



Westchester

United Methodist Church Newsletter

VOLUME VI, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2025

Black History Month

Every February, Black History Month celebrates the achievements, contributions and struggles of Black people throughout history. Carter G. Woodson developed the idea for Negro History Week to promote the history, culture and achievements of African Americans and other people of color worldwide. Woodson, the son of former slaves who became the second African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, recognized the importance of establishing an initiative that could be celebrated annually and on a national scale.

Designed to coincide with Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass' birthdays, Woodson launched Negro History Week in February of 1926 as a coordinated effort to develop lessons and encourage the teaching of Black history across the nation's communities and public schools.

Since the mid-1970s, U.S. presidents have issued proclamations supporting the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's

themes to celebrate African Americans' many achievements, culture and history.

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the creation of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids by labor organizer and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph, which was the first Black union to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor. Martin Luther King, Jr. incorporated issues outlined by Randolph's March on Washington Movement such as economic justice into the Poor People's Campaign, which he established in 1967. For King, it was a priority for Black people to be considered full citizens.

The 2025 theme, "African Americans and Labor," intends to encourage broad reflections on intersections between Black people's work and their workplaces in all their iterations and key moments, themes, and events in Black history and culture across time and space

and throughout the U.S., Africa, and the Diaspora.

Like religion, social justice movements, and education, studying African Americans' labor and labor struggles are important organizing foci for new interpretations and reinterpretations of the Black past, present, and future. Such new considerations and reconsiderations are even more significant as the historical forces of racial oppression gather new and renewed strength in the 21st century.

In light of the U.S. Government's anti-diversity effort, Black History Month takes on new meaning. Westchester UMC will continue to celebrate and honor Black History Month, and acknowledges that much work still needs to be done to eradicate racism and inequity in this country.

Sources & Additional Information: Assoc. for the Study of African American Life and History; National Museum of African American History and Culture.

"I HAVE DECIDED TO STICK WITH LOVE. HATE IS TOO GREAT A BURDEN TO BEAR."

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Dates to Remember . . .

02/01—Black History Month begins

02/02—

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

02/05—

7:30 am—Zoom Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

02/09—

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

02/11—

11 am—Rhythm & Food

02/12—

7:30 am—Zoom Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

02/16—

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

02/17—

Presidents Day—

The Church Office Closed

02/19—

7:30 am—Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

5:00 pm—Dinner Church

02/23—

8 am—Zoom Breakfast Church

10 am—Worship

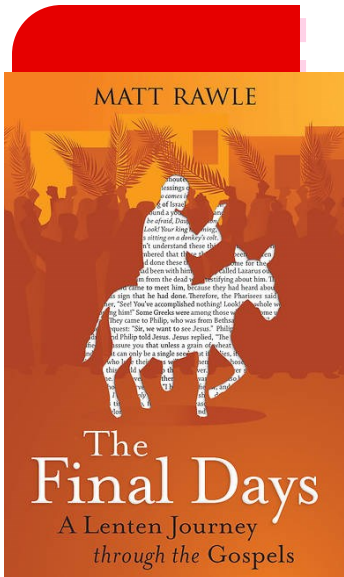
02/26—

7:30 am—Zoom Prayer Check In

12n—Crafters Group

Ash Wednesday is March 5th!

The Final Days



Our small group Book/DVD study for Lent is “The Final Days” by Matt Rawle.

The four New Testament Gospels aren’t the same story, but they offer the same Resurrection hope. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John devote most of their story detailing Jesus’ last week in Jerusalem, all highlighting Jesus’ triumphant entry into the city, the suffering and humiliation of the cross, and the empty tomb come Sunday morning—but the stories they tell aren’t quite the same.

Each Gospel offers a different lens through which we understand Jesus’ Passion. One portrait reveals Jesus to be in control, while another emphasizes his suffering. In one story Jesus offers hope to the thief on the cross, and in another Jesus only receives derision.

These different perspectives aren’t a reason to dismiss the Gospels; rather they reveal an abundant, diverse, and complementary picture of God’s work in the suffering, death, and resurrection

of Jesus.

