The Cornerstone

Rolling Hills United Methodist Church
26438 Crenshaw Blvd.
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274
310-377-6771

February 2026

For everything there is a season,
And a time for every matter under heaven.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1

An exciting and bittersweet season of change is coming to Rolling Hills United Methodist Church.

Jonathan and April will be retiring at the end of June after 41 years of ministry. They are excited to pass the baton to a new pastoral team and ask for your prayers of encouragement and understanding as they prepare for this new season of their lives.

The Staff Parish Relations Committee is thrilled to announce that Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank has appointed the Rev. Bonnie Hawk to serve as the next Senior Pastor of RHUMC. We are confident that Pastor Bonnie will enrich the coming seasons of your lives in her own distinct way.

The SPRC is equally excited about the candidates for April's successor. We hope to have an announcement about that by Easter.

Please read ahead for more information about all of these transitions.

from the pastors *Jonathan Chute*

This Wednesday, February 4, will be our annual congregational meeting. In the United Methodist Church that meeting is called a Charge Conference. That goes back to the early days of the Methodist Church, when clergy rode horseback to serve the needs of a circuit of churches to which they were assigned. That circuit was known as a "pastoral charge," and though the circumstances of ministers and churches vary widely from the early 1800s, the name continues to our present day.

I have been fortunate that over the course of my time here that the Charge Conference has been a fairly easy and straightforward gathering, lasting usually about an hour or so. That isn't the case everywhere. One church I know set their modern record one year at four and a half hours.

At the Charge Conference we review our life and work over the previous year. We remember the lives of those who have gone from us, as well as giving thanks for those who have come into the church family. Since last year we celebrated ten baptisms, including two adults and one youth. We welcomed twenty new members, including six youth who were received by confirmation.

We also look forward and make plans to support our mission for the coming year, approving the annual budget. In some congregations this can be a source of tension and worry. Making the kind of impact we hope to accomplish in our world takes a significant investment of our resources. Over the years your generosity has made it possible for us to meet and serve people in an extraordinary range of ways. There have been years when we have been a bit in the red, and others when we've been a bit in the black. But your faithfulness has helped to see us through. Thank you!

I want to say how personally excited I am to be able, officially, to welcome Bonnie Hawk as the incoming Senior Pastor for this wonderful church. It was more than a year ago that I first had the chance to see and hear her. Since that time we have been in regular communication, by email, text and phone, and come to know one another well. I have the highest confidence in her ability to come and help lead this congregation in the coming seasons of life. I could not imagine a more encouraging person to come and walk with you.

There will be opportunities for us to be together over these next months. And, as April well notes, we will continue to share in all the usual good things. Lent and Easter lie before us, with their distinct character and grace. Thank you for the good wishes you have already shared. As we move through these next seasons together your care and support mean more than I can say. Thank you.

Grace and peace,

Jonathan

April Herron

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the grace with which you are receiving the "big news." Changes in pastoral leadership can be hard, especially when the bonds of mutual care are so strong. At the same time, change can be fruitful, bringing new gifts and talents to the fore and strengthening joy in shared endeavors.

I have served in three pastoral appointments and therefore have been through the farewell process twice. Relationships can evolve, and geographic distance may become part of the equation, but connections made in shared faith and ministry have a way of enduring. I treasure my experience at RHUMC just as I cherish my memories of the West Kauai United Methodist Churches and Pacific Beach UMC in San Diego.

Before the official retirement date arrives on June 30, we (congregation members and pastors alike) can look forward to many happy shared experiences of learning, growth, and affirmation. This issue of the Cornerstone contains information about the Lenten Bible Study beginning on February 17 and the Book Discussion Series beginning on February 23. We will enjoy the annual Scout Sunday on February 8. On February 15 we will congratulate couples who have achieved their Golden Anniversaries. Mission outreach activities will continue apace, women's circles will meet, Club Maintenance will do its thing, we will all keep on indulging in donut Sundays and Taco Nights.

