



A Monthly Newsletter of the United Methodist Church of Vista

We are called to be an authentic, accessible and inclusive community
in Christ, celebrating and extending God's love into the world.

Pastor's Ponderings

According to churchgrowth.org, 86% of people start attending church because they were invited by a friend; 6% come to church because of an organized visitation program from the church; 6% come to church because they were invited by the pastor; and 2% begin attending church because they received an advertisement. It is not difficult to believe that people come to church because their neighbor or their friend or their colleague invited them.

The future of this church community, the United Methodist Church of Vista, depends on you. There are many who've been hurt by religion and many more who are hostile toward church. It is not easy to offer an invitation but to some, an invitation and welcome to this place will be life-giving and life-changing. At our core, churches are life-centers, cultural and civic engagement locations, and places that teach history, heritage, ritual, music, meditation and offer counseling and support. Yes, it takes donations of money to fund all this community engagement and connection, but the benefit to a city is profound. Churches clean neighborhoods, protect children, offer support to schools and hospitals, fire and police stations. Churches offer space to scout programs, voting locations and blood donations. Churches make a powerful impact because we follow Jesus and strive to live his teachings.

When you welcome someone to church, remember that church can be intimidating when you don't know what is expected of you. I remember a friend asked me when to stand up and sit down during church. Visitors and guests often don't know what to do during communion. Many people do not know anything about church or worship except what the news tells them. I've heard so many people show up for Christmas eve and make jokes about lightning striking them because they walk through the doors of a church. It is sad that people believe they are sinners and not welcome to church, when in fact it was sinners that Jesus most loved to hang out with. Jesus didn't call the powerful religious leaders...he hung out with the fisherman, the hungry and the lost.

This church family is an inspiration. As the world around us struggles, you've made courageous decisions in ministry. The church next door to our church has relocated, but you've continued doing the mission of God. Many congregations are focused on the number of people in the room every Sunday, but you focus on service and connection with each other and our neighbors. There have been hard and soft costs associated with building a new building, some of them obvious and some of them hidden. Rather than fixing our hearts on the stressors and struggles, you've continued to be hopeful for the engaging work of ministry. We've been blessed by change and continue to look forward.

I'm inspired by the parable about when the best time is to plant a tree. "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time to plant a tree is today." As I think about our church family, I believe the best time to share faith was decades ago but the next best time to share faith is today. Some will visit this church and find a better faith home somewhere else. That's ok! But some will visit this church and find the friends they've always wanted are already here.

It is summertime and a great time to invite your friends and neighbors to church. We are much more easy-going and flexible in the summer months. When you invite your friends remember to let them know they can wear shorts and a t-shirt or a suit and tie or a summer dress. And don't hesitate to make introductions! These are beautiful amazing times and you are a powerful congregation doing God's holy work in this world!

Pastor Leigh Ann

Finance Focus

The Finance/Stewardship Committee wish to thank our caring, generous congregation for your faithful ongoing giving each month. Although we still have a budget gap, so far we are paying our bills, thanks to you all. There will be an update to Pennies For Heaven the first week of August. Through June 30, you have contributed \$900.00. Thankful prayers of gratitude to you all for your faithful giving.

-Sara Baldwin, Chairperson,
Finance/Stewardship Committee

Thank you

And Two Fishes wants to thank everyone in our congregation for their donations of clothes, towels, and other items. We are so thankful for our volunteers and to those who continue to financially support our outreach. We are so blessed.

-Loretta Pierce

Zoom Gatherings and Meetings

Zoom meetings are one way we are working on keeping connected. All you need is a computer or smartphone with a built-in microphone and a camera and you can join in. Download the Zoom app to your device, click on "join a meeting" and follow the prompts to join the gathering.

Finance, August 2, 7:00 p.m.
Meeting ID: 963 4459 7468

Congregational Care, August 3, 1:30 p.m.
Meeting ID: 921 7026 9939

Reconciling Ministries, August 22, 6:30 p.m.
Meeting ID: 995 8164 7395
Passcode: Welcome

In-person...