Our Lenten small group study will begin on **Thursday, March 6th and continue through Thursday, April 10th**. All sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m., and will take place on Zoom.

To RSVP and/or reserve your book, please email Pastor Lyda. A limited number of books are available at the church for \$12.00 or you can purchase a book at your local bookseller.

“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for a smile is the beginning of love.”
- Mother Teresa



Immigration—Our Call to Welcome

As United Methodists, we have firmly declared through our *Social Principles* that we are called to actively welcome the migrant, immigrant, and refugee among us:

- Affirming the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants and refugees.
- Recognizing that displaced people are particularly vulnerable as their in-between status often provides them with few protections and benefits, leaving them open to exploitation, violence and abuse.
- Urging one another to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into our congregations, providing concrete support to them including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment and other kinds of support.

- Opposing all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants or refugees.
- Decrying attempts to detain displaced people and hold them in inhumane and unsanitary conditions.
- Challenging policies that call for the separation of families, especially parents and minor children.
- Opposing the existence of for-profit detention centers that are used for the purpose of detaining migrants, immigrants, and refugees including minor children.

Our Council of Bishops writes, “We are living in a dark time that more than ever calls us to be the light of Christ, people of faith who take our baptismal

vow to “resist evil in all its forms,” with utmost seriousness.”

Sanctuary churches are no longer a tool we can employ due to the executive order giving ICE permission to enter schools, religious buildings, and other places traditionally considered ones of sanctuary.

In light of that, the United Methodist Church is working closely with CLUE, LA Voice, and the UMC RRT teams to gather information and know ways in which we are best able to respond.

The General Board of Church and Society calls for a bold witness to stand against U.S. immigration and mass deportation policies influenced by misinformation, hate, fear and harm.

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Dinner Church is Expanding ... to Twice a Month!

eat pray love Dinner Church is expanding to twice a month beginning in March! In March, Dinner Church will take place on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from March through July ... with the hope of adding the 1st Wednesday for the rest of the year! To keep things fun and interesting, dinner on 1st Wednesdays will be Soup-Centric ... a delicious home-made soup will be the main course,

and dinner on the 3rd Wednesday will continue offering our home-style main courses.

1st Wednesdays—Soulful Soup
3rd Wednesdays—Hearty & Holy
Put them together ... Soulful Soups and Hearty & Holy beginning in March!

Here are the upcoming dates for eat pray love Dinner Church:
February 19th
March 5th (Ash Wednesday) - Soulful

Soup
March 19th—Hearty & Holy
April 2nd—Soulful Soup
April 16th—Hearty & Holy
May 7th—Soulful Soup
May 21st—Hearty & Holy
June 4th—Soulful Soup
June 18th—Hearty & Holy
July 2nd—Soulful Soup
July 16h—Hearty & Holy
Dinner Church starts at 5:00 pm in Fellowship Hall—we look forward to seeing you!

Purveyors of Awe

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5th. We will begin our new Lenten worship series, “Purveyors of Awe” on Sunday, March 9th, and will culminate this series on Easter Sunday, April 20th.

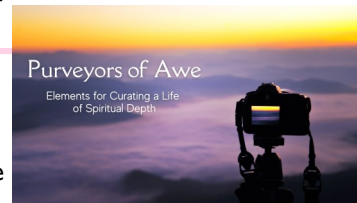
Dr. Marcia McFee writes, “I have come to believe that one of the most important things that spiritual leaders and spiritual communities can do is be “purveyors of awe” in that they promote the idea and experience of awe to the wider community—to those

who will never walk through the doors of the church. We can make the world a better place, not only by inviting people into the church community, not only by programs that alleviate suffering (and all that is right and good), but also by inviting people to be simply and deeply well.

Awe and its elements have a role in our wellbeing. Awe is a profound emotional response that can significantly impact our wellbeing and perception of the

world. Awe often arises from experiences that transcend our usual understanding, such as viewing vast landscapes, listening to powerful music, encountering extraordinary acts of kindness, or feeling heightened devotion and a Divine Presence connecting us all.”

To be a “Purveyor of Awe” is to be intentional about curating a life of spiritual depth. This has implications not only for one’s own life, but also as motivation to tend to the wellbeing of others. Let us approach this Lent with awe.



