



The Willow Word

A Publication of the Willow Glen United Methodist Church
God's Family Growing Through Caring, Sharing and Serving

Willow Glen United Methodist Church

1420 Newport Avenue, San Jose, CA 95125

408-294-9796

www.wgumc.org

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Editor's note: Due to repeated mischief by the Grinch, this month's issue is lacking the usual pleasing layout/format....please forgive!

Pastor's Letter

We begin the season of Advent with scriptures from the Prophet Isaiah. In Chapter 35, he says that the wilderness and dry land will be glad and the desert will rejoice and blossom. Then the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing. At this time of year, we are looking for signs of this joy, and one of those signs for me is the Village House shelter program that began operating as a 12-month rotating shelter on January 4th of this year.

Some of you have wondered if the work has been worth it. How many medically fragile women have been "ransomed" from the streets and is there any cause for singing? So I'd like to share a summary of the first ten months of the shelter program. Through October 20th, the Village House had welcomed 45 women as guests. Fifteen were currently active, 30 had left the program. Ten of these women found permanent rental housing and five returned to a permanent place living with family. Thus, 50% found a stable living situation. Six of the women were sent to other programs, either because they exceeded the 6-month limit or they needed a higher level of care. Only four women left the program for rule violations and two left for unknown destinations.

But that doesn't tell the whole story. Even for the women who didn't make it into permanent housing, there were still success stories. Of the 31 women who stayed in Village House for at least a month, 17 of them increased medical visits and adherence to treatment plans and experienced fewer health crises. Out of the 16 women with a history of substance abuse, 13 showed improved sobriety. Five women achieved major medical goals. Nine women secured employment. One woman got a scholarship and received a 4.0 GPA at community college. Three women attended regular psychotherapy, resulting in improved mental health. Three women resolved legal issues. Six women reconciled with family in a meaningful way.

For me, this is Isaiah's prophecy coming true. Because of the love you have for Jesus, you have opened your heart to these women, "ransomed" by the grace of God, and you have helped to make their wilderness glad, their desert rejoice and blossom. In this past year, as difficult as it has been, we have seen, in Isaiah's words, the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our god. Merry Christmas.

General News

Village House

Signups are starting soon! Village House returns to WGUMC on February 7 and will run until March 7. We are looking for a handful of folks who are willing to be an evening or morning supervisor one evening or morning a week so that we can have a consistent leadership team.

Advent Devotional: Stories of Joy

As you spend the holidays with loved ones, you will be thinking about and talking about good times and special events in the life of your family. Grab a pen and paper or a keyboard and write them down so that we can share stories of joy with each other through our daily devotional for Advent. Everyone has a story about finding joy in surprising places or in difficult circumstances. You have a story about someone who has given you great joy or taught you the meaning of joy. You may have a story about a religious experience that brought you joy. The best way to

combat all the bad news in the world is to share the good news. Bless everyone's Advent season by sending Pastor Rebecca an email with a story about the coming of joy.

The Coming of Joy: Advent and Christmas 2018

All services will be in the sanctuary.

This year has been full of both natural disasters and man-made ones. Some of us can't wait for this year to end and a new one to begin. Fortunately for Christians, the new year begins early.

December 3, First Sunday in Advent: "The Joy Coming at You."

What is joy? Where do we find it? Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10

This year the Council of Bishops has designated this Sunday as Migration Sunday and has asked us to take a special offering for UMCOR in response to the worldwide refugee crisis.

December 10, Second Sunday in Advent: "From Fear to Joy"

Mary greets Elizabeth, Luke 1:39-45

December 17, Third Sunday in Advent: "From Anger to Joy"

Mary's song of joy, Luke 1:47-56

December 24, 10 am, Fourth Sunday in Advent: "Songs of Joy"

We will celebrate Christmas with a lessons and carols service in the morning on Christmas Eve Day. For those who can't make it out in the evening or have other plans, this will be a Christmas Eve service with communion but without the candles.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Our 5:00pm Christmas Eve service is designed for families with children, but is delightful for worshippers of all ages. Our children will share some special Christmas music, our praise band will lead us in familiar and contemporary Christmas carols, and the children will tell the Christmas story from the point of view of the animals in the stable. The joy of Christmas is told with energy and hope and peace at this service.

Our 10:00pm service is a peaceful candlelit service. The familiar words of the Christmas story combine with the beauty of familiar Christmas music to create a peaceful and renewing celebration of the gift of Christ into our lives. Come and hear the good news in a way that will speak to your life for the year to come.

May all your Christmas celebrations bring you closer to the love of God. Our Christmas Eve offering will go to help us cover the costs of hosting the Village House in February. We estimate our costs to be approximately \$6500. Thank you for your generosity.

