



January 2026

# The Courier

**First United Methodist Church of Canoga Park**

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Church 818.340.2950

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Website: <http://www.umccp.org>

Pastor: [eshinpaul@gmail.com](mailto:eshinpaul@gmail.com)

*Welcome to First Church where everyone is either our friend or family.*

*Sunday Worship at 10:00 am*

## A New Year, A Steady Practice

Happy New Year, First Church family,

As we step into 2026, I keep coming back to a simple prayer: "Lord, help us live with intention." Not just big goals and big moments, but the everyday choices that shape who we are, and what kind of church we become.

This year, we are leaning into a theme that matters deeply to our life together: **Stewardship as a Lifestyle**. Stewardship is not just what we do when we get a letter, or when we talk budgets. It's how we live, week by week. It's how we care for what God has entrusted to us: our time, our relationships, our gifts, our resources, our building, and our witness in the community.

To help us stay grounded and encouraged, we're going to do something simple and consistent: one stewardship-focused practice each month. Not complicated. Not guilt-driven. Just practical steps that help us remember who we are, and how we want to live as disciples.

You'll hear us call it The Basket Challenge (January–December). Each month we'll focus on one small act of faithfulness. Something you can actually do. Small steps, done together, that shape a generous heart over time.

### For January, we begin with Time to Give.

Psalm 90:12 says, *Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*. This month's challenge is simple: give one hour this week to someone who doesn't expect it. Make a visit. Make a call. Help with a task. Sit and listen. Offer your presence.

And let this be our prayer: Lord, help me offer my time as a gift, not a burden.

I'm excited about what God will grow in us this year. Let's walk into 2026 with open hands, steady faith, and real joy.

With love and hope,

*Pastor Elaine*



#### **Pastor**

Elaine Shin-Paull

#### **Music Director/ Accompanist**

Vacant

#### **Administrative Assistant**

Jyl Lawrence

#### **Sunday School Childcare**

Veronica Cabrera

Denise Lenore

#### **Teen Ministry**

Dante Wilson

#### **Lay Leader**

Roger Johnson

#### **Courier Layout**

Sharon Mountford

#### **AV Operators**

Bernie Godwin

Preston Simpkin

Michael Mosbe



#### **Resident Bishop**

Dottie Escobedo-Frank

#### **North District Superintendent**

Rev. Garth Gilliam



## January Calendar

### January Birthdays

10 Beverly Ewing  
 13 Susanna Jones  
 14 Mary McKibben  
 20 Janet Lauredo  
 Jeanne Niss  
 21 Lora O'Connor  
 22 William Landrum  
 25 Eddy Lauredo  
 30 Juliet Kaburu  
 31 Nova Anderson  
 Mary Mackay

### No January Anniversaries

*If your birthday or anniversary is not listed, please let us know.*



### January Flower Calendar

4 Open  
 11 Open  
 18 Open  
 25 Open

*If you would like to provide altar flowers on a given Sunday, in honor or memory of someone, please contact Mary Mackay, 818-731-5872.*

### Weekly Activities

Sunday Peace Evangelical Church, Hall, 9:00 am  
 Hindi Urdu Church, Sanctuary, 4:00 pm  
 Monday Virtual prayer meetings: at 7:30 pm on Zoom  
 Meeting ID: 898 8990 4696 Passcode: 875564  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89889904696?pwd=emhFc01lY3NTNzVkRjJEWCTmZndiUT09>  
 Tuesday Church of Christ, Fellowship Hall, 6:00-10:00 pm  
 Men's AA Step Guide, Room # 10, 7:00 pm  
 Wednesday Men's AA Group (Learning to Live), Parlor, 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Thursday Bible Study is taking a month-long break in January  
 Wesleyan Bible Study, Library, 11:00 am,  
 Narcotics Anonymous (Recovery Zone), Parlor 7:00 pm  
 Friday Church of Christ, Hall & Lounge, 6-10 pm  
 Saturday Narcotics Anon. (Sharing from the Heart), Parlor, 9:30 am

### Other Activities

Thursday 1 New Year's Day Office Closed  
 Hindi Urdu UMC, 4:00 pm  
 Saturday 3 Men's Fellowship Breakfast, 8:30 am  
*Frank's Weiler's Deli, 21161 Victory Blvd., Canoga Park*  
 Saturday 10 Young Ambassadors, Fellowship Hall, 12:30 pm  
 Tuesday 13 Administrative Committee Meeting, Library, 6:30 pm  
 Saturday 17 Rockchippers, Fellowship Hall, 6:30 pm  
 Monday 19 Martin Luther King Day  
 Prayer Meeting, 7:30  
 Tuesday 20 Administrative Committee Meeting, 6:30 pm  
 Saturday 24 Lou Mountford Celebration of Life service, 11:00 am