Immigration—Our Call to Welcome (continued from Page 2)

Pastor Lyda recently attended a “Know Your Rights” training hosted by CLUE (Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice) to discover how WUMC can live more fully into its call to welcome and take action for justice. Here are a few of the actions and resources we are embracing:

If you see any ICE activity, video or take pictures if possible. In Los Angeles, immediately contact the Rapid Response Network at 888-624-4752.

We will have “Know Your Rights” cards in English and Spanish available at the church—our goal is to have them available by February 14th. You are invited to hand them out.

Here are a few things to know about your rights: You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to speak with a lawyer. If law enforcement shows up to your house, DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR. Ask them to slide the warrant under the door. The warrant has to be signed by a judge, and have your name or address on

it—ICE often tries to bypass this step and presents an ICE document—not a judicial warrant. Never carry false documentation with you—it is a crime. Do not carry documentation from other countries with you. If detained, only say your name and date of birth. Remember—everyone has rights under the Constitution regardless of Immigration status. Together, we can help empower community members who are fearing for their safety and their families at this time. Together, we can be a light of hope in these dark times.

Westchester United Methodist Church

a place where love works

www.wumcla.org

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Pastor's email: lyda@wumcla.org

Rhythm & Food—Tuesday, February 11th
at 11 a.m.

Dinner Church—Wednesday, February
19th at 5:00 p.m.



We are a Reconciling church!
ALL are welcome here.



From Pastor Lyda . . .

In the early days of television, when Westerns were apparently very popular, you could always tell the good guys from the bad guys by the color of their hats.

Today it's a little bit harder to tell the good guys from the bad guys ... although we try our hardest to lump people into "good" and "bad" categories. We hear from our government that those who don't speak English are the bad guys, those who aren't born in the U.S., people of color, those who don't identify as binary, those who are poor, homeless, or female (and the list goes on) – are labeled as "the bad guys."

Even when we resist labeling others, it's easy and tempting to reduce everything that is going wrong these days to the bad guys. And depending on where you stand, the bad guys could either be the ones in red baseball caps or the ones wearing t-shirts with liberal slogans. Focusing on who the good guys and the bad guys are can suck-up a lot of our energy and resources.

As Dr. Marcia McFee shares, "We can sometimes be so focused on the bad guys, we forget that God is more concerned with us changing the realities of suffering, poverty, and oppression in place of enacting judgment

and hurting each other.

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 4, the moment Jesus starts pointing out that life is more complicated than good guys vs. bad guys, he makes people angry – angry enough to try to throw him off a cliff.

Perhaps Jesus wanted his audience in Nazareth to recognize that staying angry at the "bad guys" – whoever they may be – was a massive failure if they neglected to care for the poor and oppressed, and failed to show hospitality to outsiders, the immigrant, the marginalized.

In the U.S. right now, it is really hard to go deeper than "my side is right and your side is wrong" in light of all the harm that is being done around us.

Last month, an executive order was signed that ended DEI in the workplace and schools. As a reminder, DEI stands for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and to clarify, DEI is **not** hiring an under-qualified person for a job just because they're a person of color, or differently abled or a woman, nor is it hiring based on race just to meet diversity goals,

which has always been illegal.

Churches are not exempt from this new anti-DEI executive order, which goes against the UMC's polity, practices and faith. Westchester UMC is, and will remain to be regardless of any executive order, committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. We affirm our unwavering commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion as foundational principles of our policies and practices. We reject any attempts to undermine these values, including discriminatory policies or orders, as they stand in opposition to our dedication to creating a welcoming, equitable environment for all.

When we see God in each person, we cannot separate people into categories of good and bad, black cowboy hats against white cowboy hats, red MAGA caps against "Woke" t-shirts. It calls us to rethink our stereotypes and challenge oppression, challenge the lies born out of fear and hate. It calls us to remember that we are all connected ... your wounds are my wounds, my healing is your healing. Until we recognize the interconnectedness of all of creation, and see God in each person, in all creatures, great and small, and in the very planet we live on, we are ALL standing on the edge of a cliff.