Easter Egg hunt in the sanctuary during the sermon and blew bubbles during prayer! Their bubbles (and laughter and joy) reminded us that Each bubble is like a prayer—rising up, floating freely, shimmering with hope and joy: Love is on the loose—in every breath, every prayer, every rising swirl of light, every bubble.

After worship, we enjoyed our annual Easter Piñata!



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 . . .

In musicals – and operas – when your emotions are too big or your heart too full – the only way you can express yourself is to burst into song! That's why I love musicals. Nothing can stop you from singing.

Singing has been around ... well, forever. In this country, African Americans literally sang their way to freedom from enslavement. Spirituals were used to share messages, send information, offer hope. The term "spiritual" is derived from the King James Bible translation of Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Music as resistance has been used throughout history, where music has served as a potent instrument for social transformation and collective expression.

Across generations and borders, songs have given voice to struggles for freedom, equality, and justice, encapsulating the emotions and aspirations of those fighting for change.

In moments where words alone are insufficient, melodies and lyrics harness the power to motivate, unite, and inspire actions towards a shared vision of a better world.

I know I'm not alone in longing for a better world. There are horrific things happening everywhere. Recently, three children who are U.S. citizens were deported with their mothers by New Orleans ICE. The ACLU – the American Civil Liberties Union - states that among the children deported with their mothers, are three U.S. citizens aged two, four, and seven. One of the children is a U.S. citizen suffering from a rare form of metastatic cancer who was deported out of the country without medication or consultation with their treating physicians - despite ICE being notified in advance of the child's medical needs.

Right now, many are fighting to get Kilmar Abrego Garcia released from a concentration camp in El Salvador. He was wrongly deported, without due process. It has also been reported that out of the 300 or so men transported to one of the most inhuman prisons in the world in March, close to two-thirds of the men had no gang affiliation and were not dangerous criminals.

Events like this may force us to confront the reality that being a Christian is a lot like living within the realities of a Broadway musical - sometimes words aren't enough and you just have to sing – a lament, a song of protest, a song of resistance, a song of justice too long denied, a song of love for everyone.

This is what God offers us—Good News so powerful and profound that it's a burden NOT to share it. Justice too powerful to stand silently by. Love so strong that even if we believe we are safe from being removed from this country without due process, we will sing out as if it is our child, our mother, our father, our neighbor being deported without a hearing, without a voice.

As human rights activist and author Elie Wiesel wrote, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest."

As followers of Jesus ... how can we keep from singing?