### Coming in February

Saturday 7 Men's Fellowship Breakfast, 8:30 am  
*Frank's Weiler's Deli, 21161 Victory Blvd., Canoga Park*



**FOOD  
 PANTRY**

*Remember to bring food for the West Valley Food Pantry on Communion Sundays*



## Local Leadership Training:

Information will be available in an e-mail with Zoom Training dates in January for all local unit officers.

From the book “Breath as Prayer” which I purchased recently.

“The love and kindness of God is unshakable and ever faithful. God doesn’t love you because you follow Him; He loves you because He loves you. Period. He isn’t kind because you trust Him; He is kind because He is kind. Period. It’s who He is.”

## United Women in Faith Reading Program

Is there any troubling content in the United Women in Faith Reading Program books? How do I know what to expect?

The Reading Program is designed to be uplifting and spiritually nourishing while also wrestling honestly with the difficult experiences of our world today, including violence and other potentially triggering content. Where possible, we have added flags to the book descriptions to note any disturbing content regarding: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual content (S), and/or profane language (L).

This is not meant to steer you away from these books, but rather to prepare you to know what to expect so you can make informed choices.

Unfortunately, we are not able to anticipate all the content that may be disturbing to every one of our readers, since each of us is unique and brings our own particular set of experiences.

*Shirley Thomson*

## Mission u

Mission u is a transformative educational program that encompasses both Bible-based curricula and events. All are welcome to engage with either or both components of Mission u.

Interested in deepening your faith in community? Gaining experience interpreting Scripture? Working toward healing for yourself, your community, and all of creation? Mission u is for you!

Each year, United Women in Faith develops three justice-focused Biblical curricula for adults, youth, and children, all on a common theme. In 2026, our theme is **Experiencing Emmanuel**. Our focus on developing three curricula around one common theme means that Mission u offers a unique opportunity for faith communities to create powerful intergenerational learning experiences.



*Confirm gatherings  
before you go.*

### Bookends

Wednesday,  
January 21 at 1:00 pm  
Book to be reviewed TBA

### Sarah Circle

Thursday,  
January 8 at 9:15 am for  
breakfast at Nico’s  
Restaurant

### Faith, Hope & Love

Wednesday,  
January 14  
Program TBA



## Midge Herder Turns 100



Sixty family, neighbors and friends gathered at Yolanda's restaurant in Simi Valley, Nov. 29th, to join in a celebration of Midge Herder on her 100th birthday.

Midge, and her husband Frank joined our church in 1956, when the church was on Jordan Street in downtown Canoga Park. She began singing in the choir there and, after the church moved to our present location, she continued in the choir until her retirement, a total of nearly 65 years. Over those years she also served as the choir librarian, was an active part of UMW and the Leisure Group and assembled the Courier for mailing.

Attending the party from our church were, Shirley FitzGeorge, Roger & Nancy Johnson & Mary Mackay.



*December 14 was dubbed Ugly Christmas Sweater Sunday. Everyone was asked to wear what they might have to fit the theme.*

## Mary Beth Godwin

Enthusiastic singer Mary Beth Godwin passed away on December 17.

She lived her life advocating for the less fortunate. She devoted her life to her church and family – husband Bernie and children August.

She served them with kindness, faith and love, even through her courageous battles with leukemia and lung cancer. She was a person with strength, resilience, grace and kindness. She loved the Lord with her whole heart. She will be greatly missed.



Ralphs: The September to November quarter had 18 church families participating in the Ralphs Community Rewards Program. We received a donation of \$75.50 for education purposes.

## Reports from the Administrative Committee

### Stewardship as a Lifestyle

Even in a challenging season for many churches, God is growing generosity among us. We increased from 34 giving commitments in 2025 to 43 in 2026. The total amount pledged was close to \$99,000, about a 10% increase from last year. We Thank You for your generosity. The Lifestyle portion of the program will continue into 2026 with monthly tips and ideas about how to incorporate stewardship into your daily life. Let's keep this program alive!!!

### Financial Update

We've had some delays with completing the 2026 budget and will finish it sometime in early January. We'll have highlights in the February Courier.