SPRC, Sunday, August 6 (following worship service),
Conference Room

Trustees, Sunday, August 20 (following worship service),
Conference Room

Education Committee collecting school supplies

The Education Committee invites you to bring school supplies for Breeze Hill Elementary students. Please bring your donations to church by August 13. Items needed are backpacks, pencils, glue, scissors, paper, crayons, white board pens and erasers. These supplies will be greatly appreciated by the students. Contact Margene Haase for more information.

Save the Date: Tuesday, October 31

Katherine Parker, with whom UMC of Vista has a Covenant Relationship, will visit us October 31, to update us on her mission work in Nepal. We will have an opportunity to visit over lunch and hear her stories about the conditions and people of Nepal.

-Jacque Howard

Happy "August" Birthdays

Beverly Hopkins (1)
Manuel Tivar (1)
Paul Lange (2)
Betty Anne Kreutziger (3)
Taylor Lyons (3)
Alfred Chappell (4)
Bob Harlow (4)
Mary Nixon (4)
Trevor Leffler Streeter (5)
Sue Humphrey (6)
Debra Leffler Streeter (7)
Peggy Muir (7)
Ranae Mathias (9)
Carson Way (10)
Al McClure (11)
Helen Robertson (12)
Andrew Mathias (13)
Tim Biggs (14)
Margo Rogers (14)
Adam Amaro (15)
Lucille Baumann (15)
Fred Ganoe (15)
Bonnie Lambert (16)
John Haase (19)
Brice Spitz (21)
David Felien (23)
Skip Harvey (23)
Barbara Mitchell (23)
Mark Wheeler (23)
Sheryl Greiner (25)
Destiny Smith (25)
Gerald Williams (28)
Donna Hill (29)
Patricia Rose (29)

Note: If your birthday is not listed, please call Paula at the church office.

Interpreter for the Deaf

An interpreter for the Deaf/and hard-of-hearing will be here on August 6 (first Sunday of the month). We are striving to ensure that God's Word is accessible to all. Please invite anyone you feel could benefit from this service.

Flame Editor
Barbara Mitchell
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Next deadline is Wednesday, August 16, 2023
Comments or suggestions, please let us know.

The Flame (monthly newsletter)
United Methodist Church of Vista
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Annual Conference Edition: Nourish—Ending Spiritual and Physical Hunger

This special edition is from your Lay Delegates to Annual Conference: Heidi Kendall, Dakota Koenig, Beth Brainerd Hallock and Barbara Mitchell. We want to thank and offer you more depth about what is happening around the Conference.

From opening worship to closing, it was visible in the services and presentations just how diverse this Annual Conference is: ethnicities, languages, genders, age and everything in between. This diversity is one of the most inspiring, but also one of the most difficult issues that surrounds this Annual Conference. Navigating these issues takes patience, grace and vision.

We were introduced to our new Bishop, Dottie Escobedo-Frank. This was her first ever Annual Conference over which she has presided. To give her a better idea of what our Conference looks like, she spent the previous few months touring the Annual Conference visiting small and large churches all over. (She spent an afternoon in the South District for a meet and greet.) In giving her address, one of her take-aways, coming out of the pandemic, was just how tired everyone seems to be from clergy to laity. She urged everyone to take care of themselves—to Rest and Recharge. She shared that we need to move forward in trust with transparency and vision to be reformed by God’s grace and justice which will help us to move from Nourish to Flourish. Pastor Leigh Ann, in her July Flame Pastor’s blog, addressed some of this.

As at our own Charge Conference, there’s the usual business items needed to take care of clergy and staff, as well as nominations to committees and programs. What was NOT decided upon was the 2024 Budget. That is going for review and study to see if there are some better ways to address apportionments and other items including clergy salary inequities. There will be a specially called Conference in November to approve. (More to come!)

This Annual Conference, with its usual moments of joy and concern, is a study in the many issues that are part of our everyday concerns. How do we live in to our dreams of making sure that each and every person feels they are valued, wanted and are a part of the family of God? Lots of questions, no easy answers. We hope that this edition of the Flame may give you some insight about happenings around the Annual Conference.