The title of the Bible Study for Lent may turn out to hold a surprising resonance. The book, by the Rev. Rachel Billups, which will guide our study is called, "An Unlikely Lent." I believe the central theme is that unexpected or unlikely events can be transformative (in a positive way) and deeply hopeful. May it be so for us!

Together with you in ministry,

April

On Feb 1st, we were delighted to announce the intended appointment of Rev. Bonnie Hawk as Senior Pastor of Rolling Hills UMC, effective July 1, 2026. Rev. Bonnie is an ordained elder from the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the UMC. A lifelong United Methodist, Bonnie heard her call to ministry early in life, and has served churches in Maryland for 15 years. She is a graduate of Dickinson College and Duke Divinity School, and the recipient of two prestigious preaching awards. Bonnie and her husband, Noah, will be moving into the RHUMC parsonage in Rancho Palos Verdes this summer.

Dear Rolling Hills UMC Community,

Greetings! It was almost one year ago that I received a call from a member of your Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), asking if I would consider a cross-country move to pastor a church called Rolling Hills UMC. It was February (a strategic move on your part?) and I was in the doldrums of a cold, Maryland winter. Who knew the weather app could be an instrument of the Holy Spirit? Once I learned more about RHUMC–the tremendous community, the preschool, the talented staff and musicians, the dedicated lay leadership, and the role you were asking me to fill–that initial "cold call" began to feel like a calling from God.

When I visited RHUMC last June, a longtime church member had just passed away. During Sunday services, I witnessed an outpouring of love and support for this member's family. Seeing the way you all shared the burden of grief and care gave me a glimpse of the kind of community that I want to be a part of.

As I've gotten to know Jonathan over the last year, I understand what a tremendous grief it will be for you all to say goodbye to him. I don't imagine that I could possibly fill his shoes. Jonathan and I are different people, but I see many resonances between the way that we approach ministry. I trust that your leadership has prayerfully chosen me as a thoughtful successor, and Jonathan's confidence in me has helped to affirm the call. If he doesn't know it yet, he can read it here first: I will keep his number on speed-dial!

A little about me… creativity and craft are central to my spirituality. I grew up woodworking with my dad and sewing with my mom. After guiding a church through the pandemic, I took a two-year sabbatical season to explore fine-furniture-making. I've spent the last two years as a bi-vocational pastor and furniture-maker, while freelance writing for Fine Woodworking Magazine.

My partner, Noah, is a mechanical engineer who works remotely for the federal government. He spent a lot of time with family in Southern California as a child, and he has always wanted to return to the area. As an avid cyclist and a former rower, he's excited to be amongst the hills and beside the ocean. I'm looking forward to the sunshine, having a garage for woodworking projects, and of course beginning this season of ministry with you.

I will be holding you in prayer as you spend these next five months enjoying your time with Jonathan and April. I know you will send them into retirement with many heartfelt blessings.

Rev. Bonnie

Peace and Joy,
Pastor Bonnie

Our Pastoral Succession Planning Journey

Rewind 28 years: The Rev. Martha Rowlett announced her plans to retire from RHUMC. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) - essentially the Church's human resources committee--contacted Dr. Kennon Callahan, author of a number of books on the subject of effective church leadership, to think through that important transition. Ken was instrumental in matching Jonathan with RHUMC (and much more besides).

Fast forward to 2023, when Jonathan and April first approached the SPRC with their intention to retire. Step One was to call on Ken once more. A small group flew to Atlanta two years ago to meet with him for some productive conversations. His advice: First, RHUMC does not want clones of Jonathan and April, in the same way that Jonathan was not a clone of Martha. These two have been wonderful shepherds for our congregation, but trying to find reproductions of them wouldn't work for anyone. Instead, we should be looking for pastors who share a similar theological outlook, preaching that is invitational and encouraging, and values of compassion, community and hope. Second, we should identify the Senior Pastor before looking for an Associate Pastor with complementary gifts and strengths.