### User Group Update

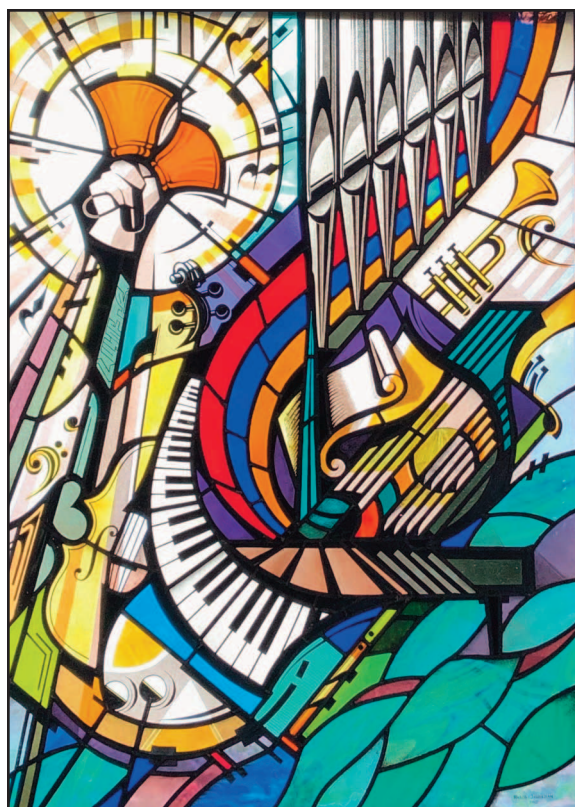
We're very excited to announce that we have exclusively leased the downstairs Fellowship Hall to Chaminade Preparatory School starting 2/15/2026. We're sad to see our long-time user groups go, but now the space will be used 6 days a week instead of 1.5-2 days a week. This will produce the needed income to help us continue making major investments in the facilities, without any financial appeals, and at the same time reduce the labor-intensive process of managing 4 different user groups.

### Facility Update

In December we had two termite inspections made on the filigree wood behind the monitors in the sanctuary and some spot problems in the Education Buildings. We hope to have the termite treatment done in January. Ants, Ants, Ants.....since early fall we've had ants on the grounds in many places. The early rains flooded out many of them, but when they started showing up again, we had them treated.

Louis Parrinello replaced the towel dispenser in the Fellowship Hall Men's Room.

Roger Johnson and Louis Parrinello have solved the mystery of how to turn off power to the outside receptacles which had been attracting the homeless. Ray Pyles has agreed to look after the Memorial Fountain. He's cleaned it and will be replacing the pump sometime after the first of the year. Many Thanks to All!!



Brian Mountford reinstalled the two chimes (near the disciples in the sanctuary) that had been pulled down a few months ago. He also repaired the handbells by replacing the old rubber springs in most of the bells. The set is now ready for a new bell choir to form and begin learning music to share in worship services.

### Another Event on Campus

The Community Helpers (formerly the Assistance League) had a rummage sale on December 13th. It was quite busy and helped them sell the remainder of items they still had from the closure of the Thrift Shop in 2024.

*George Grengs*





## Outreach/Mission Committee

Outreach has had a very busy couple of months. During the month of November I took over many bags of clothes, shoes and boots.

On November 30th I took Advent calendars that Stephanie Summer and I bought to the Chatsworth family shelter and passed them out to the children who reside there. What they mostly liked was there is chocolate behind each window. One girl came up to me and said, "I remember you. You are nice!" Each child in our church also received an Advent calendar. Some were sent home with their parents.

For the Advent Project we had 20 church families, and UWF, donate 78 - \$25 Walmart gift cards. The rest were donated by my neighbors and friends.

On December 13th I took the Walmart gift cards and Christmas stockings to the two shelters in Chatsworth so the residents could buy Christmas gifts. Currently, there are 83 residents living in the two shelters (45 in the family shelter and 38 in the Transitional Aged Youth shelter). All the residents (83) received a gift card and a Christmas card that included a label saying, "A gift from your friends at First United Methodist Church of Canoga Park."

My friend, Cathey, and I bought red Christmas stockings and stocking stuffers to give the children at the family shelter. These stocking stuffers included a Christmas card, bubbles, containers of

slime, Christmas stamps (ink kind), notebooks with pens for the stamps, Happy Birthday Jesus bracelets, porcupine balls, candy canes with their meaning, an ocean or insects themed coloring book with crayons, a stuffed animal and small bags of pretzels. The four older children (14-18) also received a journal with pen.



