Reconciling Ministries Network

Westchester United Methodist Church Newsletter

VOLUME VII, ISSUE II NOVEMBER 2026

When I Vote, Who am I Saying I am?



A ballot is a small thing to hold so much responsibility. When we vote, we help decide whose needs receive attention, whose rights receive protection, and whose suffering can be ignored. Our votes have consequences for people we know and people we may never meet. They reveal something about the kind of community we are willing to build.

So, as we approach this midterm election, I find myself asking: *When I vote, who am I saying I am?* As a follower of Jesus, I cannot separate that question from another: *Who is my neighbor?*

Jesus keeps widening our answer. Our neighbor is the stranger, the person struggling to survive, the person others have taught us to fear. Our neighbor is someone whose language, birthplace, religion, or life experience differs from our own. Our neighbor is also the person whose politics leave us frustrated and bewildered.

Each bears the image of God. That conviction asks something of us when we consider our broken immigration system. Behind every argument about enforcement are human beings: parents and children, workers and students, people seeking safety and people who have spent years building a life among us. Their dignity cannot depend on whether we approve of their paperwork. People held in government custody remain our neighbors, entitled to humane treatment, safety and care.

We must ask what is being done in our name—and whether our votes give permission for cruelty or demand accountability for it.

In a campaign season crowded with accusations, fear, and dehumanizing language, we need spiritual grounding. Bishop Mariann Budde offers this reminder: **"Our call to love God and neighbor does not change with any election result."**

Before the election, that calling can guide how we evaluate candidates, examine claims, and speak to one another. After the election, it will still guide how we live.

Voting is a sacred trust because our choices reach into other people's lives. We still have a responsibility to ask whose policies protect the vulnerable, whose words recognize our shared humanity, and whose leadership makes room for mercy, truth, and justice.

When I vote, I want to say: I believe every person has sacred worth. I believe compassion belongs in our public life. I believe power carries a responsibility to protect those most easily harmed. And when the votes have been counted, I want my life to keep saying those things.

May we cast our ballots with care, grounded in prayer and attentive to those who will live with the consequences. And may we rise the next morning ready to put love into action.

**"BE MINDFUL.
BE GRATEFUL.
BE POSITIVE.
BE TRUE.
BE KIND."**

- ROY T. BENNETT

Dates to Remember . . .

11/01— Daylight Savings Ends

11/01—Communion Sunday & Remembering our Saints

8 a.m.—Zoom Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—Worship

4 pm—Sound Sanctuary Sound Bath

11/03—Election Day

6:30 pm— Zoom Genesis Small Group

11/04—

7:30 a.m.—Zoom Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

5 pm—Soul-Full Soup Dinner Church

11/08—

8 a.m.—Zoom Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—Worship

11/09-11/10 - Restaurant Fundraiser at Truxton's

11/10—

11:00 am - Rhythm & Food

11/11—Veterans' Day

7:30 a.m.—Zoom Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

11/15—

8 a.m.—Zoom Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—Worship

11/18— 7:30 am Zoom Prayer

5 pm—Holy & Hearty Dinner Church

11/22—

8 a.m.—Zoom Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—Worship

11/25 - No Zoom Prayer Check In

11/26—Thanksgiving!

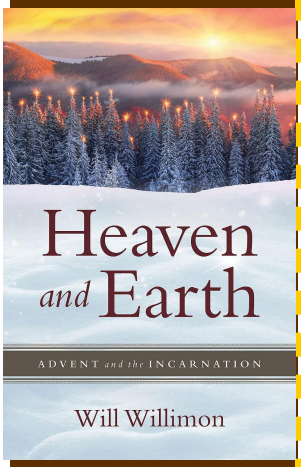
11/29—

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship—1st Sunday of Advent

12/01—Advent Small Group Study

Heaven and Earth Advent Study



The first Sunday of Advent is Sunday, November 29th—and our Advent Small Group Study, *Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation* by Will Willimon, begins on **Tuesday, December 1st at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom**.

Watch out. God is on the way. It's not within our own power to make a fresh start. If we're to have a future different from the past, it must come as a gift, something not of our devising. What we need is a God who refuses to be trapped in eternity, a God who not only cares about us but is willing to show up among us and do something with us, here, now.

In *Heaven and* Earth, Will Willimon introduces us to the God who does just that, bringing heaven to earth and changing everything. In Advent, we celebrate and anticipate the earth-shaking, life-transforming good news that God is coming to us. Watch out. Get ready. God is on the way.

The church has a few books available for purchase at $13.00 each, or you can purchase the book from your local bookstore or on-line.

For a Zoom invitation and to RSVP, please email Pastor Lyda at Lyda@wumcla.org

"I'm grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual … O how I laugh when I think of my vague indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment."

- Henry David Thoreau

Bag It Up Holiday Meals

The Food Pantry LAX is an emergency food resource for those experiencing food insecurity in Inglewood, Westchester, El Segundo, Hawthorne, and portions of Los Angeles.

