



Westchester

United Methodist Church Newsletter

VOLUME IV, ISSUE II

OCTOBER 2024

World Mental Health Day



October 10, 2024 is World Mental Health Day, an international day for global mental health education, awareness, and advocacy against social stigma.

It was first celebrated in 1992 at the initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries. On this day each October, thousands of supporters come to celebrate this annual awareness program to bring attention mental unwellness and its effects on peoples' lives worldwide. It's also an opportunity for mental health professionals to discuss and shed light on their work, making mental health a priority worldwide.

World Mental Health Day is supported by the World Health Organization through raising awareness on

mental health issues using its strong relationships with the Ministries of health and civil society organizations across the globe. The World Health Organization also supports developing technical and communication material.

This year's theme of World Mental Health Day is "Mental Health at Work." This World Mental Health Day, the World Health Organization is uniting with partners to highlight the vital connection between mental health and work. Safe, healthy working environments can act as a protective factor for mental health. Unhealthy conditions including stigma, discrimination, and exposure to risks like harassment and other poor working conditions, can pose significant risks, affecting mental health, overall quality of life and consequently participation or productivity at work. With 60% of

the global population in work, urgent action is needed to ensure work prevents risks to mental health and protects and supports mental health at work.

Poor mental health can lead to decreased performance, absence from work, and increased staff turnover. Depression and anxiety alone result in the loss of approximately 12 billion workdays each year.

It is essential for governments, employers, the organizations which represent workers and employers, and other stakeholders responsible for workers' health and safety to work together to improve mental health at work. By investing efforts and resources in evidence-based approaches and interventions at work, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive at work and in life.

"OCTOBER IS A SYMPHONY OF PERMANENCE AND CHANGE." —

- BONARO W. OVERSTREET

Dates to Remember . . .

10/02—12 n—Craft Group

10/06—**World Communion Sunday**

8 a.m.—Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—In Person Worship—"Do Unto Others" worship series begins

10/08—**11 a.m.—Rhythm & Food**, wellness drum circle & lunch

10/09—**7:30 a.m.**—Prayer Check In

12n—Craft Group

10/10—

6:30 p.m.—Zoom Small Group Study, The Gospel of John

10/13—8 a.m.—Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—In Person Worship

10/14—**Indigenous Peoples' Day**

10/16—**7:30 a.m.**, Prayer Check In

12n—Craft Group

10/16—**5 p.m.—Dinner Church!**

10/17—**Spirit Day**

6:30 p.m.—Gospel of John Study

10/19—**Blessing of the Animals**

10 am to 12n in front of the church

10/20—8:00 a.m., Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—In Person Worship

10/23—**7:30 am**—Prayer Check In

12n—Craft Group

10/24—6:30 p.m. Gospel of John Study

10/27—8:00 a.m.—Breakfast Church

10:00 a.m.—In Person Worship

10/30—7:30 a.m.—Prayer Check-In

12n—Craft Group

10/31—**Halloween!** Puppy Pastor

Molly, Pastor Lyda and Kyla will be handing out treats in front of the church

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

“Always try to be a little kinder than is necessary.

- J.M. Barrie

In 2006, the PACER National Bullying Prevention Center declared the first week of October as a time to educate and raise awareness about bullying prevention. Their goal was to change the prevalent view that bullying was just a childhood rite of passage, something every kid had to go through. They pointed out that bullying raises school absentee rates, decreases student performance, and increases physical and mental stress.

After much success, the event was expanded to the entire month of October starting in 2010.

While all kids are mean to one another from time to time,

bullying is a persistent pattern of behavior, meant to emphasize a power imbalance and hurt the victim. The reasons for being bullied reported most often by students include physical appearance, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation.

One out of every five students report being bullied. One in five tweens (9 to 12 years old) has been cyberbullied, cyberbullied others, or seen cyberbullying.

Among students ages 12 – 18 who reported being bullied at school, 15% were bullied online or by text.

Students who are both targets of bullying and engage

in bullying behavior are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems than students who only bully or are only bullied.

For too long, those who were bullied felt that no one cared. This month and beyond, share the message that bullying is never okay and that you are there to help. No kid should feel that they are alone, and that the adults in their lives—teachers, family members, faith communities, and neighbors—are there to listen and help empower them to speak out against bullying.

