

150 YEARS
1875-2025

MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2025

Faith-based free clinic serves community

By Kathy L. Gilbert
Aug. 29, 2025 | NEW ORLEANS (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/faith-based-free-clinic-serves-community>

Key points:

- † Luke’s House, a free clinic in New Orleans started by United Methodists, grew out of a need after Hurricane Katrina closed most avenues to health care.
- † It was an inspiration from St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, which

sent mission teams to New Orleans for 16 consecutive years, and ran its own clinic for the uninsured.

- † After starting with a single doctor, the clinic has grown to have volunteer providers from around 30 different medical professions.

Luke’s House, a free clinic in New Orleans, grew out of a need sparked in the Rev. Callie Winn Crawford’s heart after Hurricane Katrina closed most avenues to health care.

It was an inspiration from St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, which sent mission teams to New Orleans for 16 consecutive years. St. Mark’s started a free clinic for the uninsured called “Clinic

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LA-area churches seek to rebuild after fires

By John W. Coleman

Aug. 25, 2025 | LOS ANGELES (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/la-area-churches-seek-to-rebuild-after-fires>

Key points:

- † Both Altadena and Community United Methodist churches were among the Los Angeles-area houses of worship destroyed in the January wildfires.
- † While temporarily worshipping in other churches, the congregations are planning for the yearslong rebuilding process and benefiting from support they have received.
- † Many of the churches' members also are dealing with the loss of their homes.

As August's wildfires north of Los Angeles reach containment, survivors of the historic, monthlong inferno there in January are just starting to see signs of hope and recovery.

Those wildfires, [among the area's most destructive ever](#), forced over 200,000 to evacuate and obliterated more than 18,000 building structures, including many houses of worship. The flames also killed at least 30 people, including [a longtime United Methodist](#).

Members of two destroyed United Methodist churches — Community in Pacific Palisades and Altadena — are temporarily worshipping in other churches. Many also are dealing with the loss of their homes.

Over six long months, the sprawling, grotesque ruins and mounds of debris at both churches and neighboring properties were painstakingly cleared. Now there are barren plots of land upon which to rebuild.

United Methodists have stepped up in response to the fires donating more than \$1.3 million toward disaster recovery, thousands of dollars in gift cards and many hours of volunteer time.

“To me, that’s the superpower of our (connectional) system,” the Rev. Garth Gilliam, North District superintendent, said [during a recent Altadena service](#).

But the road ahead remains long. While some rebuilding of homes has begun, it is still a fervent dream for these two congregations who lost their churches in the fires.

Altadena United Methodist Church

Altadena's members moved into the sanctuary and campus of the former First United Methodist Church of San Gabriel on Aug. 3, after



A visitor reads Altadena United Methodist Church's sign in front of the church's burned ruins in Altadena, Calif., in March. The congregation is now worshipping at a new location about nine miles from the Altadena campus, but members are eager to get back to their church and community. Photo by John W. Coleman, UM News.

worshipping since January on Sunday afternoons at Scott United Methodist Church in Pasadena. Now they are happy to return to Sunday morning services and to plan other ministries for their new temporary campus, vacated after the First United Methodist congregation formally ended ministry June 29.

The new location is about nine miles, or a 20-minute drive, from the Altadena campus. The property needs repairs, including refurbishment of an outdoor play area to serve young people. That immediate need is a short-term fundraising priority over the church's long-term rebuilding effort.

But members' excitement about having their own space has produced needed energy to counter displacement fatigue and frustration over ongoing disaster recovery hurdles, said their pastor, the Rev. J. Andre Wilson.

He has led the interracial but mostly Black congregation's growth from six members to more than 30 regular attendees, in his eight years there. Over a century old, the family- and youth-focused church emphasizes its positive, Scripture-based theme, "Home of the Abundant Life," especially when inspiring support for its rebuilding efforts.

Andre and Heather Wilson's home survived the Eaton fire. But in a recent interview they recalled the night he tried in vain to fight the massive, spreading blaze at the

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2025 August Budget Summary

The Finance Committee appreciates your contributions and donations. With your support we will be able to continue sharing God's love with those around us.

Income

Total Income: \$49,612

Expenses

Church Programs:	\$0
Finance:	\$0
Church Administration:	\$1,420
Facility Maintenance:	\$13,265
Personnel:	\$21,163
Conference Apportionments:	\$3,256
<u>Change in Payables:</u>	<u>\$1,873</u>
<i>Total Expenses:</i>	<i>\$40,977</i>

Income Over Expenses: \$8,635

The budget for 2025 is **\$500,000** which, divided evenly, makes each month's goal \$41,667 rather than being weighted differently throughout the year.

Thank you for your loving generosity in keeping this church operating! Only with the generosity of our congregation have we been able to weather the storms

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Come as you are!