We are again participating in their annual "Bag It Up" holiday meal, which will run from now through November 29th —the **meals will be picked up on Sunday, November 29th after worship**

Please pack these items in a sturdy, reusable shopping bag as part of your donation. If you cannot get all of the items on the list, don't worry. Any donation will help brighten someone's holiday.

Shopping List

1 can 16 oz ham or other meat (no chicken or Spam)

1 box of potatoes (mashed, scalloped, au gratin)

2 cans of vegetables (15 oz each)

1 can of fruit (15 oz)

1 can of soup (no broth please)

1 package pudding or jello mix

1 jar of peanut butter (no glass)

1 jar jam or jelly (no glass)

1 cake mix & frosting or complete dessert mix

1 box dry cereal

1 box pancake mix

2 boxes of macaroni & cheese

Please—no perishables, glass containers or oversized cans or boxes. Items must not require refrigeration.

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, November 22nd, we will take a special offering for the Food Pantry LAX.

Dinner Church Celebrates it's 3rd Anniversary!

This month marks the 3rd anniversary of our first Dinner Church - Hearty & Holy ... and in March of 2025, we added our second Dinner Church experience—Soul-Full Soup!

Soul-Full Soup Dinner Church happens on the first Wednesday of the month and Hearty & Holy Dinner Church takes place on the third Wednesday of the month. Soul-Full Soup's menu consists of a delicious homemade soup and sides, and Hearty & Holy's menu offers a home-style main course and sides.

We are pleased to share that both Soul-Full Soup and Hearty & Holy are going strong and we are looking forward to another year of sharing food and the teachings, life and love of Jesus.

As Rachel Held Evans stated, "This is what God's Kin-dom 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."

As we reflect on our 3rd Dinner Church Anniversary and celebrate the 2nd year of our second Dinner Church, we rejoice in community meals, praying for each other, and sharing stories over dinner. We are grateful for new friends, new recipes and a whole lot of love.

There are so many stories of Jesus gathering people around a table. As Robert Karris writes, "Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal." May we continue to feed body, mind and soul … around a table.

Alive Together 2026

On September 27th, Team Westchester UMC participated in Didi Hirsch's Alive Together: Uniting for Suicide Prevention.

We are proud to share that thanks to so many people's generous support, Team Westchester UMC raised $2,273.88 for suicide prevention & awareness programs at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services.

Here are a few photos from the event!



4th Annual Blessing of the Animals!



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wumcla.org

We are a Reconciling church!
ALL are welcome here.

Reconciling Ministries Network

From Pastor Lyda . . .

It had been three years of watching Jesus in action—listening to his teaching, witnessing his healing, seeing him feed hungry people, challenge injustice, and welcome those pushed to the margins. Three years of watching his inclusive and radical love take shape. Yet, the disciples still can't seem to understand. "Show us God," Philip asks. Jesus invites him to look again. Whenever they have witnessed his works, they have seen God's love made visible. And then comes one of the most astounding statements of all: those who carry on after he is gone will do works like his—and even greater. Apparently, Jesus trusts us to do this work! What?!

At the beginning of John's Gospel, we hear that the Word became flesh and lived among us. Eugene Peterson's translation puts it beautifully: the Word "moved into the neighborhood." God moved into the neighborhood. The language behind "lived among us" carries the image of pitching a tent, recalling God's presence among the people as they journeyed through the wilderness. God was with them on the move.

In Jesus, that presence takes flesh: a face, a voice, hands that touch, feet that travel, a life shared with others. This is an astonishing claim. We can spend a lifetime exploring it and still find ourselves wondering. Jesus gives Philip something to recognize even while he wonders: look at the works themselves. Look at what love has been doing right in front of you.

Philip's anxiety speaks to our anxiety. Jesus, what are we supposed to do in the times we are living in? How do we recognize your presence when the news leaves us angry, frightened, or heartsick?

When families fear being separated, when access to health care or food is threatened, when neighbors who are "othered" must fight for their rights and dignity, our question becomes urgent: Jesus, what do we do?

We may not have every answer. We may not know how to change everything that needs changing. But we have seen the way Jesus lives. We can be with people. Feed them. Love them. Stand beside them. Fight for their rights with the energy and compassion we bring to defending our own. We can keep learning, keep asking hard questions, and keep demanding accountability. And we can begin caring for our neighbors before all our questions are settled.

Often, it is in that caring that we come to recognize God's presence more deeply. God is in the neighborhood. And God is drawing us into relationship with the people who live there. Even when so much feels beyond our control, we still have choices about how we respond. We can choose to draw near. We can choose to listen. We can choose to make someone's burden a little less heavy. And those choices can help someone else see what they can do.

Whenever the work of connecting and loving occurs, we participate in what Jesus began. Small acts accumulate. Communities take shape. People discover that they belong. Jesus trusts that we, like the disciples, can keep learning. Keep returning to love. Keep helping one another find the way. So, keep shining the light of love. We may never know how far its light will travel—or whose love it will help us see.