



The Vine *February 2020*

United Methodist Church
1031 Iowa Ave. Los Banos, CA 93635
E-MAIL Address: umclb@att.net
Phone (209) 826-4181
Address Service Requested

Worship Service 9:30 AM

Infant and Pre-school Care 9:30 AM

Sunday School: 9:40 AM

(Following Children's Moment in Worship Service)

Church Office Hours: Mon - Thurs. 8:30 AM-11:30 AM

Pastor: Rev. Jim Garrison

Church Secretary: Cassie Wolf-Miyamoto

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

5 th	Tyler Morris	7 th	Chris Foxworthy
11 th	Brooke Barton	14 th	Jim Jones
18 th	Larry Wiley	21 st	Godfrey Zaunbrecher
25 th	Allen Battle		

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO YOU!

11th Dennis & Donna Morris

14th Bud & Susan Ramsey

16th David & Belinda Sabetta

21st Jerry & Fay Davis

25th Robert & Shannan Doubek

January contributions total: \$ 8,159.00

Attendance for January 5th (38) 12th (63) 19th (63) 26th (46)

Will Methodists Stay United?

You may have read news articles proclaiming that United Methodists have made plans to divide the denomination. These reports are somewhat true and somewhat exaggerated. What occurred is that a group of key leaders representing various interests and groups in the United Methodist Church (UMC) met together with a renowned mediator and developed a process for dividing the church. This plan would have to be approved by the General (Worldwide) Conference that will meet in May 2020. There is no guarantee that the plan will be approved, although the groups involved in the mediation have pledged to promote it. General Conference could also change the proposal. Many UM members will be asking, "How did we get here and what will it mean for our congregation?" I'd like to address those questions.

For over forty years there has been a growing rift in the UMC. The media would portray the controversy as being about how the church understands the practice of homosexuality, but that is really just the most visible aspect of the division. A more fundamental division exists in the way we view the authority of scripture. For the sake of simplicity, I'm going to talk about two major groups, even though in reality there are many people and congregations that would not fit neatly into these categories. One group might be called "evangelical," "traditional" or "conservative." I'm going to use the term "traditional" because that is the term you will often see in news articles. This group has a strong view of the authority of the Bible and the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. This group believes that the prohibitions against homosexual behavior found in the Bible are still binding on us today. The other group might be called "liberal" or "progressive." I'm going to use progressive, because that is that group's currently preferred designation. This group tends to see the Bible more as a human record of people's experience of God and understands the biblical prohibitions against homosexual behavior as more a product of the culture and time in which the Bible was written. They believe that denying ordination to practicing homosexuals, or prohibiting same-sex marriage is a violation of human rights and a withholding of the unconditional love of Christ. This group is also less insistent on the unique nature of Jesus and the necessity of personal faith in Christ for salvation. I acknowledge that these descriptions are simplifications. I count myself among the evangelical traditional group.

The liberal/progressive wing of the church has been advocating for the acceptance of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and gay clergy for decades. The traditional wing has consistently won the votes at General Conference (the group that sets our official rules in the UMC) saying that homosexual practice is not condoned and that same-sex marriage is not permitted nor are "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" eligible to serve as clergy. Our California-Nevada Annual Conference has consistently taken the progressive approach and advocated to change those rules and has often bypassed those rules. The on-going debate on this issue was so disruptive that the 2016 General Conference called for a special General conference just to address this issue. A special commission was formed and worked for three years to produce some options to move forward. The option promoted by the commission was called the "One Church Plan," and would have eliminated the current rules regarding homosexuality and left it to

individual congregations and conferences to decide for themselves whether they would do same-sex marriages or accept gay clergy. However, the special General Conference instead narrowly passed what was called the "Traditional Plan" which maintained our same rules and sought to strengthen penalties for violating them. The debate was ugly and divisive. The response of many of the progressives was to vow to disobey the rules as an act of "civil disobedience" akin to blacks riding in the "whites only" section of the bus as a means to overthrow a system of discrimination.

The proposed "protocol" for amicable separation was hammered out by key leaders who determined that the differences were unreconcilable and that we could serve God better by peacefully parting and not spending so much energy and creating so much negative publicity in conflict.

The proposal would allow the traditional group to form a new denomination while the progressive group would continue as the on-going "United Methodist Church." It would allow those congregations who choose to switch to the new denomination to retain ownership of their church buildings.

The proposal would also make it possible for the U.S. church to have different rules than the church in Africa, where views are more conservative. If the proposal passes, a new more conservative/traditional Methodist denomination will be quickly formed, and the on-going U.S. UMC will very likely quickly change/delete the rules regarding homosexuality.

Each annual conference can vote to join the new denomination or to remain in the ongoing UMC. If no vote is taken, the default is to stay. The default for each congregation is to do whatever their annual conference does, but if they disagree with that decision, they may vote to do the opposite. In our situation it is clear that our California-Nevada annual conference will choose to stay with the on-going UMC. Any congregation that so desires would have to vote to leave to join the new denomination.

The situation creates a lot of uncertainty. For many congregations, having to take a vote to leave or stay will cause painful division. Not all of our church members would agree on these issues. There are many details yet to be decided, and the whole proposal might not even be approved. In light and in spite of all this, I want to leave you with a few encouragements:

1. We are called to share the love and message of Jesus; we shouldn't let this situation stop us from being a healthy congregation.
2. Whatever the future holds, God will continue to hold us.
3. Love one another.

Yours in Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim".