"Leah, dear, when you told me about the block party, I asked 'Where's it at?' I did not say 'Wear a bat.'"

First United Methodist Church
206 S. Hopkins Avenue

After assassination, bishops urge peacemaking

By Heather Hahn
Sept. 12, 2025 | UM News

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/after-assassination-bishops-urge-peacemaking>

Key points

- † United Methodist bishops call for prayers and actions for peace following a school shooting and the assassination of activist Charlie Kirk.
- † They wrote as people across the political spectrum debate the legacy of Kirk, whose death follows a growing number of politically motivated acts of violence.
- † The bishops roundly condemned violence in all its forms and urged churchgoers to emulate Jesus.

After a day that saw a school shooting in Colorado and an assassination in Utah, United Methodist bishops across the U.S. are calling for the faithful to be peacemakers.

“As United Methodists gather for worship over the next several days, we call you to prayer and meaningful action against violence as a means of dispute settlement,” Council of Bishops President Tracy S. Malone said in [a statement on the bishops’ behalf](#). Malone also leads the Indiana Conference.

“We urge United Methodists to actively promote a culture of understanding, respect, and nonviolent conflict resolution,” she wrote.

Malone and other bishops are encouraging the pursuit of peace as they see both political violence and school shootings on the rise.

On Sept. 10, a shooter took the life of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who was speaking at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. Authorities announced Sept. 12 that [a 22-year-old Utah man is in custody in connection with the shooting](#).

Just minutes after Kirk was shot, a 16-year-old shot and critically injured two fellow students before killing himself at the local high school in Evergreen, Colorado. The local sheriff’s office says the high school shooter was [“radicalized by some extremist network,” and the Denver Post found that he espoused white supremacist views online](#).

Nearby, Evergreen United Methodist Church immediately mobilized [to provide care for the traumatized school community](#). The high school is located in the same Colorado county where two students’ massacre at Columbine High



An American flag waves at half-staff in 2018 after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Flags are standing at half-staff again after the Sept. 10 assassination of an activist on a university campus. United Methodist bishops are urging members to act as peacemakers to help put an end to the violence. Photo by Bryan Roschetzky, iStock.

School in 1999 eventually [led to the deaths of 14 people](#).

The shootings — both on school campuses — came just a couple of weeks after [United Methodists around the U.S.](#) joined in mourning the victims of a mass shooting at a Catholic church and school in Minneapolis.

“Among developed nations, the U.S. is an outlier [with extremely high incidence of homicide and gun violence](#),” Mountain Sky Conference Bishop Kristin Stoneking said [in a statement](#) shortly after the two shootings. Her area encompasses United Methodist churches in [Montana, Wyoming, a part of Idaho, as well as Colorado and Utah](#).

“Violence has become the air we breathe and the water we are swimming in. As a collective, we have become too accustomed to it, until it hits personally,” she wrote. “But the truth is that all of this is personal. As a human community, violence that affects one of us affects all of us.”

She and other bishops wrote as many across the U.S. political spectrum are wrestling with the legacy of Kirk, who died at the age of 31. The co-founder of Turning Point USA capably organized and drew the admiration of young Christian conservative evangelicals, especially young men. He was a husband, father, and [cherished ally of President Trump](#), who called for U.S. flags to be at half-staff in Kirk’s honor until the evening of Sept. 14.

Kirk also was a provocateur, [known by some for his divisive rhetoric](#) about LGBTQ people, women, as well as racial and ethnic minorities. He denounced [the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#). He stirred fears that immigrants were replacing white

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Honoring our differences while celebrating unity

Commentary by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Muhomba
Aug. 25, 2025 | BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/honoring-our-differences-while-celebrating-unity>

Key points:

- † As the global United Methodist Church seeks to embody a vision of unity, it must also reckon with the different convictions and contexts that shape its people.
- † While the church has removed language condemning homosexuality from its polity, United Methodists in the Philippines and parts of Africa have declared that marriage is solely between a man and a woman.
- † In choosing to walk together through complexity, disagreement, and change, we bear witness to a Gospel spacious enough for all God's children.

In a world rich with complexity, The United Methodist Church continues to stand at the intersection of unity and diversity. Our Wesleyan heritage calls us to celebrate what makes each community unique while affirming that our deepest roots are intertwined.

Diversity, in this light, is not a challenge to overcome but a gift to embrace — a vibrant testament to the many ways God's grace is experienced across continents and cultures.

The Wesleyan tradition, deeply woven into the fabric of our faith, invites us to honor individual journeys while never losing sight of our common spiritual home. It is through this tradition that we learn to listen deeply, love generously, and build bridges where differences arise. To be "united by the Wesleyan tradition" is to commit ourselves not to uniformity, but to a unity that cherishes every distinct voice in our global choir.

