



Westchester

United Methodist Church Newsletter

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Suicide Prevention Month

988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

September is National Suicide Prevention Month—a time to remember those whose lives have been lost to suicide, to surround with compassion those who have experienced suicidal thoughts or attempts, and to acknowledge the families, friends, and communities affected by suicide. It is also a time to remind one another that help is available, healing is possible, and none of us should have to carry our pain alone.

According to the CDC, 48,824 people died by suicide in the United States in 2024—about one person every 11 minutes. An estimated 14.3 million adults seriously considered suicide that year, and 2.2 million attempted suicide.

At a time when the need for mental health care remains profound, changes in federal policy have raised concerns about access to care. In 2025, the Trump administration announced it would not enforce stronger regulations adopted in

2024 to implement the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act while those regulations are reconsidered and challenged in court. The administration also discontinued roughly \$1 billion in previously awarded school mental-health grants, later awarding more than \$208 million under revised program priorities.

Particularly concerning is the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ young people. CDC data from 2023 found that 41% of LGBTQ+ high-school students seriously considered attempting suicide, compared with 13% of heterosexual students, and nearly one in five LGBTQ+ students reported attempting suicide. Yet in July 2025, the federal government ended the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's specialized LGBTQ+ youth service. The 988 Lifeline itself remains available to everyone, including LGBTQ+ callers.

Immigrant families are also living with significant fear and stress as immigra-

tion enforcement affects communities, with the greatest effects among elementary-school children.

Suicide prevention is about more than responding in a moment of crisis. It is also about creating communities where people know they matter—where isolation is met with connection, fear with safety, despair with hope, and suffering with compassionate presence.

As people of faith, we can help create those communities, and we can advocate for accessible mental-health care. We can remind one another, again and again: You matter. You are loved. You are not alone.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Dates to Remember . . .

09/02—

7:30 am—Prayer Check In

12 Craft Group

5 pm—Soul-Full Soup Dinner Church

09/06— 8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10:00 am—Worship

4 pm—Sound Bath in the Chapel

09/07—Labor Day

09/08— I am—Rhythm & Food

09/09— 12 n Craft Group

09/13— 8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

09/16—

7:30 am—Prayer Check In

12n—Craft Group

5 pm—Hearty & Holy Dinner Church

09/20— 7:30 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

09/21-22—Restaurant Fund-

raiser at California Pizza Kitchen in Manhattan Beach

09/23— 7:30 am—Prayer Check In

12n—Craft Group

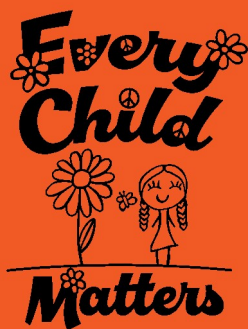
09/27—

7:45 am—Alive Together—Uniting to Prevent Suicide—UCLA Westwood Campus

11 am—Worship

09/30—Every Child Matters Day

Every Child Matters Day



On Thursday, September 30th, “Every Child Matters Day” will be observed in America and in Canada.

This day is also known as “Orange Shirt Day,” a national day of remembrance and reconciliation that honors the children of indigenous communities who were forced to attend residential or boarding schools, and recognizes the lasting impact of that system.

The name comes from the story of Phyllis Webstad, Northern Secwepemc from the Stswecem’c Xgat’tem First Nation, whose new orange shirt was taken

from her on her first day at a residential school, symbolizing the loss of identity and culture experienced by so many indigenous children.

On this day, we remember victims and survivors of Indian boarding schools, acknowledge their suffering, and promote truth, reconciliation and healing.

Wearing an orange shirt on this day is a public statement of solidarity, remembrance and commitment to ensuring “every child matters.”

Another important issue facing Indigenous peoples is lifted up by the MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) Movement, which seeks to raise awareness about the disproportionate rates of violence, disappearance, and murder experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit individuals. The murder rate of Native women is more than ten times the national average on some reservations.

For more information about Every Child Matters and MMIW, please visit: Empowernativevoice.com

“There are as many paths to God as there are souls on earth.”

- Sufi Proverb

Labor Day by Heather Cox Richardson

“On September 5, 1882, workers in New York City celebrated the first Labor Day holiday with a parade. The parade almost didn’t happen: there was no band, and no one wanted to start marching without music. Once the Jewelers Union of Newark Two showed up with musicians, the rest of the marchers, eventually numbering between 10,000 and 20,000 men and women, fell in behind them to parade through lower Manhattan.

Their goal was to emphasize the importance of workers in the industrializing economy and to warn politicians that they could not be ignored. Less than 20 years before, northern men had fought a war to defend a society based on free labor and had, they thought, put in place a gov-

ernment that would support the ability of all hardworking people to rise to prosperity.

By 1882, though, factories and the fortunes they created had swung the government toward men of capital, and workingmen worried they would lose their rights if they didn’t work together. A decade before, the Republican Party, which had formed to protect free labor, had thrown its weight behind Wall Street. By the 1880s, even the staunchly Republican Chicago Tribune complained about the links between business and government. The Senate, Harper’s Weekly noted, was “a club of rich men.”

The New York Times denied that workers were any special class in the United States, saying that “[e]very one who works with his brain, who applies accu-

mulated capital to industry, who directs or facilitates the operations of industry and the exchange of its products, is just as truly a laboring man as he who toils with his hands...and each contributes to the creation of wealth and the payment of taxes and is entitled to a share in the fruits of labor in proportion to the value of his service in the production of net results.”

Two years later, workers helped to elect Democrat Grover Cleveland to the White House. Trying to stabilize the economy by enacting the proposals capitalists wanted, Cleveland and the Democratic Congress had to abandon many of the pro-worker policies they had promised. They could, however, support Labor Day—on June 28, 1894, Labor Day became a legal holiday. May “We the People” continue to fight for the rights of all workers.

