Your Input Is Needed!

Asbury is developing a five year plan, and your voice is needed.

Thank you for filling out the surveys, which provided valuable information on what you hope for in a faith community. Our consultant has analyzed all the feedback, and now we are ready to decide which areas we will focus on.

Here’s where we need your participation: Please join us in one of the following sessions, which will be led by our consultant Janet Cooke. In these workshops, we will together decide on our near-term and long-term goals; and develop ways to reach those goals. Exciting stuff!

- Sunday January 10, right after worship
- Sunday, January 24, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 3, 7:30-8:30 p.m., at Jean and Dave Braun’s home. (See you there, Faith Choir, for sure!)

If you need childcare, please contact the church office at least three days before the event. Thank you!
The Role of Missions & Outreach in an Active Faith Life

Just as daily prayer time, regular bible study and attending worship are important components of a vibrant faith life, likewise is participation in missions and outreach. For me, and many others, this participation is integral to making our faith tangible. Serving others brings my faith alive and puts what I believe into action.

At Asbury we offer regular local outreach opportunities – preparing and serving meals at Open Heart Kitchen, workdays at Habitat for Humanity, working in the Garden of Grace, just to name a few. Each offers a meaningful expression of faith. Most of our local outreach addresses a common need of all people – food, safety and shelter. All represent a way to "put a face" on the people we serve, often with a chance for personal interaction.

In addition to our local outreach, Asbury responds to needs elsewhere in our country. Most often these mission trips are to assist with disaster recovery. For example, in 2015 we traveled to Staten Island, New York to help with rebuilding from Superstorm Sandy. In past years, we have helped address tornado damage in Oklahoma and Alabama, flood recovery in Cedar Rapids and hurricanes in Texas and Louisiana.

On these trips we typically work in the homes of specific families. The important point is that this is much more than doing construction. These trips show that someone cares and provides encouragement during challenging times. We always ask our teams, when working on a home, to take the time to stop and visit with the people we serve. It is therapeutic for a person to tell their story of survival. "Lending an ear" is the Christian thing to do.

Of a slightly different version is our annual trip to Camp Lodestar. Camp Lodestar is a United Methodist owned camp in the Sierra foothills. We have been working for several years on a significant backlog of deferred maintenance. This trip is a working retreat of Christian service and renewal. Each day offers fellowship and an extended evening devotion time.

It is in the "doing" of missions and outreach that we come to appreciate what it means to be the hands, feet and heart of Christ in our world. The amazing thing is that this service is a blessing to the giver, as much as it is for the receiver. Praise be to God!

In Mission Together, Steve Elliott
Serve Others With Love

Habitat Interfaith Build Day
Saturday, January 16

On Saturday, January 16, Asbury will join other faith communities at the new Habitat construction in Martinez. Everyone is welcome, regardless of skills or experience. We often work with the families who will own the homes.

Work at the site starts at 8:30 a.m. and ends by 4:00 p.m. We carpool from Asbury, leaving at 7:40 a.m. from the parking lot by the office building. To sign up, come by the Serve Others with Love Table after worship or contact the church office.

Undie Sunday!
Sunday, January 24

The many outreach programs and ministries here at Asbury, such as Open Heart Kitchen and the Showers bring us in touch with people with all kinds of needs. Did you know that one of those needs is new undies? You probably have never given it much thought. But if you don’t have good undies, it wears on your pride.

On January 24 we are asking that you donate NEW undergarments or socks. We will keep the donated clothing on-hand and distribute throughout the year to anyone who needs something.

Here is a list of the undies most needed, in men and women sizes, Small thru Extra Large. In addition we would like to have a small supply of children/youth sizes.

- Underwear (any style, any color, including boxer)
- Thermal underwear (tops & bottoms)
- White Undershirts (men's) or tank tops/bras (ladies)
- Socks – White cotton

All donations must be NEW, with tags on or in the original packaging. Collection boxes will be in the Narthex and the Church Office.