In Lieu of Christmas Flowers

With the combining of services, we no longer have much space in the sanctuary for lots of poinsettias. We will have some, but instead of buying flowers, we invite you to make a Christmas gift in honor or memory of someone you love to help us fund the Village House in February 2018. Signups will be in your worship bulletin later in Advent.

Stewardship

If you have made a pledge toward our 2018 operating budget or to the LiftUp! campaign to replace the sanctuary lift, THANK YOU!. If you have not yet had the chance to do so, you will be receiving a letter and a pledge slip.

New Year's Eve Day Breakfast and Worship

10 am in Kohlstedt Hall

Come as you are on December 31st for pancakes and worship around tables in Kohlstedt Hall. Having celebrated joy all season long, let's start out the new year that way! If you'd like to help make pancakes, contact Pastor Rebecca or Pastor Susan.

Advent Night Labyrinth Walks,

Tuesdays, 7 to 9 pm, December 5, 12, and 19. In conjunction with the Advent Family Nights, we are offering a quieter time for reflection in a noisy and busy time. Come at 6 pm and share a meal with your church family at 6 and then move over to Kohlstedt Hall to walk the labyrinth.

Labyrinth Themes:

December 5th: "The desert shall rejoice and blossom." Where are the dry places in your life and what needs watering?

December 12th: "It's a Wonderful Life." Meditations based on favorite scenes from this favorite movie.

December 19th: "Building Your Own Bethlehem." Meditations on the manger with scenes from the Christmas Creche in Palo Alto.

Come Volunteer at the Family Giving Tree

Sunday, December 17, 6-8pm

Come be an elf for the Family Giving Tree – sorting and wrapping gifts for needy children in the valley. We will meet at the church at 5:30pm and carpool to the Family Giving Tree warehouse in Milpitas for a 2-hour shift of Christmas wish fulfilling. This is a great project for older elementary children on up. Bring the family! E-mail Susan (susan@wgumc.org) for more information or to let her know you're coming.

Joining the Willow Glen Family and New Member Sunday

The Bible talks about a "spirit of adoption" [Romans 8:15] and we want to be all about adopting newcomers into the Willow Glen family. If you are new and interested in joining this community, we especially invite you to the Advent Family Nights to get to know some of our folks and share some food. Mark January 21, 2018 as a new member Sunday and we will have a gathering after worship to welcome you!

Ministry of Tithing

Last month's newsletter explained how all the United Methodist churches in our conference are being asked to tithe or give ten percent of their operating income to ministries that we support beyond the local church. Not everyone can tithe their income to the church, but we ask that you consider increasing what you are giving by 10% for 2018 so that we can fully meet that obligation by this time next year. We can do this!

Call For Shawls

We are just about out of prayer shawls, so I hope you'll be knitting while you're watching those football games and holiday specials in the next few weeks. If you can't do that but could donate some cozy, soft yarn (the softer the better), we'd take that, too.

Lift Replacement Update

While we are worshiping in the sanctuary, we have set up an in-house radio station so that anyone not able to access the sanctuary can listen live to the worship services in the church library as well as the narthex, kitchen and Sunday School. There will be radios in each of those places. Just tune in at 92.7 and there are no commercials! Thank you to Tony Stone for setting us up to broadcast.

Meanwhile, the Trustees have approved a contract to hire a structural engineer to go over the architect's drawings and provide all the measurements and specifications that the city inspectors might want in order to approve the project. When that work is done, our Board chairman and the architect will go to the city for approvals and put out the project for final bids. We are hoping and praying that the city won't require other ADA upgrades so that we can begin right away. We have about \$45,000 in hand, so we are almost to our goal and are just waiting to get all the ducks in a row.

UMW News / Women's Page



Celebrate 150 Years of Women Organizing for Mission

“The Power of Bold” UMW 20th Quadrennial Assembly May 18-20, 2018

Come and join women from around the country and world in Columbus, Ohio, for a faith-filled event launching into the future with bold mission action addressing the needs of women, children, and youth. Assembly2018 will focus on biblical texts surrounding the story of Jesus' mother, Mary. Mary was a teenage mother, wife, sister and migrant refugee. Her life demonstrates what it means to boldly answer “yes” to God's call despite life's challenges. Plan now to experience the “Power of Bold” moving worship and riveting workshops. Together we can change the world as part of a daring and compassionate 150-year and counting movement. Find out more at www.UMWAssembly.org.

In Awe of Our Own UMW Leadership

Looking back over the last 30 or so years, it is remarkable to discover all the accomplishments of Willow Glen U.M.C.'s United Methodist Women.