Selling of Camp Colby: Recommendation 23-06

The recommendation for the selling of Camp Colby, in part, states that the camp has been a vital part of United Methodist camping ministries for over 70 years, and suffered catastrophic losses in the 2009 Station Fire resulting in its extended closure. The Annual Conference has not been or has not been able to faithfully rebuild. Recent extreme weather has brought further extensive damage to the Camp. The sole access to the Camp has become nearly impassible preventing not only use of the Camp, basic vendor and utility services, but also safe access and exit for the resident director and family creating liability and safety issues.

This decision to sell was not as difficult for the Annual Conference as some in the past (Camp Virginia as an example). There were joyful remembrances of times at Colby shared, but even folks that love Colby agreed with the need to sell, sharing it would cost millions to bring it back. Colby is 373 acres of land, about 35 minutes north of Pasadena, and is surrounded by U.S. Forest lands. The Camp and Retreat Ministries Council are in contact with the U.S. Forest Service. They also made a commitment, upon a request from Indigenous peoples, to look into working and sharing with Indigenous on possibilities for Colby as this sale proceeds. There will also be a decommissioning service in the future. The Camp and Retreat Ministries Council also recognized the importance of camping and have developed a “Camp on the Go” program that they can bring to individual churches.

Identifying and Opposing Apartheid in the Holy Land: Resolution 23-02

Submitted by the Cal-Pac Palestine/Israel Task Force, with no fiscal impact and no staff time needed, was the call for this Conference, its clergy and laity, to listen to the voices of Palestinians regarding their situation and urging us to look at a 2020 document entitled “Cry for Hope: A Call for Decisive Action.” The resolution shares the studies of other organizations that have called out Israel for its apartheid policies. They cite from our Social Principles document: that we “commend and encourage the self-awareness of all racial and ethnic groups and oppressed people that leads them to demand their just and equal rights as members of society” and “call(s) the Church to challenge any hierarchy of cultures or identities.” The resolution calls on the U.S. government to condition U.S. funding to Israel upon their willingness to dismantle its apartheid system and implement all the rights due to Palestinians under international law.

Reconciling Church

Recently we took a vote to become a Reconciling Congregation. What does this mean for us? OUR church is NOT disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church. We, as we have always been, have, with this vote, said that we accept ALL peoples into our congregation. That we are welcoming. We may not always agree on all issues, but it is important that we are honestly and openly welcoming, and that we have taken a stand.

Many have heard the news on difficulties in the United Methodist Church over LGBTQIA issues. We were told at Annual Conference that we need to take some of what we hear in the news with a grain of salt. Having said that, there are a few churches in our conference that have voted to disaffiliate and that was a discussion at Annual Conference.

It’s important to know that our Annual Conference, as well as much of the Western Jurisdiction, have long been in favor of gender equity and equality in all its forms. There, of course, will be more discussion on the issue as it is important and involved, and, will probably be several years in the process. God calls us to welcome all and encourages us to move in the direction of acceptance.

Dakota Named Outstanding Lay Person, South District

One of the purposes of the Cal-Pac Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is to celebrate, acknowledge and lift up lay persons who have been extraordinary leaders in the commitment of sharing God's love. This year UMC Vista was honored to learn that our own Certified Lay Minister, Dakota Koenig was named Outstanding Lay Person of the year for South District. In recognition of those named from each district, a special Laity Luncheon was held, at which Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank gave opening remarks about the importance of laity and the significance of their contributions to our Christian work. Among the highlights of Dakota's accomplishments were her guidance of district church leadership teams in refining their vision in growing the church; giving the Sunday worship message to churches in South District; giving presentations, mentorship and guidance to church Staff Parish Committees with the emphasis on caring for our pastors; serving as a mentor to newly appointed Lay Ministers in our conference, recently being elected to the District Committee on Planning and Strategy, and finally, and most importantly, being a source of inspiration to all those around her. Congratulations, Dakota!

ReNew UMC

It was a privilege representing UMC Vista as one of our lay delegates to this year's Annual Conference. One particular component of the conference experience that I would like to share is the tradition of lifting up churches that have met the challenges facing us today by revitalizing their mission and vision. ReNew UMC is but one of many.