Together we can create a world without bullying.

The Gospel of John Small Group Study

On Thursday, October 10th at 6:30 p.m., we will begin our new Zoom small group study, *The Gospel of John, a Beginner’s Guide to the Way, the Truth, and the Life* by Amy-Jill Levine. Together we will explore the hidden depths of John’s Gospel.

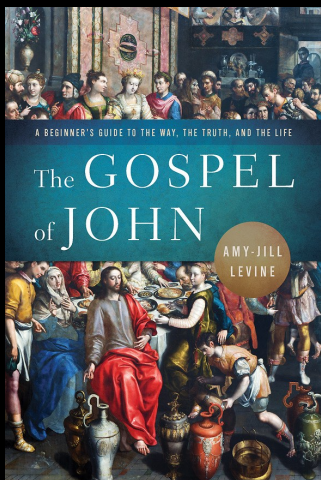
John’s Gospel offers readers a new language—of being born anew, of living water, of wind and spirit, of the “I am”—that enhances how we understand the divine, how we experience the world, and how we participate in the mystery of faith.

With her characteristic wit and charm, Amy-Jill Levine introduces readers to the world of the Gospel of John by unpacking the stories in their original context, along with examining how the text is read today. This book considers the Gospel of John in its entirety, moving through the Gospel and exploring the prologue, the wedding at Cana, the Samaritan woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery, the healing of the man at the pool and the man born blind, foot washing, Mary Magdalene

and Doubting Thomas, and the Lamb of God.

This study will take place for six weeks, beginning Thursday, October 10th and ending on Thursday, November 21st, and will meet over Zoom at 6:30 p.m. (we will not meet on 10/31).

We have a few books available for purchase at \$14.00, or you can order it online or buy it at your local bookstore. If you would like to reserve a copy of the book, please let Pastor Lyda know via email.



Blessing of the Animals

We look forward to our 2nd Annual Blessing of the Animals on **Saturday, October 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon**. You are invited to bring your pet, or a picture of your pet, to our Blessing of the Animals in the front courtyard at Westchester UMC. Kids can bring stuffed lovies to be blessed.

Each pet, picture or stuffed lovie will receive a blessing. You will have a photo opportunity at the event to capture the moment! We will also have a Memorial Table set up—

you can bring a photo of a beloved pet who has crossed over the “Rainbow Bridge” to place on the Memorial Table. We recommend bringing a copy of a picture or a picture that you don’t need to get back.

We are collecting donations of pet food and pet treats for the pets of the clients of our local LAX Food Pantry. Requested items from their wish list:

- Cat wet food
- Cat dry food
- Dog wet food
- Dog dry food

- Dog & cat treats (hard & soft)

We will also have a monetary donation station set up for the Food Pantry LAX if you wish to help support the wonderful work they are doing in the community to fight food insecurity for humans and fur-babies.

Bring your furry, feathered or scaled companion—if you have a shy pet, you can bring a photo or pull one up on your phone! All creatures, great or small, are welcome.

Do Unto Others Worship Series

Our world seems to be consumed with division—often typified in the colors red and blue. Rather than stay in our monochromatic silos, the Golden Rule in scripture challenges us to engage in conversation as we seek to create whatever common good we can with our relatives, friends, and neighbors who we might consider to be on the “other side” politically and ideologically. As we attempt to come together, the idea is not that we are obliterating either one or trying to change each other, but rather we discover the beauty that can be created when we work together to make the world a better place.

The “purple space” is where we cultivate kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love for one another and for the good of all the world, no matter what.

Do Unto Others will begin on Sunday, October 6th and will conclude on Sunday, November 3rd, right before the upcoming election in the U.S. on November 5th.

Our themes are:

- Blue and Red Make Purple: Kindness
- The Polarization Within: Compassion
- Listen More, Speak Less: Humility
- Living Together on Uncommon Ground: Respect
- Malice Toward None: Love



There is no more important time to be talking about “doing until others” in ways that we hope will foster kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love in the world right now. With divisiveness—and anxiety about that divisiveness—at an all-time high, how does our faith equip us to survive and perhaps even thrive spiritually, in this moment?

The message is clear: caring for one another, as persons not positions, is at the core of our faith.