Christian Community: Advent Family Nights

6:00-8:00 p.m., Woodhaven

Tuesdays of Advent (Dec. 5, 12 & 19)

It has become our tradition to gather as a church family to celebrate the season of Advent with activities and fellowship, food and preparation. We hope you will take a break from the "everyday" and join us each Tuesday for a simple potluck dinner and a little bit of "special" for the season. Drop in at Woodhaven anytime between 6:00 and 8:00pm. You'll find friendly faces, a warm meal, Christmas crafts and activities for the whole family, including the labyrinth available for some contemplative time.

We hope you'll come in from the cold and crazy of the Christmas season and get warmed and centered at Woodhaven with your church family.

If you would like to help by bringing part of the potluck meal one evening, please contact Pastor Susan (susan@wgumc.org). We would also like to have a host family each week to help with the set-up, greeting, serving and clean-up.

Have you heard? Our children are becoming animals to tell the Christmas story! Parent meeting on Sunday, December 3 at 9:30am, auditions at 1pm

We invite all children to join us as we tell about the birth of Jesus in from the perspective of the animals in the Bethlehem stable. It's a slightly different take on the traditional Christmas story with excitement and preparation, waiting and wondering, doo-wop singers and the King (of rock and roll).

Choir: All of our Sunday School children become the Christmas choir. Rehearsals begin Sunday, November 19 at 9:00am each Sunday (at the beginning of Sunday School). Practice CDs are available from Pastor Susan.

Cast: Auditions for solo, ensemble, dancing and speaking roles will take place on Sunday, December 3 at 1pm. All parents of those children interested in auditioning must attend a parents' meeting that morning at 9:30am in Woodhaven.

We need your help! We will need parent help making simple animal costumes and creating a stable set complete with hay. We will also need a photographer and videographer for the service, sound, choreography and stage assistance. Please e-mail Pastor Susan (susan@wgumc.org) if you can help in any of these areas.

Generosity and Commitment in Sunday School

Every good and perfect gift comes from God. In fact, generosity is at the very core of God's character - God even gave us His own son, Jesus! Jesus showed unwavering generosity in his life and showed us that we can be generous towards others, showing that we love God by loving the people God loves. We pray that this Christmas, as kids celebrate God's amazing generosity, they'll see how they can be generous with their family, friends, and neighbors.

In January, we will discover what it means to live our lives for God and how we can practice our faith consistently. We're building a solid foundation for the new year and beyond as we continue to grow in our relationship with God.

Sunday School meets each week at 9am in the preschool building for ages 3 years through 5th grade. Please note that there will not be Sunday School on Sunday, December 24 or 31.



CrossWalk: Faith and Fellowship for 3rd, 4th and 5th Graders

Friday, January 12

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Kitchen, Wesley Room & Kohlstedt Hall

Theme: Cooking for Others

Start the new year off right with friends and faith, continuing to find ways to shine our light in the world. We'll be preparing a meal to serve in the Village House women's shelter in February, and as always, there will be fun and friends, food and fellowship. CrossWalk is for all third, fourth and fifth graders. Bring a friend!

E-mail Pastor Susan (susan@wgumc.org) to ask any questions, let her know you are coming, or just say "hi!"

Woodhaven Preschool Open House

Saturday, January 20

Interested families are invited to tour the school, talk to parents and teachers, and learn more about registration for the 2018-2019 school year. Mark the date on your calendar and watch for more details in January.

Joint Youth Ministry News (from Lisa and Kat)

Mall Night Lock-in was just incredible – here are a few highlights:

*Collecting \$4,000 plus to purchase gifts for students at a school where 94% are free and reduced lunch and the median family income is \$30,000.

*Most older siblings being incredibly kind to their younger siblings who were at this chaotic event for the first time.

*12th graders being accepting and silly with 6th graders during games.

*Leaders who took groups of students all over the mall and helped the younger ones understand budgeting and taxes. Leaders who threw in not only their time but extra money to buy supplies.

*The innocence and kid-like questions of 6th-graders.

*Teenagers who never complain (for very long at least) when we asked to take their 100th groups picture and then ask them to clean up, organize, sort and do jobs. They just listen and are respectful knowing they go to a Youth Ministry that's kind of like a bootcamp.

*Teens who spend the evening at the mall shopping for others and then instead of spending the rest of their free time shopping for themselves, coming back to where Kat and I sat with more envelopes and gift lists and continuing to shop for more students.

*Conversations with students where there wasn't an agenda, small group questions, teaching or plan beyond laughing, listening and being a community.

*Teens who never hang out together, are in different social circles and go to different schools, spending time together getting to know each other.

We had so many financial donations and donations of time and food. Thank you so much to our drivers and sleepover helpers. This event couldn't happen without all of you.