Haiti Mission Efforts

Stop by the Fellowship Hall after worship during January to catch up on the latest news on our work in Haiti! We have teams going in January and March from California, Virginia and Pennsylvania to do computer upgrades, to build a playground, to distribute community clean water systems and to prepare for adding a lunch program at another school.

We have a nice Haitian gift available for donations of $20 or more towards our lunch program. Every donation makes a difference.

Join Us in the Kitchen!

One of the most rewarding things we do is offer a nice “home cooked” meal to those who need one. We are pleased to continue to do so via our partnership with Open Heart Kitchen. Volunteers are needed at Asbury every Tuesday and Wednesday to prepare and serve meals.

In addition, an Asbury UMC team covers 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday each month. The next two Asbury team dates are January 4 and February 3. For more info stop by the Serve Others with Love Table in the Fellowship Hall after worship any Sunday.

Livermore Homeless Refuge

Asbury will be hosting again this month, January 4-22. We are pleased to offer a warm and dry place for our homeless clients to sleep when it is cold and wet. Many volunteers are needed to make this work. Shifts are available from early evening through morning when our guests leave. Consider asking how you might help. Ask at the Church Office or stop by the Serve Others with Love Table during the Fellowship Time after worship on any Sunday.

Serving Others With Love in 2016

For 2016, we hope you will consider participating in Asbury missions and outreach as your time and resources permit. It is an opportunity to put our faith into action.

(Continued on page 6)
Sunday School News

Happy New Year! I hope your Advent season was a time you were able to slow down and connect with God. My life and many other lives were deeply blessed by all the wonderful activities that brought us together as a community centered in Jesus Christ. The beautiful and simple decorating of our campus as we slowed down to know God, card making to send others our love, the music of the concert filling so many hearts with the joy of the season and our bellies with delicious homemade cookies, the blessed night of the pageant, the lighting of the candles while we contemplated God's love for each of us, the joyful singing we brought to many homes and hearts, and the reading of the well written book "Awaiting the Already" by Magrey R. deVega together as a community, as well as enjoying the beautifully insightful sermons paralleling the book.

Our First Annual Intergenerational Inclusive Community Christmas Pop Up Pageant was a sensational hit. We were blessed by so many people who shared their talents and gifts. We even had 95% of the audience up on the "stage" by the end of the program, including both Pastor Kim and Pastor Chelsea.

Barbara David wrote us an amazing script, which our rehearsed narrators Emily Gnecco, Sarah Rudd, and Emily Bennett read, while directing our guests, who chose parts to be upon arrival, when to go up and act out their parts.

The props and direction given by Nancy Dies made the night so much fun. Allen Schell’s magical playing of the piano brought the whole program together. Nick Constant provided the awesome sound and Austin Gnecco kept up beautifully with the visuals for the program, put together by Jennifer Bernstein, and into slide format with lyrics for the Christmas songs we sang together by Sharmyn Crawford.

Barbara and Dave David trained Jim and Jeannie Lobao on how to set up and take down the manger. I couldn't believe how fast Jim Lobao and Dave David could take down a manger, and it was just in time for the bells to practice in the Sanctuary on the same night.

We were all well-fed at our Potluck Soup and Sandwich dinner organized by the amazing Scott Smith, LaNor Smith, and Karen Bauman.

We had so much fabulous feedback on how meaningful, fun, and easy the Pageant was this year, with many people already expressing they can't wait to do it again next year. Thank you to everyone mentioned—and to all of those not mentioned—for working together so well to make the story of Jesus' birth come to life in a meaningful way for so many.

I believe the children and grownups of our community experienced God's and Jesus' love for us all that night. I will personally carry the joys of this special evening in my heart into 2016.

In January, the children will be finishing their four week Thankfulness series with the “A Happy Heart” lesson and then journey back to our Jesus' Parables study. We will be taking a closer, meaningful look into the Parables of The Vineyard Laborers, The Persistent Widow, Lamp on a Lampstand, and Salt together.