The TAY residents received a \$25 Walmart gift card, a Christmas card, a box of chocolates and a candy cane with their meaning. When I walked into the TAY shelter these kids were already in the room. When I tell you they were happy they received a gift from us I am telling you this is no little matter to them. They must have thanked me 6 times for not forgetting them. They asked me to thank everyone at the church who gave them a gift. A couple of them asked me to ask the church to pray for them. They mostly wanted prayers that God would help them get out of their current situation.

Our church members were given mini candy canes and the meaning of candy canes with their bulletins on December 14th, which happened to be Crazy Christmas Sweater Sunday. Each child who was present at our service on December 21st received a Christmas stocking.

On December 11th Valerie Woods and I, representing the church and its Outreach/Mission Committee, took a Christmas stocking filled with snacks, a bottle of Martinelli's and 3 homemade baked cakes by Valerie to Captain Ho and his crew at Fire Station 105. This is the station who assisted with our Trunk or Treat.

*Shari Worrell, Outreach/Mission Chairman*

## What do Advent Wreath candles mean?

The Advent wreath began as a German and Scandinavian home devotional practice used to mark the four weeks of Advent. Families would light a candle for each past week and the current week at their dinner or evening time of prayer. The configuration of candles, whether in a line or a circle, did not matter. Neither did the color of the candles (all colors are used in homes in Europe). What mattered was the marking of time and the increase of light each week in the face of increasing darkness as the winter solstice approached.

As Advent wreaths began to be used by congregations on Sundays beginning in the late 19th century, several adaptations were made to make them work better in public worship spaces. Candles needed to be larger and more uniform than the “daily candles” handmade or purchased for home use. They also needed to be more uniform in color to fit with other décor in the sanctuary. This shift in context from home to public use also made it important for the candles to be given a meaning more than simply marking time and increasing light.

As this practice began to catch on by the mid-twentieth century, several church supply houses who sold Advent Wreaths and candles for public worship also developed resources, banners, and bulletin covers assigning a theme to each week, and thus each candle, based on scriptures from the one-year lectionaries used at that time. Those themes were Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace, in that order.

Today, almost no one uses those one-year lectionaries, so those themes may not always fit the scriptures we hear in worship. The one exception is the Third Sunday of Advent, where the current lectionaries have continued to support the centuries old observance of “Gaudete” or “Joy Sunday.” That is why church supply houses often offer rose or pink colored candles for the wreath for use on this day.

So how may we talk about the meaning of the Advent wreath today?

We can reclaim the original home use of marking time with the hope of increasing light as we await the return of Christ, that day when “The city no longer has need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it, because the glory of God illumines it, and its lamp is the lamb.”

And we can develop meanings or themes for each week based on the focus of the scriptures themselves. After all, the candles and the wreath are an accessory, not an end in themselves. Their meaningfulness comes from how we use them to point toward Christ, the world’s true light, who was, and is, and is to come.

*This content was produced by Ask The UMC,  
a ministry of United Methodist Communications.*



*People lifted on the  
prayer chain:*

*Bernie and August  
Godwin following the  
death of their mother*

*MaryBeth*

*Sharon Aivazian*

*Valerie Aivazian's*

*cousin-Greg*

*Millie Alexich*

*Carol Rogers*

*Carol Berns's brother*

*Stan and Lynn Westover*

*The Mountford Family*

*Brent Gettelfinger*

*Angela Anderson and  
family*

*Nancy Johnson*

*Jim Turner*

*Barry and Emily Guerrero*

*Laurie Berger*

*Chandra Seeger and  
family*

*Paul Cady*

*Send prayer requests to*

*Anita Parrinello*

*luv2bjedi@gmail.com)*

*and CC Pastor Elaine*

*(eshinpauill@gmail.com)*





FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF CANOGA PARK

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West Hills, CA 91307-2396

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## Edwin's Computer Ministry

If you're having problems with your computer and would like someone to look at it (for free) please contact me. Edwin works in the IT department at Valterra Products, where I used to work and has gladly looked at several computers for the church and church members.

He doesn't come to your house, he just connects to your computer through the internet on the third Saturday of each month between 9-11am. Joe Dedinas was the last member that had great success improving his ability to connect with others.

If you or your computer need help, please give me a call and I'll schedule you in!



*George Grengs,  
george.grengs@outlook.com or 818.632.7538*