We gather as one church, each congregation contributing its own color and rhythm to the greater symphony of faith. Our differences — be they rooted in language, custom, or conviction — do not diminish our shared purpose. Rather, they illuminate it, reminding us that the Gospel thrives wherever hearts are open and communities are willing to learn from one another.

This commitment to unity amid diversity is more than an aspiration; it is our ongoing invitation. It calls us to move beyond simple tolerance toward genuine celebration of the unique gifts each person and place brings. In honoring our differences, we are doing more than preserving tradition; we are shaping a future where all may find belonging and

purpose in the body of Christ.

Yet as the global church seeks to embody this vision of unity in diversity, it must also reckon with the distinct realities, convictions and contexts that shape its people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the conversations and discernments unfolding across the central conferences — United Methodist regions in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines — where questions of theology, culture and self-governance come into sharp focus. The challenge, then, is not only to honor our differences as a source of strength, but to navigate faithfully the tensions that arise when deeply held values diverge.



The Rev. Dr. Thomas Muhomba. Photo

It is in this space of both convergence and contradiction that The United Methodist Church continues its pilgrimage, endeavoring to hold together the gifts of local autonomy and global connection, the call to faithfulness and the invitation to mutuality. Our commitment to cherish every distinct voice must be matched by a willingness to engage in honest dialogue and compassionate discernment as we seek God's will together.

[The Council of Bishops clarified last May](#) that central conferences are not compelled to adopt or accept practices regarding homosexuality if these conflict with their local laws or cultural contexts. This action came a year after the church's top legislative assembly, [General Conference, voted to remove language from the Book of Discipline](#) stating that the practice of homosexuality was incompatible with Christian teaching.

In alignment with the bishops' directive, [the Philippines and African central conferences have since implemented policies](#) upholding marriage solely as a union between a man and a woman.

[Bishop Mande Muyombo of the North Katanga Episcopal Area affirmed in July the continent's spiritual independence](#), declaring that African United Methodists will not be swayed by external ideologies that might contradict their cultural and biblical values. He [reiterated the unwavering stance held by African United Methodist leaders](#) that homosexual practice is incompatible with African cultural and traditional values.

This firm stance, articulated by the church's leadership, has ignited both passionate support and earnest conversation within the African United Methodist

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Americans. In the wake of a shooting at a Christian school in Nashville, Tennessee, he said it was [worth the cost of some gun deaths to preserve Second Amendment rights](#). At the time he was shot, he was addressing a question about gun violence.

United Methodist bishops, as well as both Democratic and Republican leaders, unequivocally condemned the assassination and offered prayers of comfort for his loved ones.

“We will not shift this culture of violence with more violence,” Stoneking said. Jesus chose another way, she noted, even when facing a brutal death at the hands of Roman authorities.

“Just before the violence of this world overtook him, Jesus said, ‘Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword,’” she wrote, quoting [Matthew 26:52](#). “This violence is not our way.”

Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, who leads the Holston and West Virginia conferences in Appalachia, said in addition to rejecting violence, United Methodists must actively choose love, civility, and compassion.

“Our world does not need more voices that inflame anger or deepen division,” she wrote [in a statement](#). “It needs Christians who embody Christ’s reconciling love in the public square as well as in our private lives.”

Kirk’s death appears to be the latest in politically motivated violence in the U.S. These include:

- [An attack on workers at the Centers for Disease Control that resulted in the death of an Atlanta police officer.](#)
- [The killing of a Democratic state lawmaker and her husband and the shooting of another and his wife in Minnesota.](#)
- The firebombing of the Democratic Pennsylvania governor’s residence.
- The fatal shooting of two Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, D.C.
- The killing of United Health Care’s chief executive officer.
- [Attacks on an Arizona campaign office of then-Vice President Kamala Harris.](#)
- [Last year’s two assassination attempts on Trump.](#)

“This has to stop,” California-Pacific Conference Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank [wrote succinctly](#). “Violence is never the answer. One of our basic commands and guides for living in community is ‘Thou shall not murder.’”

This week’s shootings also come as the U.S. marks the 24th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

“There is no rationalization that can ever legitimize the terror we are inflicting upon one another as human beings,” [wrote Bishop Laura Merrill on Facebook](#). She leads the Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Oklahoma Missionary conferences.

She noted that the latest acts of brutality come as [the military is being used to police U.S. civilians, as civilians in Ukraine and Gaza](#) are under attack and as masked federal agents have been given license to detain people [based on how they look, talk, and make a living](#).

“We must pray, remembering that the true purpose of prayer is never to change God’s heart, but to change our own,” she wrote. “We must listen and learn, to try to understand across the breach. ... We must move, to put ourselves next to the vulnerable ones who always end up at the bottom of these heaps. And we must speak in courageous ways that build up love and community.”

United Methodists must do more than speak out, said Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez, who leads the Upper New York and Susquehanna conferences.