We are so blessed to have so many people support the children of our community. It really makes a difference in our children to know you care about them. Studies have shown the more children feel connected to a loving supportive caring community they themselves will grow into caring, loving, and supportive adults. Our world needs our children to grow up to be caring, loving, and supportive. Thank you for your time, gifts, and resources in order to make this happen.

Next month, we will announce the week Asbury is hosting VBS 2016. Our theme, being created by Barbara David and Nancy Dies, is Christmas in July (or June?). So don't pack up all your Christmas stuff just yet, you may need some mid-year again. I wonder how fast Jim Lobao can put up and take down a manger in the summertime?

Blessings and Love,
Jackie Bennett
Director of Children's Ministry

Sunday, March 20, 5:30 p.m.

Save the date for our First Annual Spring Youth and Children Music Program and Potluck Dinner on Sunday, March 20 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. in the Asbury UMC Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. To celebrate the Easter season Youth and Children can sign up with Pastor Chelsea Constant or Children's Ministry Director Jackie Bennett to play, on their chosen instrument, a piece of music which speaks to them in a meaningful way to share with our community.
Youth Ministries

Youth Events, January 2016

- **January 3**: No Youth Groups
- **January 10**: Youth Groups 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- **January 17**: No Youth Groups
- **January 24**: Youth Groups 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- **January 31**: Laser Tag 5-7:00 p.m.

Winter Youth Retreat

We are heading up to the snow for a winter retreat March 4-6. All Middle and High Schoolers are invited to join us for a weekend of snow, fun, food, and friends. There will also be options for skiing, snowboarding, or tubing! Please RSVP to Chelsea by February 14.

Building an Inclusive Church

Questions, Answers, and Prayers

We thank each and every one of you who has spoken with us one-to-one about what it might mean to be a Reconciling Congregation. We are still available if you'd like to share with us your hopes, concerns, ideas, etc. Among the questions we have heard during our conversations is this one:

Q: Why do we have to make a public statement? We already welcome everyone.

The following is an answer prepared by the Reconciling Congregations Program of the United Methodist Church:

A: Many local church and Christian leaders are public about their anti-gay actions and statements. So Reconciling Congregations must be public about their desire to be in ministry with gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons. The overwhelming perception within the lesbian/gay/bisexual community today is that they are not welcome in churches. A public statement is needed to overcome that reality. Remember Jesus' statement about hiding your light under a bushel (Matt. 5:15). Rather than a decision to keep quiet, the decision to become a Reconciling Congregation is an event to celebrate.

This answer was prepared in 1999, but still holds true today. If you are interested in other answers this group has provided, go to [http://bit.ly/1R9BiAq](http://bit.ly/1R9BiAq).

Sierra Service Project

**July 31-August 6, 2016**

Save the Date for SSP! We will head down to San Diego for Sierra Service Project from July 31 to August 6 this summer! Make sure you save the date and come to an informational meeting for parents and youth on January 24 at 7:00 p.m. to learn more. All youth starting 9th grade in the fall of 2016 through seniors graduating in 2016 are welcome to come on SSP.

Additional questions answered there include "Are we breaking church law by becoming a Reconciling Congregation?", "Won't this issue split our church?", and "Why should we single out lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons?"

Remember, too, that starting January 10, Pastor Kim will be leading a four-week Bible study on some of the Scriptural passages that address same-sex relationships. Our committee will be in the Fellowship Hall after worship on January 10 to answer any questions we can and to make available copies of our previous newsletter articles in case you missed them.

In February, we will sponsor our second panel discussion, this one featuring members and friends of our own Asbury family. Watch for further details.

Until then, we continue to ask for your prayers and God's guidance for this Asbury community we all cherish.

The Reconciling Committee (Margot Platt, Larry Wiley Carol Perry, Val Pace, Bill Groth, Leila Epperson, Dale Boercker)
January Religious Chat
Wednesday, January 13, 5:00 p.m.
Each month, Interfaith Interconnect hosts a religious chat, open to all.
On Wednesday, January 13, from 5-6:00 p.m., the topic will be "What is your faith's perspective on an afterlife?" Our speakers will be Ms. Janet Milder, who will speak about the Jewish perspective, and Imam Tahir Anwar, who will tell us about the Muslim point-of-view.
This month, the event will be hosted at the Muslim Community Center, 5724 West Las Positas Blvd, Pleasanton, CA. Doors open at 4:30. If you have never visited the Muslim Community Center, this is an opportunity to learn more about our local, thriving, Muslim community.