Step Two was to look for possible candidates within our Conference. We looked at and listened to clergy serving in churches with similar size and outreach. We watched countless sermons, joined email lists, read church newsletters and scoured web sites. Then we began to look beyond our immediate area.

By this time last year Jonathan had shared with our bishop, the Rev. Dottie Escobedo-Frank, both his and April's plans to retire in June of this year. She indicated that she would want his input in considering possible candidates. In the UMC it is the bishop who ultimately assigns clergy to the churches where they serve, so it was encouraging to learn of Bishop Dottie's support for our efforts.

Step Three was to cast a wider net. We contacted United Methodist seminaries around the country who recognized excellence in preaching among their graduates. We received names of a number of other capable persons and added them to our list. As we did so, one person stood out. Her name was Bonnie Scott, a member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. It took us some time to find her, as she had married and was now Bonnie Hawk. She was working at a small church in Maryland, where we reached her with a phone call out of the blue, to see if she would be open to exploring a move to California. That call led to any number of further calls, emails and exchanges, as we shared more with her about the church, and she with us. The more we got to know Bonnie the more we felt sure that she was the person we were looking for. Pastor Bonnie and her partner Noah were able to visit RHUMC last June to get a better sense of our church, the parsonage, the South Bay, and California, generally. The SPRC seriously considered 20-30 possible candidates. We watched hundreds of sermons, read through countless websites and spoke to a large number of possible candidates. In the end, every member of the committee indicated that Pastor Bonnie was their first choice. We are so fortunate that she was interested and even felt called to ministry at RHUMC.

Continued on next page

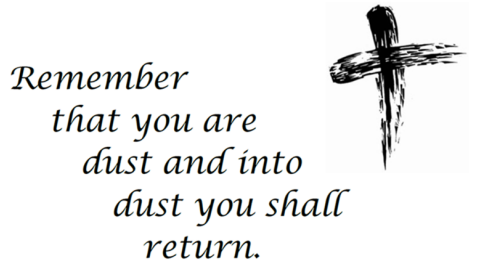
Our Pastoral Succession Planning Journey Continued

The SPRC is grateful for the collaboration we received from Bishop Dottie and our District Superintendent, Saia Tu'itahi. Saia had raised the importance of this appointment with Jonathan more than two years ago, and it is deeply satisfying to see it come to such a hopeful conclusion. Please join us as we welcome Pastor Bonnie and her partner Noah to our church family.

Current members of the SPRC: Co-chairs Kathy Platnick and Janet Westergaard, as well as John Compton, Michelle Dexter, Liz Gyori, Dave Long, Logan Tootell, Lisa Van Ingen Pope and Silva Will. Others who served on the SPRC during this transition consideration were prior co-chair Susan Welch as well as Doug Kemps and Diane Salter.

Ash Wednesday

February 18



Our congregation's observance of Lent begins with our Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil on February 18 from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Choose a time that suits your schedule and come be with God in prayer. Resources will be available in the sanctuary to guide you. Our worship service is at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary with music and singing, prayer and scripture.

RHUMC Charge Conference

The primary responsibilities of the annual Charge Conference meeting is to receive reports which help us to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church. We elect lay leadership for the year to come. Our next Charge Conference will meet on **Wednesday, February 4,** in the choir room. We will gather at 7:15 pm for social time and the meeting will commence at 7:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

Farewell Events

Planning is underway for retirement celebrations for Jonathan and April. You will also be invited to participate in a love offering retirement gift for both of these beloved pastors. More information about retirement activities will be available in March.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

An Unlikely Lent: Extraordinary People of the Easter Story

A Six Week Bible Study

TUESDAYS

Choose:

10:30 am in person

or

7:00 pm on Zoom

February 17: Unlikely Offering

February 24: Unlikely Opposition

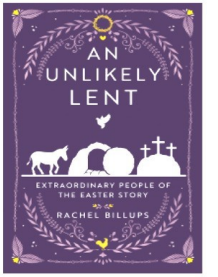
March 3: Unlikely Freedom

March 10: Unlikely Companionship

March 17: Unlikely Courage

March 24: Unlikely Allies

Classes are led by April Herron and are one hour in length. During each class session we will read and discuss selected scripture passages, view a 10-minute video in which pastor and author Rachel Billups shares her perspective, and be in conversation and prayer with one another about how our lives are impacted by the stories of some unlikely people who were near to Jesus as his death and resurrection approached.