“These are days for the church to be seen — proclaiming the gospel with boldness, being Christ’s love in action, and standing shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors in every place,” he [wrote in a statement](#). “That is the path I choose. That is the witness I will bear.”

Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling, who leads the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware conferences, has been helping United Methodists in her area nonviolently continue ministry and protect the vulnerable as armed troops and agents patrol their neighborhoods.

“We must understand and hold sacrosanct that we belong to one another,” she [said in a statement](#). “Our obligations transcend ideology. Let us continue to commit ourselves to a path of peace, where disagreement does not lead to death, and where the beloved community, which demands mutual respect and the protection of basic human rights, is not a dream, but a reality we live into each day.”

The United Methodist Church [came into being at a similarly tumultuous time under the shadow of political assassinations and the Vietnam conflict](#). The Uniting Conference, where the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches officially became one, took place just 19 days after the murder of King.

“The birth of The United Methodist Church in April 1968, just days after Dr. King’s assassination, reminds us

Love more, fear less, in cross-cultural ministry

Commentary by the Rev. KyungHae Anna Shin
Aug. 22, 2025 | SCHAUMBURG, Ill. (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/love-more-fear-less-in-cross-cultural-ministry>

Key points:

- † Early years of cross-cultural ministry were often confusing or painful, but the Rev. KyungHae Anna Shin writes that she came to see that her difference wasn't a limitation, but a gift.
- † Life in Christ is always cross-cultural, as Jesus crosses every boundary.
- † Choosing to love more and fear less has led to transformation in herself and others, she writes.

From the very beginning of my ministry, I was appointed to cross-cultural/cross-racial settings.

No one ever talked about this in seminary or at ordination. But it didn't take long for me to realize that I was different: a Korean pastor serving a predominantly white congregation.

The way I spoke English, the way I thought and related to others, the way I communicated — and even the way I kept silence — none of it fit easily into the dominant mold.



On June 11, 2025, the Rev. KyungHae Shin shares her reflections at the Northern Illinois Annual Conference clergy retirement celebration service. Photo by the Rev. Thomas E. Kim, UM News.

I hadn't fully understood how much of me had been shaped by culture — or by the invisible force of privilege — until it clashed with another way of being. Simply put, I didn't know what I was up against.

Those early years were confusing and sometimes painful. I often wondered why I had to explain myself so much. There were lonely moments when I questioned if my call would truly be received.

But over time — and only by God's grace — I began to

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YOU'RE INVITED TO

Thanksgiving Service

& Picnic

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH
10AM

EVERYONE WELCOME FOR
A SERVICE, FOOD, AND MUSIC

First United Methodist Church
Grassy Lot

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with a Heart.” Luke’s House is named for St. Luke, patron saint of physicians.

Crawford, then pastor of Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church, brought the need for a clinic to the outreach committee on a Sunday evening in 2006. She also brought the idea to the Rev. Connie Thomas, pastor of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church.



The Rev. Callie Winn Crawford stands on the front stoop of Luke's House in 2015. Crawford helped found the free health clinic in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina while serving as senior pastor of Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church in New Orleans. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

Thomas, who died in 2009, offered the church fellowship hall with the caveat that the clinic had to disappear when it wasn't operating. Six exam rooms were made using PVC piping and sheets. Massage tables were exam tables. Everything was tucked away in a closet between clinic hours.

“At every meeting of the outreach committee, I would say, ‘I just want to help one person,’” Crawford said. “Well, the first night we opened and after the first client was helped and left, the doctors and nurses pulled back the sheets and yelled: ‘We just helped one person!’ I was just so happy.”

Bob Lancaster, a member of Rayne Memorial and a retired psychiatrist, volunteered at the clinic.

“He came every time the clinic opened and he had the most patients,” she said. “He had to have appointments; nobody else had appointments. There was such a need for mental health services.”

Dr. Susan Berry, a member of Rayne Memorial’s outreach team, said Lancaster was retired from Tulane.

“He died during COVID,” she said. “He was the third death of the COVID epidemic in Louisiana.”

Two weeks before the clinic was to open, Berry was the only doctor they had.

“I’m a pediatrician and I knew the people walking in were going to have all these problems — diabetes, hypertension, and things older people get — that I don’t treat,” she said.

She contacted Louisiana State University and Tulane University asking for help. They all said, ‘Are you kidding? We don’t have enough people to staff our clinics.’”

Dr. Betty Lo-Blais, director of LSU’s medicine-pediatrics resident program, stepped forward and said she could bring residents and doctors to the clinic for two hours, one night a week.

The clinic moved from the foyer of Mt. Zion to a building on Simon Bolivar Avenue owned by The United Methodist Church’s Louisiana Conference. Its current location is the Edna Pilsbury Health Center. It is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m.

Lo-Blais is still volunteering.

“Everyone is benefiting from Luke’s House. The residents are getting experience and the clinic provides great care for minimal expense,” she said. “It is a calling for us to do this.”