What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?
January 10, 7:00 p.m. (starts)
Join Pastor Kim for a four week Bible study on Sunday evenings, 7-8:00 p.m., starting on January 10. We will explore the passages most often identified as condemning same sex relationships.
As our Asbury faith community explores our own stance on sexual orientation and gender identity, it's vital that we look to the Bible.
In addition to looking at specific passages, we will consider the origins and intent of the Bible. What gives the Bible authority or meaning in your own life? What does it mean to call the Bible "the word of God?"
How do you read and understand the teachings of the Bible?
I look forward to our discussions! Please call the church office at 925-447-1950 if you need child care.

Serve Others with Love (cont’d)
(Continued from page 3)
Stop by the Serve Others With Love Table during the Fellowship Hour on any Sunday to learn more about opportunities to serve in any of our ongoing mission and outreach efforts.

Thank You, Asbury
Tri Valley Haven send a thank you note for the $1000 donation from Asbury, to support the Haven's holiday programs. The letter included this hand written message: "We appreciate your support for the work of the Haven and for all the good folks at Asbury do throughout the year. Your congregation is simply inspiring."

Concert to Benefit Open Heart Kitchen at Lynnewood UMC
Sunday, January 24, 7:00 p.m.
Lynnewood United Methodist Church will kick off its 50th anniversary year with a Jubilee Concert to benefit Open Heart Kitchen on Sunday, January 24, at 7:00 p.m. Songwriters and concert artists Jim and Jean Strathdee will provide a program of inspired songs that offer hope for people of all faiths.
Lynnewood is asking for a $10 donation per attendee (tax deductible). A $15 donation per attendee will be accepted at the concert. Call Mary Ellen Huey to reserve your ticket in advance: 925-485-1795.
Ladies’ Night Out
Tuesday, January 5, 6:30 p.m.
This month we will be enjoying Mexican food at Casa Orozco located at 325 S. L Street. All ladies of Asbury are invited. Please let Nancy Grover know if you plan to attend so we can let the restaurant know how many to expect.

Senior/Retiree Luncheon
Thursday, January 7, 12:00 p.m.
All seniors and retirees are invited to attend the Senior Lunch on Thursday, January 7, 2016, at noon in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a speaker from the Alzheimer’s Association. We will have a simple lunch and the cost is $5 per person. Please sign up after worship or call the church office at 925-447-1950. For more information, please contact Mitchie.

Asbury Carolers Make Holiday Rounds
Thirty four singers from Asbury made their way around Livermore on Sunday afternoon, December 20 for the annual All-Church Christmas Caroling event. They sang at 13 different residences and handed out homemade Christmas cookies to their audiences. Our photographer, Doug Webb, snapped several pictures. The first one here is the group assembled in Fellowship Hall, before dividing up into groups. You’ll notice everyone pictured is either wearing red or has jingle bells.

The second picture shows our young folks interacting with the audience at Heritage Estates. Carolers serenaded them as they ate their dinner. (Talk about a captive audience!)

Many thanks to the cookie bakers, singers, and drivers that made this event such a success. Asbury pastors and staff get lots of accolades from the recipients. It’s a wonderful gift!

See the entire photo album on the Asbury website: http://www.asburylive.org/?p=11471
Wow! It’s hard to believe that 2015 is almost history. Despite fallowing a significant number of vegetable beds to conserve water this year (and not growing any squash), we still grew around 12,000 pounds of great "organical" produce for those in need at the Garden of Grace. Our Sustainable School Garden program has grown and evolved and yes, it has nurtured sustainable school gardens that have flourished despite student, teacher and parent churn from year to year (the things that typically uproot and wither school gardens on a regular basis). Our new historic Kitchen Garden at Hagemann Ranch is taking shape and nutritious food from that garden is already blessing the lives of the needy.