#Spirit Day

Spirit Day began in 2010 as a way to show support for LGBTQ youth and take a stand against bullying. Following a string of high-profile suicide death of gay teens in 2010, GLAAD worked to involve millions of teachers, workplaces, celebrities, media outlets, and students in going purple on social media, or wearing purple, a color that symbolizes spirit on the rainbow flag.

Spirit Day now occurs every year on



the third Thursday in October, during National Bullying Prevention Month, and has become one of the most visible days of support for LGBTQ youth.

This year, GLAAD will celebrate Spirit Day on **Thursday, October 17th** when we will all stand together: communities, corporations, faith groups, sports leagues, schools and so many, many more, to send a message of solidarity and acceptance to LGBTQ youth.

You can get involved in Spirit Day too! The first step is to pledge to go purple! Visit the GLAAD website at: glad.org/spiritday to learn more.

Join Pastor Lyda, Puppy Pastor Molly and the folks at Westchester UMC as we pledge to wear purple on Thursday, October 19th — and on Sunday, October 22nd during worship! We support LGBTQ youth and we take a stand against bullying!

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 . . .

I've been thinking about kindness . . . a lot. It often feels as if the world has lost its kindness. Living through the past two election seasons—in addition to our upcoming election this November—has reinvigorated my quest for kindness.

A poll released on September 27, 2022 found that 75% of Americans, both conservative and liberal, and everyone in between, agreed with this statement: “To restore peace and unity we need leaders to model kindness and understanding.” They also agreed with this statement: “But waiting for our leaders to ‘model kindness and understanding with people they disagree with’ may not happen if ‘we the people,’ the people who elect our leaders, are not willing to do this first.

So, I have to wonder, how are we, the people, doing with modeling kindness?

The Hebrew word for kindness, *hesed*, appears more than 250 times in the Hebrew Bible. This shows that kindness is of critical importance in the Bible and in the Jewish faith.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Luke and Jesus' Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Matthew both share one of Jesus' most crucial teachings: “Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High . . .”

I know I struggle with the “love your ene-

my” part. There are also days when I struggle with the “love” part—enemy or friend—particularly in another contentious election season.

As theologian Dr. Marcia McFee shares, in Luke, Jesus speaks of a “reward” that would be great if we “love our enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” What might be a reward for being genuinely kind to our enemies? In today's world, there are so many things which “reward” us for being unkind to those who don't think like we do, and “rewards” for hating one's “enemy.” What can we do about the rewards we receive for being the opposite of kind? What is the cost we are paying for not being aware of this “reward” given to us when we characterize the “enemy” and reduce their inherent humanity and belovedness in our own eyes?

Dr. Michelle Robin, author and wellness coach, founded the “31 Day Kindness Campaign.” Of her kindness campaign, she writes, “The world has been heavy lately. We have the opportunity to change that. It starts with kindness. By signing up for the 31 Day Kindness Campaign, beginning October 14th, you will receive an email which contains a small message about kindness, how it affects the well-being of the giver and the receiver, and a simple act of kindness you can choose to do that day. Even one small act can launch a ripple of pay-it-forward kindness in the world.”

She shares that researchers at U.C. Berkely found that people who were kind tended to

have higher self-esteem, a greater sense of self-efficacy, less depression, less anxiety, and improved physical health. Overall, scientists learned that people who were kind or regularly engaged in informal acts of kindness tended to have higher well-being. In other words, when we are well (spirit, mind, and body), we are better equipped to face our obstacles with strength, clarity, and calmness.

The first line of defense is giving ourselves more self-compassion in what we're going through – and self-compassion is born from kindness. When we show ourselves kindness, we are far more likely to be kind to others. Dr. Robin shares that we have fallen out of touch with how to be kind to ourselves and to others – and we need to revive the practice. In fact, our entire well-being depends on it.

Showing and receiving kindness releases three natural chemicals in our brain – oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. Oxytocin helps regulate our emotional responses to situations. Dopamine regulates mood and muscle movement. Serotonin also affects mood, sleep, and digestion.

Beginning this month, let's support each other with kindness. Let's begin to create a space in which we all can be kind, exchange goodness, and change the world . . . for the better. For more info on the Kindness Campaign, visit smallchangesbigshifts.com.