Saegan Swanson, executive director for Luke’s House said the clinic now serves the Spanish-speaking community in New Orleans.

“I think last year we saw patients from under a year to 92,” Swanson said.

The providers are volunteers from around 30 different medical professions, she said.

“We have a partnership with LSU’s ophthalmology department and so all of the providers who volunteer here are ophthalmologists versus optometrists, so our patients are able to get much more in-depth eye exams.”

Luke’s House is a teaching clinic and has students from their first year up to their fourth year, Swanson said. There are also students getting master’s degrees in counseling.

“People need to know this is a safe place to come and provide care that they normally would never be able to afford. Everyone deserves health care,” Lo-Blais said.

Gilbert is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tennessee, who covered the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina for UM News in 2005.

News media contact: Julie Dwyer at newsdesk@umnews.org. To read more United Methodist news, subscribe to the free UM News Digests.

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church with a garden hose, while also helping and consoling neighbors. Yet, they heard no fire engine sirens nearby.

A recent [Los Angeles Times investigation](#) reported that only one fire engine was in the church's heavily Black West Altadena community, while hundreds more were fighting rampaging fires in more affluent East Altadena and over in Pacific Palisades. Fire Department officials blamed the stark imbalance on "human error" and confusion caused by catastrophic fires that raged far beyond their control. Of the 19 people reported killed by the Eaton fire, 18 died in West Altadena.

The Wilsons are grateful for the recovery management efforts of church leaders in "a very intense process." They are especially grateful for the Rev. Melissa Roux MacKinnon, whose serves as a "change manager" for churches in the North District.

"She's been really helpful, coming alongside us," Wilson said, "helping us with insurance matters, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) deadlines, SBA (Small Business Administration) loan applications, meetings with architects, and working with the conference and district on our behalf."

MacKinnon describes herself as a "go-between." She said she feels honored to work with the church's trustees and finance leaders while freeing Wilson to plan worship, do pastoral care and handle other administrative duties.

"Persons in this church have lost their homes, their church, their community. And they're grieving," she said. "When we start to envision their future, they say they want to get back to their church, their hub for ministry in the community that they love."

She marvels at the faith of Antonio Watson, Altadena's chair of trustees. "He lost his house and everything," said MacKinnon. "Yet, he is so grounded in his faith in God that there are moments when we're talking about the process and problems, and he just says, 'God will provide,' like he really believes it."

During a June 13 [panel presentation on disaster response](#) at the California-Pacific Annual Conference, Watson spoke about his congregation's recovery efforts and the struggle to remain faithful despite doubts.

"This was something that we needed to go through to know that God is real, that there's something on the other side that God has for us," he told the conference. "I am prayerful that we will continue to operate with eyes of faith and go forward." The next day his pastor preached at the conference's closing ordination and commissioning worship service.

At the congregation's final worship service at

Scott United Methodist, Gilliam, North District superintendent, preached to the two congregations jointly and then presented both with Community Courage awards. The award for the Altadena congregation credited its "resilience, grit and faith to bounce back from adversity."

"It's important to continue sharing our story and the impact of the fire on our community to keep needed financial support coming in," Wilson, the church's pastor, later said in an interview. "But we also emphasize the need to let go of what has been lost and look forward to new opportunities. I know it's painful now. But we're going to have a new church someday with new opportunities for ministry. We don't know how God will do it. But we know it will be abundant."

Community United Methodist Church

Since May, Community United Methodist Church's congregation has worshipped just four miles away from their celebrated Pacific Palisades neighborhood. They are welcome guests in the chapel of First United Methodist Church of Santa Monica, where the host congregation worships in its sanctuary.

The Rev. Cathleen "Catie" Coots, Community's new pastor, shared in a recent interview about the church's loss of multiple properties but also its emerging plans for restoration.

The Rev. John Shaver was appointed there for only six months before the January Palisades fire destroyed the church, its parsonage and most neighboring homes and businesses. During a tour of the site March 18, he spoke candidly of the challenges and emotional turmoil of critical losses, the resulting chaos and his uncertainty of what would happen next.

Shaver took a leave of absence in April. But as his successor, Coots may be ideally suited to face the challenge of rebuilding. She served as the church's pastor from 2012 to 2015. And at Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank's request, she provided administrative support to help Shaver manage the crisis from January to April. After becoming interim pastor in April, she became the appointed pastor in July.

Coots, a fourth-generation Methodist pastor, retired in 2023 after 41 years of full-time ministry. Having her pension benefits the financially strapped church. And she has many helpful connections throughout the conference. But she sees her familiarity and affection for Community's members as a special advantage.

"I already knew a number of the people, and they knew me and trusted me," she said. "So, in the midst of this chaos and loss, I was someone they knew they could rely on. That makes a big difference."