The Garden of Grace and other Fertile Groundworks gardens are portals into what can become abundant and sustainable food-growing communities that bring greater meaning and fulfillment into life. Garden places, open to all, provide space and opportunity to connect with nature (both human and all else). They are places of learning, sharing and being that provide meaning, connection and greater insight in the human experience.

The numbers and capabilities of our dedicated volunteers are growing in very exhilarating ways. Our collective energy, talents and intelligence are raising us to higher levels of insight, capability and accomplishment.

Our third annual fundraiser was a great success as was our first annual Spring Plant Sale. Our Board is redoubling its efforts to build the underpinning fundraising and business organization that is vitally important to support our vision, mission programs and projects. Thanks to the success of this past year’s fundraising we were able to hire an additional employee on contract.

Heart-felt gratitude and thanks to all of you for your participation and support!

Best wishes for well being, joy and happiness during the holidays and the coming year,

Bruce
Prayer for General Conference 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In May, United Methodists from all over the world will come together in Portland, Oregon, for our General Conference. This quadrennial (once every four years) gathering is a time for Christian conferencing, policy making, and advancement of the Church's mission. I, and my colleagues on the Council of Bishops, ask you to join us in preparing through prayer for this May 10 to 20, 2016 meeting.

Your Bishops will be praying, and we ask you to join us in a continual prayer vigil for the 131 days leading to General Conference.

Why 131 days? General Conference 2016 begins 131 days after the New Year. By coincidence, there are 131 annual conferences in The United Methodist Church around the world.

Each annual conference has been invited to host a 24-hour prayer effort on a specific date, with the intent of creating a shower of prayer in the days leading up to the General Conference. The California-Nevada Conference has been asked to hold its 24-hour prayer vigil on Saturday, January 2.

I am calling upon each of our United Methodist congregations, with their 78,000 members and friends throughout Northern California, and Northern Nevada, to participate in this prayer vigil on January 2. Please pray for our United Methodist Church, all of its ministries around the world, and all of its leaders, especially the delegates to General Conference. Pray for the delegates elected from our annual conference (Jeffrey Kuan, Greg Bergquist, Karen Oliveto, Emily Allen, Burt Yin, and Randy Miller). I also ask you to pray for me when I as President of the Council of Bishops convene the General Conference. I will preach in the opening worship, and preside during the first plenary session.

When we gather in Portland, my wife Minnie and I, along with other Bishops and spouses, will be there participating in a round-the-clock prayer vigil that begins on the opening day of General Conference and continues through the closing session.

TO SIGN UP FOR A SPECIFIC TIME OF PRAYER, go to: www.slotttr.com/sheets/549393

May God bless, guide, and sustain, all of us.

"And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."(Matthew 21:22)

Grace and Peace,

Warner H. Brown, Jr.
Resident Bishop
Anniversaries

Brian and Sharon Grant
Louis and Pam Howell
Virgil and Donna Koon
Robert and Anna Lim
Jim and Lois Lyle
Otis and Sharon Walton

Birthdays

Steve Arnold
Melody Bluck
Lily Boercker
Chelsea Bohling
Bob Buckley
Rich Buckley
Becky Cain
Bob Cowgill
Dave Crozier
Alexia Dawes
Joanne Duncan
Susan Edgar-Lee
Patrick Epperson
Kirby Fong
Tony Gnecco
Brian Henderson
Valerie Henderson
Stephanie Hepner
Jackie Hoffman
Marsha Howard
Duane Jantzen
Kay Jeakins
Bobbie Johnson
Taber Kohlmoos
Robyn Lakamsani
Christa Lamb
Gary Lamb
Connaught Lindberg
Robbi Loomis
Kathy Molvik
Louise Nelson
Fiona Pomykal
Katherine Riley
Kim Risedorph
Ivy Senge
Zach Siebers
Scott Smith
Carl Sorem
Dayna Taylor
Alan Teruya
Karlie Teruya
Parker Turk
John Van Scyoc IV
Amanda Wagoner
Chris Weiss
Beckie Wiley
Jenna Wiley
January 2016 Calendar