Reading the book "An Unlikely Lent" is optional. Copies will be available in the church office for ease of purchase. The cost will be $15 per book. Please email churchoffice@rhumc.org to communicate your plans to participate.

ROLLING HILLS
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Martha Circle by Barbara Addleman

How well do you know the members of Martha Circle? Do you know where they grew up? Do you know what they liked to do as kids? Do you know about their families – brothers – sisters?

Come to our meeting on **Monday, February 9**, at 12:00 pm. After our paper bag lunch each member will talk about their memories of childhood. Maybe someone grew up in the same state you did, and you never knew it. Maybe they were championship gymnasts or volleyball players just like you. Who knows what we will learn? However, what we do know is that it will be fun!

If there is not enough time for everyone to talk, we will continue this activity later in the year. Hope to see everyone on February 9!

Slava Ukraine: Study/Action Group on Ukraine

We had our second meeting on Sunday, January 11, and decided to call our group "Slava Ukraine" which is the Ukrainian national resistance salute meaning "glory to Ukraine." During our meeting we reviewed several recommended news sources where we can find accurate information about what is going on there. We received updates from several members who are researching what the United Methodist Church is doing to help Ukrainians at this time. One of our goals is to find ways we might participate in these humanitarian efforts both through the UMC and through other trusted nonprofits. We are also discussing inviting several Ukrainians known to members of our group to come speak to us about their country and what is happening from their perspectives.

At our next meeting we hope to create a mission statement that includes our commitment to learning more about Ukraine and its people, ways we can encourage our government to restore support for Ukraine and reliable organizations through whom we can help the Ukrainian people, including the United Methodist Church.

Our next meeting will be **Sunday, February 15**, from 6:45-7:45 pm in the Aldersgate Room. Please join us as we seek to be a small light of hope and practical help in this tumultuous time. Questions? Vince Budrovich - 310-971-3227 – VBudrovich@gmail.com.

Sunday Morning Coffee Cart Signage

Hunter Rieves (son of BJ and Amy Roth) took it on his own initiative to make new signs for the coffee service using his 3D printer. This is a significant improvement over the coffee-stained signs we have been using. Thank you Hunter!

A BOOK DISCUSSION SERIES

LIVING TO TELL THE STORY

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23
ENDLING
by MARIA REVA

MONDAY, MARCH 30
THE CORRESPONDENT
by VIRGINIA EVANS

MONDAY, APRIL 27
SACRAMENT
by SUSAN STRAIGHT

2 PM - IN PERSON

7 PM - ZOOM

Life is full of challenge, grief, struggle, and joy. Wonderful things happen and terrible things happen. How do we endure? What are the lessons we have learned? When will we achieve understanding, or resolution? Is there someone, or something, that can help us make sense of it all?

Join the conversation! All readers are welcome. Please email April@RHUMC.org to let her know of your plans to participate.

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Laundry Love Program Thanks RHUMC:

Why We Collect Laundry Items in the Narthex Each Sunday

"I want to thank you for your invaluable support you have given to…
-That person who sleeps in their car.
-The mother who knows she will have clean clothes to dress her children.
-Husbands and wives who know they will save a few cents for more necessary expenses.
-The homeless man who knows that even if he sleeps on a street sidewalk, he will wear clean clothes.
-The madman who spends his day clutching his shopping cart full of things that are all his possessions, but who wears clean clothes."
—Pastor Oscar Gutierrez, Laundry Love

RHUMC volunteers Carla Smith (left), Maureen Morton and Joe Morton (back) with Laundry Love client

We recently received a letter from Pastor Oscar Gutierrez who runs the Laundry Love program in San Pedro that we support. In his letter, he writes: "We would like to thank you for your stronger support and thank you for being part of this amazing charitable opportunity. During 2025, we served an average of 14 people per week…In recent years we have seen a rise in attendance due to the pandemic and other economic factors. With everyone's support we have developed a familiarity, a brotherhood that, thanks to them, we have been able to share the Gospel, bring some people to Christ, pray for the illnesses and necessities of each person who is with us week after week."