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Leading the church's recovery has meant helping its longtime bookkeeper find and reconstruct scant financial records, while also working with FEMA and the conference's insurance provider.

"I have had to learn a lot of things with God's help," Coots said, "and I gain strength from God and from our members and supporters every day."

The church lost 90% of its income and faces a \$30 million rebuilding cost, with only \$12 million coming from insurance, she reported. That rebuilding must include the church's much-admired preschool, destroyed by the fire and now temporarily relocated to West Los Angeles. It had a \$1 million budget and a waiting list of 100 children. Also, the historic church, [which played a crucial role in establishing the Palisades community](#), had several commercial properties along nearby Sunset Boulevard that were a lifeline of rental income.

"The church is waiting for the results of a feasibility study to make decisions; but we anticipate a phased approach to rebuilding, including spaces that can be used for multiple purposes," Coots said. The sequence may begin with the parsonage, including a larger living room to serve as a temporary worship space, followed by the commercial rental property and the preschool. Then the sanctuary, fellowship hall and other facilities may follow.

Bryce Swanson, Community's lay leader, praised Coots' leadership when he addressed the California-Pacific Annual Conference during the June 13 disaster-response panel discussion.

He recalled how Community suddenly became the local United Methodist Committee on Relief assistance center when the conference's disaster response task force parked its trailer in front the burned-out church and offered supplies to anyone in need.

"Without exception, those we helped were grateful, and many were amazed that the Methodists were offering assistance to the community, even though our church building was gone," Swanson said. "But they weren't only grateful for the supplies. After speaking with dozens and dozens of people, I got the impression that they were equally grateful for the opportunity to tell their stories. I know that we were grateful for the opportunity to listen."

Community United Methodist Church of Pacific Palisades is affectionately known as the church that built a town, Swanson told the assembly. "But of course, the church and most of the town are gone now. We believe that Catie will bring stability to an unstable situation."

He added that he is confident that decades from now, "we will also be known as the church that helped rebuild a community."



New graduates are recognized at Community United Methodist Church in Pacific Palisades, Calif., during worship in the chapel of First United Methodist of Santa Monica, Community's temporary worship venue since

Despite not knowing all the details, Coots believes the church can rebuild within three to five years — but only with community involvement. It could take longer, she acknowledges, especially if complicated by federal tariffs on building materials and labor shortages from increased federal immigration enforcement.

She lauds the participation of church members and local volunteers in planning meetings and feasibility studies as crucial for the rebuilding process.

"Our multi-generational church's long-term vision and commitment to rebuilding are supported by the community's deep affection for us," Coots said. "Meanwhile, our members alternate between feeling heartbroken and discouraged but then also finding resilience. It's not just knowing how to do what needs to be done. It's also believing that we can do it. That's most important."

Coleman is a UM News correspondent and a licensed local pastor. News media contact: Julie Dwyer, news editor, newdesk@umnews.org.

How to help

The California-Pacific Conference offers multiple ways to help the congregations of Community and Altadena United Methodist churches rebuild.

To give to the conference's Los Angeles Fires Recovery Fund, give your donation to your church with "LA Fires Recovery" in the memo or mail checks to the California-Pacific Conference, c/o Jennifer Gaylord, PO Box 6006, Pasadena CA 91102.

To aid Altadena United Methodist Church directly, use their Cash App account at \$abundantlife349. Be sure to note "AUMC Disaster Relief."

To aid Community United Methodist Church of Pacific Palisades directly, visit its [Palisades Fire Relief web page](#).

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community. For many congregants, these affirmations are more than doctrinal declarations; they are experienced as vital safeguards for the integrity of their faith and as powerful expressions of their right to spiritual self-determination. The position is viewed not simply as a defense of tradition but as a means of ensuring that the church retains its relevance and moral authority amid rapidly changing societal landscapes.

Yet, the language and imagery that frame this moment reveal deeper currents at play. In Zimbabwe, for example, the phrase “cutting the umbilical cord” resonates deeply, capturing both the pain and promise of embracing self-governance and stepping into an identity unmoored from inherited connections. This metaphor has become a rallying cry for the marginal advocating for a fully independent, self-governing Zimbabwean United Methodist Church.

While the longing for autonomy is a natural impulse for any community navigating cultural and historical complexity, framing the journey primarily as an act of severance sits in tension with the heart of the Wesleyan tradition — a tradition that calls us to unity even amid profound difference.

When considered through Wesleyan eyes, the impulse toward separation invites honest reflection. John Wesley’s vision was never one of uniformity, nor was it one that endorsed withdrawing into enclaves of sameness. Instead, he envisioned a “world parish,” a communion marked by grace that overflows boundaries and draws diverse people together in shared discipleship.

Autonomy, when it leads to disengagement rather than collaboration, risks drifting from this vision of connection and mutual growth. The freedom found in Christ is not about turning away from one another but choosing to remain in relationship, affirming faith’s capacity to bind us together even as we honor cultural, traditional and theological distinctions.