Please visit the Asbury website calendar for the latest updates: http://www.asburylive.org/events

Weekly Recurring Events

Sundays
- 9:00 a.m. Worship, Sunday School, Sanctuary
- 10:15 a.m. Butterfly Gardens is open
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
- 10:30 a.m. Bible Study, Room 15
- 10:30 a.m. Cherub Choir Rehearsal, Room 6
- 10:30 a.m. Rainbow Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 10:30 a.m. Youth Choir Rehearsal, Room 9
- 5:00 p.m. Stephen Ministry, Fireside Room (first and third Sundays only)
- 7:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 7:00 p.m. Bible Study, Room 10 (starts January 10)

Mondays
- 7:00 p.m. Fertile Groundworks, Conference Room (second and fourth Mondays only)
- 7:30 p.m. Reconciling Ministries, Room 10 (first and third Mondays only)

Tuesdays
- 11:00 a.m. Loose Canons
- 11:00 a.m. The Long Good-bye, Fireside Room (second and fourth Tuesdays only)
- 12:00 p.m. Open Heart Kitchen, Fellowship Hall
- 7:00 p.m. Small Group, Fireside Room (second and fourth Tuesdays only)
- 7:00 p.m. Alanon/Alateen, Rooms 13-15
- 7:00 p.m. Band Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Wednesdays
- 9:30 a.m. Mom’s Bible Study
- 12:00 p.m. Open Heart Kitchen, Fellowship Hall
- 7:30 p.m. Faith Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Thursdays
- 7:45 a.m. Men’s Group, Fireside Room
- 10:30 a.m. Women of the Spirit
- 7:00 p.m. AA, Rooms 11-12

Fridays
- 10:30 a.m. Bible Study, Room 15
- 10:00 a.m. Crafting for a Cause, Room 10

Saturdays
- 8:00 a.m. Lawn Crew
- 9:00 a.m. AA, Rooms 11-12
- 10:30 a.m. Bible Study, Room 15

Other Events

January 5, 2016 (Tuesday)
- 6:30 p.m. Ladies’ Night Out, Casa Orozco

January 7, 2016 (Thursday)
- 12:00 p.m. Senior/Retiree Luncheon, FH

January 10, 2016 (Sunday)
- 10:30 a.m. Finance, Conference Room
- 10:30 a.m. SPRC, Room 10
- 10:30 a.m. 5-Year Plan Meeting, Chapel

January 15, 2016 (Friday)
- 1-7:00 p.m. Livermore Community Blood Drive, FH

January 17, 2016 (Saturday)
- 10:30 a.m. Trustees, Conference Room

January 19, 2016 (Tuesday)
- 7:30 p.m. Fellowship Team, Rooms 11-12

January 24, 2016 (Sunday)
- 10:30 a.m. Church Council, Conference Room
- 5:30 p.m. 5-Year Plan Meeting, Chapel
Asbury United Methodist Church
4743 East Avenue
Livermore, CA 94550

Time Dated Material—Deliver Promptly

Asbury UMC Staff

Pastor
Chelsea Constant

Pastor
Kim Risedorph

Children's Ministry Director
Jackie Bennett

Youth Director
Chelsea Constant

Secretary
Terri Gamble

Facilities Use Manager
Teri Lambert

Music Director
G. Allen Schell

Choir Coordinator
Jean Braun

Nursery Coordinator
Pam Tegge

Livermore Community Blood Drive
Friday, January 15, 1:00-7:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Every single day, Bay Area hospitals need over 300 units of blood to help sick and injured people live. If you’re 17 or older and in good health (or 16 with parental consent) help save a life by giving blood! Go to red-crossblood.org and use sponsor code: ASBURY925. Call Tom Petty at home for more information. Thank you for helping to save a life by giving blood!

www.AsburyLive.org

Church office hours are:
Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Closed for lunch.

The deadline for the next Asbury Articles is Friday, January 22, 2015