Under Carla Smith's leadership, our congregation supports Laundry Love one week per month with volunteers, soap, dryer sheets, sandwiches and other food, water and funding to run the washers and dryers. We are grateful for our congregation who contributed more than $4,000 for Laundry Love as part of Mission Fiesta Sunday. ***To volunteer for Laundry Love, contact Carla Smith at carla4health@gmail.com.***

FREE **SUPPORT GROUP** for those caring for a loved one with

Dementia, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's

Wednesdays
February 11 & 25
10:00-11:00 a.m.
in the Mission Room

Lauren Mahakian

Certified Dementia Practitioner, Speaker
Facilitator/Educator
Certified Validation Therapy
HCO#194700543

The discovery of memory loss can be daunting, yet in our experience, professional guidance and learning from others with similar experiences can be very helpful. Our groups are designed for those caring for a loved one with dementia, Alzheimer's or cognitive decline. All groups are led by Lauren Mahakian and are free of charge.

Club Maintenance - by Dave Larson

The next opportunity to participate in the Club Maintenance event will be on **Saturday, February 14**, at 8:30 am. We will have a variety of tasks on the to-do list. Thanks to all who have helped out in 2025, and we look forward to more fun opportunities. Please mark this date on your calendar and share in the ongoing work to keep our facilities in good repair. And please remember that a tasty lunch will be provided.

Taco Night

Join us for Taco Night after 3rd service on **Sunday, February 22.** You'll have a choice of chicken, beef, pork or potato tacos served with rice, beans, and chips. The requested meal donation is $5 per person, $15 per family. 3rd service takes place every Sunday at 5:30 p.m.

Blood Pressure Sunday

Blood pressure screenings will next be offered on **Sunday, February 22,** after each service. The morning screenings will be held in the church office conference room and after 3rd service in the Mission room.

Second Sundays at Two

Sunday, February 8, at 2:00 p.m.

~ presents ~

Elara String Trio

from the USC Thornton School of Music

Photo © USC 2026; Courtesy of USC Thornton School of Music / Photo credit: Mallory Snyder

Maya Irizarry Lambright *violin*

Miles Reed *cello*

Matthew Pakola *viola*

Winner of the USC Thornton 2025 Chamber Music Competition, the Elara String Trio is the 11th top ensemble from the USC Thornton School of Music presented annually on the *Second Sundays at Two* series. Each Elara member is pursuing a Master of Music degree.

Free admission. If this is your first time attending a *Second Sundays at Two* concert, please email **ClassicalCrossroads@ClassicalCrossroads.org** to request a reservation for yourself and your guests. The concert will be livestreamed for those unable to attend in person. Watch at concert time at **https://vimeo.com/event/4030680**.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On **Sunday, February 15**, we will celebrate those in our church family who have been or were married for 50 years or more. We would like to present a video of wedding photos to be shown in the narthex and appended to the on-line YouTube recording. No need to resend your wedding photo again if you have already done so in the past. Those new to reach this milestone, please consider forwarding a copy of your wedding photo by either forwarding a scanned copy or use your phone camera to take a photo of your wedding picture and send via email to churchoffice@rhumc.org. We can also scan your actual wedding photo for you if brought to the church office weekdays between 10:00-4:00 p.m. **Be sure to let us know your name and wedding date.** Submissions must be received by Monday, February 9, to be included in the video. Thanks for your participation and congratulations!