Ultimately, the journey of The United Methodist Church is not defined by the lines we draw but by the bridges we build. As we navigate the sacred tension between honoring our particularities and claiming our shared identity, we are invited to imagine a church that finds its blessing not in sameness but in the rich interplay of voices, histories, and hopes.

True unity — rooted in grace, sustained by dialogue and open to the Spirit’s leading — will never silence difference, but will transfigure it into deeper understanding and holy partnership. In choosing to walk together through complexity, disagreement, and change, we bear witness to a gospel spacious enough for all God’s children.

May we have the courage to continue this journey, trusting that love will guide us toward a future where every member, every tradition, and every story finds a home in the living body of Christ.

Muhomba is a pastor in the North Alabama Conference. He is from Zimbabwe.

News media contact: Julie Dwyer at newsdesk@umnews.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free UM News Digest](#).

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that unity in the midst of crisis can itself be a radical witness,” said Ashley Boggan, a noted church historian and top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History.

“When the world felt fractured along racial, political, and moral lines, United Methodists understood that reconciliation required more than statements — it demanded visible action: vigils in the streets, partnerships with civil rights leaders and advocacy for peace so that the church’s witness was as present in the public square as it was in the pulpit.”

Today, she said, United Methodists are once again called to come together and stand boldly both within and outside church walls “as a people committed to justice, peace, and the sacred worth of

every life.”

Stoneking invited United Methodists to pray to God to guide their steps toward a country and world where schools are truly safe places of learning.

She also asked for prayers for a time when “churches hold an evening service for daily vespers not in response to the pain of violence and loss” and “we hold one another with the dignity and care with which God holds each of us.”

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 of newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free UM News Digest](#).

Annual Church Conference

Sat, Oct 25th @ 5 p.m.
Fellowship Hall

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see that my difference was not a limitation. It was a gift, especially in a church that aspires to become a beloved community. Grace was inviting me to become who I truly am.

Through this journey, I discovered not only who I was as a pastor, but as a Korean, an immigrant, a mother, a wife — and a beloved child of God. The more I embraced my identity, the more open I became to others. More compassionate. More curious. More willing to hold differences.

Cross-cultural ministry taught me that love means making room. Room for others. Room for truth. Room for transformation.

That kind of love requires trust in the goodness of God. It challenges us to see the image of God in every person, even when they don't yet see it in us.

Here's what I've come to believe: Life in Christ is always cross-cultural.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not just secular ideas; they are at the heart of the Gospel. They are God's plan for this beautiful, complex world. It's how the Body of Christ breathes. It's what the kingdom of God looks like.

Jesus crosses every boundary — between cultures, classes, heaven and earth, even between us and God.

A colleague who retired some years ago advised, "love more, fear less." It's tempting to let fear lead, to play it safe and avoid hard

conversations. But grace has taught me that fear may preserve me for a moment, but only love can free me for the journey ahead.

Whenever I chose to love more — to lean in rather than pull away; to speak hard truths, not knowing who would follow; to apologize first, even when I believed I was right — I saw transformation. Not just in others, but in myself.

And I've discovered another grace along the way: the joy of receiving. I had forgotten how amazing it is to witness others offering their gifts to us. The greatest joy in ministry is found in mutuality — in letting others love, care, and shape us, too.

I stand here today because of that grace. It has carried me. Humbled me. Changed me.

Wherever you are in ministry: love more, fear less.

Love the work — even when it stretches you. Love the people — even when they challenge you. Love yourself — as one made in God's image.

And fear less. Not because there's nothing to fear, but because God's grace is immeasurable.

And it is enough.

Shin retired July 1 as an elder in the Northern Illinois Conference.

News media contact: Julie Dwyer or Heather Hahn at newsdesk@umnews.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free UM News Digest](#).

LET'S GO AGAIN!

**We will reopen our
medical debt
campaign from**

Oct. 1st—Dec. 31st



**Current Medical Debt in Brevard:
Over \$45 Million**

Nancy Burgess is once again coordinating with [UndueMedicalDebt.org](https://www.unduemedicaldebt.org) to organize a campaign to help local residents pay off their medical debt. When we did the first campaign at the beginning of this year, your contributions helped pay off **over \$2 MILLION** worth of medical debt. According to Undue Medical Debt, there is currently **over \$45 MILLION owed in Brevard County, Florida alone!** As daunting as that number may seem, when good people come together, great things can be accomplished...and the possibility of success is magnified beyond numbers when we join together with Christ in our hearts.