Pastor Jim

Administrative Council Highlights – January 7, 2020

The Ad Council met in the Fireside Room on Tuesday, January 7, 2020 with six people present. The following items were discussed:

- **Nurture, Outreach and Witness (NOW):** New Chairman Bud Ramsey plans to hold regular meetings of the NOW team, once a workable day is identified. The Los Banos Memorial Hospital gave a second \$2,500.00 donation to Manna Ministries, making a total of \$5,000.00 for the year. A meeting of the participating groups will be held soon to set up Manna's calendar for the year.

The hospitality schedule has been adjusted to identify separate tasks (providing snacks, serving them, and cleaning up afterwards) each week, so that volunteers won't need to commit for everything for a full month at a time. The children did a very good job with the Christmas program. Bud took video of the production, and will try to post it online. We hope to make improvements to the church's website this year.

Tawny and Susanna are teaching the Sunday school classes, and have acquired a 52-week curriculum. The homeschool coop is using our facilities on Mondays and Tuesdays, and their final meeting for the school year will be on Monday, June 1. To minimize the impact on the UMW rummage sale later that week, June 4-6, coop members will be asked to help set up the tables, chairs and other items as needed for the rummage sale.

We have received a request to use one of our rooms for three days of state testing for approximately 20 students of Inspire Charter School, in late March or late April. The Ad Council agreed that the Fireside Room should work for this purpose, and referred the matter to the Trustees to set the conditions and fee schedule for the room rental.

- **Trustees:** We haven't heard back yet from American Music in Fresno about the problem with the sound board in the sanctuary. The church telephone system was largely fixed by Dennis Morris and his grandsons, but there is currently no service to the Fellowship Hall. A

pest control firm recently completed an inspection of the sanctuary, and found no termite damage.

- **UMW:** The annual Christmas party on December 10 went very well, and the rummage sale will be June 4-6.
- **Staff-Parish Relations Committee:** Our new pianist, Christine Pefanco, began on January 5, and did very well.
- **Treasurer's Report/Finance Team:** Our General Fund income for December was \$14,044.47, plus a transfer of \$12,133.50 from Designated Funds. Paid expenses were \$23,568.32, including the final balance due for medical insurance. The checkbook balance was \$4,436.39 as of December 31, and there were no unpaid bills

We tithed \$6,600.00 in 2019, which was about 5.5% of our total income, well short of the 10% goal for all member churches of the denomination. We paid our full 10% obligation in 2018, but last year's collections were down significantly, with total income for 2019 roughly \$15,000 less than in 2018. The Finance Team is looking at ways to control expenses, but the vast majority of costs are for payroll, utilities and insurance, without much leeway. Some thought is being given to fundraising efforts, such as the scrip program, and we have just received information on how the church can participate in the Amazon Smile program.

Jim has downloaded the forms and begun working on year-end statistical reporting to the Annual Conference, due by February 15.

- Prayers were requested for the following **People in Need:** Darrell Henley, Suzanne and Ed Kusters, Jim Willis, Karla Scott, and Kimberly Dickens.
- **Pastor's Report:** Jim will be in Livermore January 28-30 for a Gathering of the Orders, and will be involved in a Walk to Emmaus in March. He said he felt it was too early in the process for us to spend much time on the recent report on the potential split of the United Methodist Church, which will be taken up at the General Conference in May.

Vine Monthly Events

February 4th - Admin. Council Meeting 7PM in Fireside Room

February 5th - Women's Bible Study 10AM in Fireside Room

February 6th - VBS Planning Meeting 4:30PM in Fireside Room

February 9th - Scout Sunday - Scouts will be greeting and speaking

February 10th - NOW Meeting 7PM in Fellowship Hall

February 11th - UMW Meeting, speaker and light luncheon 10AM in Fireside Room

February 11th - Trustee's Meeting 7PM

February 12th - Women's Bible Study 10AM in Fireside Room

February 17th - Office closed - President's Day

February 19th - Women's Bible Study 10AM in Fireside Room

February 25th - Finance Meeting 3:00PM

February 26th - *Ash Wednesday*

February 26th - Women's Bible Study 10AM in Fireside Room

Scout News- Pack 85 held their annual pinewood derby race on Saturday, Jan.19th at the church. We had 15 racers and all the boys had fun racing their speedy cars down the track. On Jan. 20th, the scouts helped pack military care packages with OPC to send to service members overseas. The boys and their families are invited to join our congregation on February 9th for the 100th annual United Methodist Scout Sunday celebration. Our biggest event of the year is also this month - our annual Blue and Gold Banquet that celebrates scouting as well as our boy's accomplishments and cake auction is on February 29th here at our church as well. Thank you, Mackenzie Ferreira



This Photo by Unknown

VBS- Yes, it is time to begin the planning for another year! Meeting will be February 6th @ 4:30 in the Fireside room or Sanctuary. If you wish to be a part of this next year's event in July, please attend. Thank you, Shannan Doubek & Kerri Michel

If: Los Banos - This is an event for women of faith. It is a telecast that will take place at Cornerstone Church on 1209 South 6th Street. It takes place on Feb. 7th & 8th. If you want to attend, you must register online. The fee is \$20 which includes a catered lunch. The online site to register is: cornerstonechurchlb.iflocal.com

E-Giving - I am sure some of you noticed the flyers in the pews. These are there for your convenience. Anytime you forget your check book and/or cash and want to help the church function you can use your phone to make a one-time pledge or set up a regular giving plan. The flyers give you the steps. If you have questions, please see Gregg Rice or Cassie. Thank you!