2026-2027 FALL REGISTRATION

Rolling Hills United Methodist Preschool

(310) 377-0742

Registration Dates > Fall & Summer

Lic. # 191600604

Fall Class Registration

Monday, February 9th through Friday, March 13th

Fall Class Assignments/Confirmations

Thursday, March 19th

Summer Fun/Camp (July/August) Registration

Registration will begin for summer on Wednesday, April 15th

***NOTE**: Boy/girl ratio is considered with enrollment. If classes are full and your child is placed on a waiting list, you will be contacted as soon as a space becomes available at no additional charge.*

Children's Ministry

Valentine Care Packages

Please let us know if you have a special person in your life
that might be away at college, homebound, or under the weather
and might benefit from a lovely package
made by the Children's Ministries Department at RHUMC.

Please call the church office at (310) 377-6771
by Friday, February 6th,
with their name and address or email information to:
Debra DeLuca at debra@rhumc.org.

Parents Night Out

Enjoy a night off while we take care of your children!
Drop them off for an evening of crafts, games, dinner,
and a movie - fun guaranteed!

Space is limited, so be sure to sign-up early!
Email Debra DeLuca at debra@rhumcorg to reserve your child's spot!

$60 for 1 child
$70 for 2 or more siblings

Children ages
1 year old
to 5th grade

1 to 3 years old-
Nursery
4 years and up-
Playground &
Mission Room

Saturday
February 21st
430pm to 830pm

Rolling Hills United Methodist Church
26438 Crenshaw Blvd
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

Youth Ministries

Ignite Mid-Week Youth Ministry

We will meet @ 6:30-8:00pm in Wesley Hall, dinner will be provided.

2/4 Valentine's
2/11 Bible Trivia
2/18 Ash Wednesday (6:30 - 8:15pm)
Gather for dinner, then attend the worship service in the sanctuary at 7:00pm.
2/25 "A Day in the Life" Movie Project

Service Opportunity

Cookies for Valentine's Day Care Packages

Sunday, February 8, from 11:15am - 1:00pm youth will help bake cookies to be included in care packages assembled by the Children's Ministry team. We will meet in the RHUMC kitchen. Please contact Kristin@rhumc.org if you would like to help.

Sierra Service Project 2026

We are now accepting registration for SSP 2026! Our high school team will go to Tsaile, AZ on July 25 - August 2, 2026. Submit your deposit now to reserve a spot on our team.

Save the date: Youth Sunday will be March 15!

If you would like to present a mini sermon during worship please contact Kristin.

Rev. Kristin Sutrave, Youth Ministries Pastor
Cell phone: 562-234-0161 Email: Kristin@rhumc.org
Natalie T. Contact: rhumcyouth@rhumc.org
Facebook page: facebook.com/groups/RHyouth Instagram: rhumcyouth_

Rolling Hills United Methodist Church
26438 Crenshaw Blvd.
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

Change Service Requested

SAVE OUR PLANET!

Have your Cornerstone sent via email; it's easy, just call the church office at 310-377-6771. You can also view the Cornerstone on the church website at www.rhumc.org

Senior Pastor	Jonathan Chute	Associate Pastor	April Herron
Youth Ministry Pastor	Kristin Sutrave	Senior Pastor Emeritus	Martha Rowlett
Music Director	Chuck Dickerson	Organist/Pianist	Althea Waites
3rd Service Music	Paula Kuno	Children's Ministry Dir.	Debra DeLuca
Preschool Director	Myra Ghabrial	Kid Zone Director	Gabby Palacios
Church Office Admin.	Peggy Roulette	Executive Assistant	Michele Nelson
Treasurer	Wade Welch	Business Manager	Catherine Dingman
		Custodian	Miguel Portillo

Church Office Phone	310-377-6771	Resident Bishop	Dottie Escobedo-Frank
Fax Line	310-544-4123	District Superintendent	Rev. Dr. Siosaia Tu'itahi
Web Site	www.rhumc.org		

SUNDAY WORSHIP HOURS
8:30 & 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Next Cornerstone deadline is February 20
www.rhumc.org