This is how it works:

- † **We start a campaign**
We coordinate with [UndueMedicalDebt.org](https://www.unduemedicaldebt.org) to create and promote a campaign that collects donations.
- † **You make a donation**
Undue Medical Debt uses data analytics to pinpoint the debt of those most in need: households that earn less than 4x the federal poverty level (varies by state, family size) or whose debts are 5% or more of annual income.
- † **Undue buys medical debt at a steep discount**
Undue Medical Debt buys debt in bundles, millions of dollars at a time at a fraction of the original cost. This means your donation relieves about 100x its value in medical debt.
- † **Together we wipe out medical debt**
People across the country receive letters that their debt has been erased. They have no tax consequences or penalties to consider. Just like that, they're free of medical debt.

First United Methodist Church in Titusville Florida is determined to eliminate MORE medical debt in Brevard county in 2025.

Our hope for this short campaign is to extend our love of God to our neighbors in need. This campaign runs October 1st thru December 31st, 2025. We would love to join with other churches around Brevard County to increase our impact in.

Please visit <https://www.fumctitusville.com/undue-medical-debt.html> for more information including a secure link to donate!

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

150
YEARS
1875-2025



BLOCK PARTY

OCTOBER 11TH, 2025
10 AM - 2 PM

CELEBRATE WITH US ON SATURDAY!

ENJOY **FOOD TRUCKS**, **LOCAL VENDORS**,
GAMES WITH PRIZES, **FACE PAINTING**,
MUSIC, AND **FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

THEN JOIN US ON SUNDAY FOR A SPECIAL
ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP SERVICE AT FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH —
FOLLOWED BY A FREE COMMUNITY LUNCH!

SUNDAY SERVICE & LUNCH

OCTOBER 12TH, 2025
10 AM - 1 PM

OCTOBER 2025

First United Methodist Church







Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30am Patchwork Friends 1:00pm Bible Study 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm We Gather	2 8:00am Life Line Screening 10:00am Ladies Day Out 6:00pm PEO Meeting	3 11:00am Food Pantry	4 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
5 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	6 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	7 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	8 9:30am Kids' Playtime 1:00pm Bible Study 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	9 9:30am Retired Teachers of North Brevard	10 11:00am Food Pantry	11 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 10am Block Party  BLOCK PARTY
12 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:00am 150th Anniversary luncheon  LUNCHEON	13 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	14 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	15 1:00pm Bible Study 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	16 10:00am ADK Meeting 12:00pm Ladies Day Out 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg.	17 11:00am Food Pantry	18 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
19 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	20 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	21 11:00am Food Pantry 5:00pm Solos Meeting 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	22 10:00am UWF Meeting 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	23	24 11:00am Food Pantry	25 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 10am Moonlight Quilters
26 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	27 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	28 11:00am Food Pantry 5:30pm Moonlight Quilters 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	29 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	30	31 Halloween 11:00am Food Pantry 	

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FUMC Staff

Reception Desk	Ext 201
Rev. Wayne Cook - Pastor	Ext 202
Mario Davis - Administrative Assistant	Ext 203
Glenda Waring - Membership Secretary	Ext. 204
Leah Patterson - Finance Secretary	Ext. 204
Lauren Good - Family Ministries	Ext. 205
Tom Mosier - Facilities Manager	Ext. 206
Leah Patterson - Custodian	Ext. 206
J.D. Daniel - Organist	
Steve Rossi - Sound Tech	
Josh Henn - Lights and Visuals	

1st UMC Ministries

OUTREACH

Bags of Grace	Patchwork Friends <i>(Quilting group providing quilts to the community)</i>
Christmas Store	
Community Breakfast	School Outreach <i>(Apollo Elem., Madison MS, Andrew Jackson MS, Astronaut HS, & Titusville HS)</i>
Community Garden	
Cuba Missions <i>(Santa Cruz Methodist Church in Holguin, Cuba)</i>	Stop Gap Community Dinners
Food Pantry	Shoe Ministry
Good Shepherd <i>(Funds to help the community with bills & other needs)</i>	Undue Medical Debt

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Church Choir	Holiday Cantatas
Evensong Services	Special Concerts
Handbell Choirs	

FAMILY MINISTRIES

1st Wednesday Dinners	Theater Programs <i>(Children & Adult)</i>
Children's Ministry	Vacation Bible School
Street Festivals	Youth—Longest Day of Your Life
Open Play <i>(1st Monday, safe playtime for parents & kids)</i>	Youth Ministry
Rock the Universe	Bus Ministry
Summer Youth Camp	

NURTURE MINISTRIES

United Women of Faith	Solos
Bible Studies	

First United Methodist Church

206 S. Hopkins Ave
Titusville, FL 32796

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.

Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday
Closed from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Phone: (321) 269-7631

Fax: (321) 269-8359

E-mail Address: office@fumctitusville.com

Website: www.fumctitusville.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/682694095204027

Instagram Handle: [@UnitedChurch321](https://www.instagram.com/UnitedChurch321)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChscOcLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q>

[UChscOcLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChscOcLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q)