ReNew United Methodist Church*

In these times, when we so often hear of church closings, this is a wonderful and uplifting testimonial about new beginnings. ReNew United Methodist Church. Located in South Pasadena, ReNew is a new church venture started in January, 2019, a part of the Cal-Pac Conference. The church is partially funded through the Korean Ministry Plan, one of six national ethnic ministry plans of the United Methodist Church. "Our diverse church represents South Pasadena residents," said Rev. Sam Park, ReNew's pastor. "Our fastest growing segment in the congregation is Asian Americans." It aligns with the Korean Ministry Plan for Next Generation Ministries, which encompasses three strategic initiatives: children, youth and college ministries, according to Rev. Paul Chang, executive director of KMP.

Since General Conference established the KMP in 2000, the number of Korean-American clergy ordained in The United Methodist Church has increased. Many of those, like Park, serve cross-cultural, cross-racial appointments. About 25%-30% of Korean clergy in the UMC are women serving cross-cultural English language appointments. "We contribute to the whole United Methodist Church," noted Chang.

ReNew Church is located on a historic site. It was originally owned by hotel magnate Albert Clay Billicke and his wife, Gladys Hugg Billicke, who built a three-story mansion on the site in the early 1900s. In 1915, the couple took a fateful trip on the RMS Lusitania, which was torpedoed by a German submarine off the southern coast of Ireland. Billicke did not survive the blast, but Gladys escaped in a life boat. Billicke heirs willed the property to the Methodist Church in 1960.

After building a sanctuary in the mansion, the congregation moved in and called it home until 2014. Reflective of the times, the church closed. As Cal-Pac considered options for how the eight-acre property could be used, plans for ReNew emerged.

Rev. Park's current focus is to build up the congregation. In addition to Sunday worship, ReNew hosts small group gatherings on Thursday nights and Sunday afternoons, allowing the congregation's members to develop deeper relationships. In addition, a ministry for fathers meets virtually once a week from 10-11 p.m., after children are in bed. What has drawn many congregants to ReNew UMC are the opportunities for small group experiences to renew and strengthen their faith in an uplifting and more personal way.

Across the country with 25 million children and families involved in Sunday morning sports, Park hopes to reach those families by adding a Thursday night service. The church is ever grateful to the Cal-Pac Conference grant and additional financial support from the KMP to make such ministries possible. With a long term plan for the property and for congregational growth, Rev. Park sees a bright future ahead for ReNew.

-Heidi Kendall

*Excerpts taken from article written by Christie R. House/ ReNew UMC website.

Thanks...

We want to thank you again for the honor of being your delegates representing you at Annual Conference. Blessings!

Heidi, Dakota, Beth and Barb

Flowers for Birthdays, Anniversaries and Special Events

Is there someone or something you would like to recognize and celebrate? Let us know WHAT and WHEN you would like “Flowers” and our Video Team will create a “Flower Slide” just for you. Please click on this link: <http://specialeventslides.umcvista.org/> to fill out a form in order to request the flowers.

Please...

Do not drop off your donation of clothes, etc. when the church office is closed. The church office is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 12 noon.

Stay connected

E-mail: umcvista@umcvista.org

Website: www.umcvista.org

Facebook: United Methodist Church of Vista

Be sure to check us out on Yelp!

Pray together for...

Joan Brainerd, Stu Gibson, Jeanette Marusak, Scot and Juna Spitz, Pat Hotaling, Judy Gibson, Dolores Sasway, Norm and Luene Corwin, Evelyn Lawson, Marilyn Mathias, Traci Wheeler, Erin Fraser, Ko and Rosalynn Kim, Charlotte Chappell, Beverly Thomason, Stan Hamilton, Jim Rogers (hospice care)

South District Prayer Session, Tuesday, August 1, 7 p.m.

South District Lay Leader, Michael Mitchell, hosts an on-going monthly prayer Zoom meeting the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. This is open to everyone from regular church folks, leaders and pastors.

Zoom Meeting ID: 842 2413 4406

Passcode: 786330

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