Alive Together—5K for Suicide Prevention

We are proud to share that Westchester UMC is once again a sponsor of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services' "Alive Together-Uniting to Prevent Suicide 5k! Thanks to your generosity, we are a "Friend" level sponsor.

Team Westchester UMC will gather together at 7:45 a.m. at the Wilson Plaza at UCLA before the race for a time of prayer and welcome, and then at 8 a.m., the 5K will begin!

Worship will be at 11 a.m. on Sunday, September 27th so

that Team Westchester UMC can participate in the 5K!

You can support Team Westchester UMC and participate in Alive Together in a few ways: you can join Team Westchester UMC, support a team member or the team, or donate directly to suicide prevention on the church website.

Please visit www.didihirsch.org for more information. You can also check out Westchester UMC's website for infor-

mation on how to join or support Team Westchester UMC.

Remember, on Sunday, September 27th, Sunday morning worship will begin at 11:00 a.m.!

Together, we can support mental wellness in our church and communities ... together we can make a difference!

Go Team Westchester UMC!



Hugs & Stitches at WUMC—Going Strong!

What can happen when a group of creative people gathers every Wednesday with fabric, yarn, needles, sewing machines—and generous hearts? In just eight months, 1,581 gifts of care can happen!

That is how many handmade items Hugs & Stitches has created and donated so far this year. Week after week, they gather at Westchester UMC to knit, crochet, sew, stitch, laugh, share stories, and turn their creativity into something that will make life a little warmer, softer, and kinder for someone they may never meet.

Among their creations are 193 tote bags, 38 pillowcases, 602 baby toys, 132 baby bibs, and 142 soft hearts for Project UCLA—and those are just a few! Through Yarn Angels South Bay, their creations travel to organizations including Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and its NICU, Miller Children's & Women's Hospital, Venice Family Clinic, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Oncology, the Mindful Veteran Project, and Project Ropa, which serves people experiencing homelessness. But those 1,581 items represent more than impressive numbers. A handmade toy comforts a child. A soft heart is held

by someone who needs encouragement. A tote bag gives someone experiencing homelessness something sturdy and beautiful for their belongings.

1,581 items—and 1,581 ways of saying: Someone thought about you. Someone cares.

That is what makes Hugs & Stitches about so much more than crafting. Their Wednesday gatherings become acts of compassion that ripple outward. Hugs & Stitches welcomes anyone who enjoys creating—or would like to learn. Sometimes making a difference really does happen one stitch, one heart, and one act of kindness at a time.

Genesis—A Beginners Guide to the Beginning

Beginning in October, we will explore ... the beginning!

Genesis—A Beginners Guide to the Beginning by Amy-Jill Levine will begin on Tuesday, October 6th at 6:30 p.m. and will end on Tuesday, November 10th. Our small group study will be held on Zoom.

In this study, we will look at six stories in Genesis:

- The creation of humanity and the

subsequent events in Eden

- Cain and Able
- Noah, the flood, and its aftermath
- Abraham's almost-sacrifice of his beloved son Isaac
- Jacob's dream of a stairway (it's not a ladder!) to heaven, and
- Mrs. Potiphar's sexual harassment of Joseph

We will explore interpretations that concern history, literature, and theology, and will invite you to share your own interpretations as well! If you begin with the question, "What does this text mean to me?" you've already got a start on interpretation. Amy-Jill presents Genesis as a living text, one that continues to shape faith, identity and our understanding of what it means to be human.

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 . . .

Jesus gives us some wonderfully simple instructions: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. Simple to say. Much harder to live.

Lately, I've found that loving my neighbor has become more challenging than I'd like to admit. Turn on the news, scroll through social media, or listen to the latest political debate, and it can feel as though fear, division, anger, and cruelty have become our national language.

Recently, I found myself discouraged after reading stories of violence, injustice and the growing influence of voices that seem far more interested in power than compassion. I could almost feel the love leaking out of my heart.

So I did something that seemed like a good idea at the time—I put on my headphones, walked outside to water the church garden, and started singing along—rather enthusiastically—to the Beatles' *All You Need is Love*. Apparently my performance was memorable enough to earn a few curious glances

from parents dropping off their children at preschool. I decided to tone down the concert, but the song stayed with me.

All you need is love. It's a beautiful lyric, but I wonder if we sometimes misunderstand what love really asks of us.

Love is not simply a warm feeling or a pleasant sentiment. Love is a choice we make every day. It is compassion in action. It is seeing another person's humanity, even when it would be easier to reduce them to a label, a stereotype, or an enemy.

A fellow United Methodist pastor recently shared a question that has lingered in my heart: **"What if love?"** What if love became the measure of our church, our communities, and our own lives?

John Wesley offered United Methodists three simple General Rules: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God. Those aren't merely church "rules" - they are a way of living with compassion in a world that often encourages the opposite.

The more I think about it, the more convinced I become that compassion begins with recognizing the sacred worth of another per-

son. Every human being and every creature bears the image of God. Every part of creation is beloved. Sacred worth is not something we earn or something another person grants us. It is something God has already declared.

When we truly believe this about ourselves, we no longer have to live from fear. And when we truly believe it about others, it becomes much harder to turn them into enemies. Imagine what our world might look like if people really understood how precious they are—and how precious their neighbors are as well.

The world doesn't need more fear, it doesn't need more outrage, it doesn't need more reasons to divide people into "them" and "us." It needs more people willing to practice compassion.

Perhaps that's the invitation Christ places before us today: embrace your own sacred worth, recognize the sacred worth in each person and creature, and let compassion shape the way you move through the world. The Beatles were on to something—Love is all you need.