



HOPE, JOY AND LOVE RISING

Cast~A~Net

First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

JANUARY 2021



“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure...”

---Hebrews 6:19a

Do you have a passage you claim to encourage yourself on your journey in the Christian life? This passage is half a verse taken out of context! Nevertheless, I love it. It brings hope, joy and renewed faith to my doorstep.

Hebrews is a summons to faith and word of encouragement to a community that has grown weary of the Christian life. Caught up in the challenges of their day, they found it difficult to see a way forward. Some struggled with their faith and others neglected meeting together. As for us, we CAN'T meet together (unless it is outside in the parking lot)! That community had faced external pressure and duress, becoming less confident and energetic for Jesus. This letter of encouragement was offered in the hope of reawakening the community's faith.

We are a vibrant community of faith that needs encouragement too! Hope, joy and love always rise among us easily as we gather together in person. Our great challenge is to spread hope, joy and love from a distance now as 2021 begins. Let's put our heads and hearts together “virtually”, create ministry with and for one another, continue our missional outreach giving for people in need and seek God's guidance for the weeks and months ahead.

If you have thoughts and ideas regarding the way forward, activities you imagine we can do at this time, please talk to each other and to us (pastor, lay leader, church council chair, staff). And as you pray for yourselves, for each other and the church, claim this passage from Hebrews 6:19 as an affirmation for 2021.

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure...”

May God bless this New Year as we create the future together,

Rev. Mary Birgelaitis

Rev. Mary Birgelaitis

275 North Halcyon Road . Arroyo Grande . CA 93420 . (805) 481-2692



California-Pacific Conference

The United Methodist Church

A Message from our North District Superintendent

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the North District,

As we celebrate the birth of Christ and the New Year, there have been new questions about restrictions for worship gatherings following the Supreme Court's decision on November 25th. In that decision, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 against the Government of New York, setting regulations for worship gatherings that were stricter than retailers, offices, and factories. The ruling was based on the Court's understanding of the First Amendment's guarantee of Religious Liberty. On December 3rd, the Court also vacated the same restrictive guidelines in California. Even though the County of Los Angeles has lightened indoor worship restrictions, the safety of all is our greatest concern with the death toll reaching a new record on December 23rd.

While these rulings address a matter constitutional law lifting governmental ability to restrict religious worship, it does not change the California-Pacific Conference's dedication to participate in our local efforts to eradicate the COVID-19 pandemic. Our caution is supported by scientific and health care experts, recommending guidelines to curb this deadly contagion.

To that end, we continue to freely worship as the Body of Christ. Still, for the United Methodist Churches of the California-Pacific Conference, we will continue to do so only virtually and in outdoor settings. We pray for patience and endurance so that the vaccines which are now being deployed can bring us to the place we can joyfully embrace in our Sanctuaries. When that day comes, we will all gather together and lift our voices in thankful praise for the health of our families of faith.

May the Prince of Peace Be our Lord Forever,

Rev. James R. Powell
North District Superintendent
California-Pacific Annual Conference

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. — I Peter 4:10-11

Our beautiful beloved mother
Marjorie Cawelti died peacefully
at home in the early morning
hours of Christmas Eve day.

Thank you,
Jean Cawelti, daughter



A Gracious Thank You

I want to thank our congregation for providing such wonderful gifts for the Angel Tree this past Christmas. Our congregation has been so generous and caring about the gifts for the foster care children and other needy children. All of the tags were taken and all of the gifts were received by December 22, 2020. I am very thankful for that, too.

I am sure we will receive another gracious thank you letter from the San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services in January, thanking our church for our generous contributions to their program for children. I am also certain that many more children were in need this year.



The Angel Tree

If you need verification for a charitable income tax deduction, Social Services has given their tax identification number as 95-60000939.

Our church members have caring hearts and are truly generous in helping others in our community, especially children. Thank you again for your love and generous support for The Angel Tree. Bless you all!

Have a Happy 2021.

submitted by Jan Treat

North District Covenant Prayer for January 3, 2021
from District Superintendent, Rev. James Powell



Dear Church Leaders,

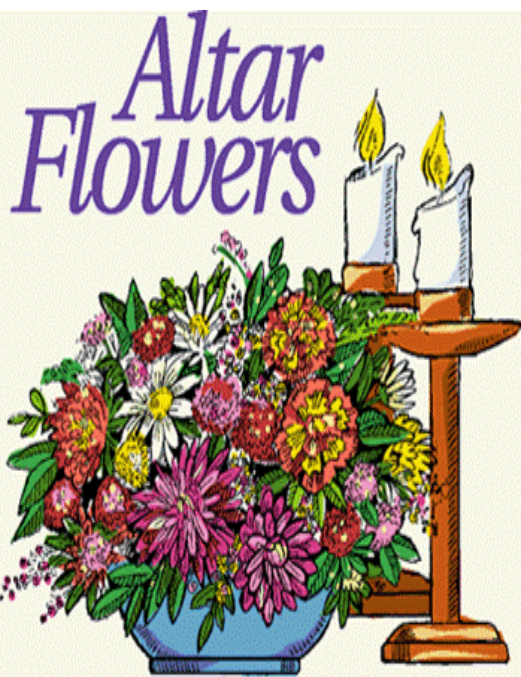
...I am so impressed with how you diligently pray for each other. I ask us to continue to pray for all.

- * Healing for those infected and affected by Covid-19.
- * Healing for those who have experienced racism.
- * Healing for those who have been injured through hatred.
- * Healing of the separation we have from the Lord's ways (sin).
- * Healing for the church that still awaits our time to gather for "in-person" worship.
- * Healing for the body of Christ!

"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

[Chronicles 7:14]

*Peace for the Journey,
Pastor Jim*



WOULD YOU LIKE TO ORDER FLOWERS FOR VIDEO WORSHIP?

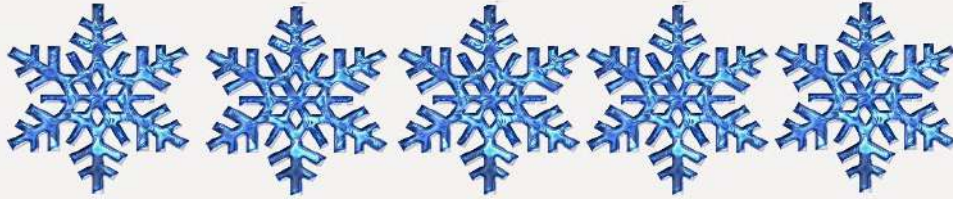
Order flowers to honor or remember someone special. Your floral tribute will be placed on the altar as we record our mini-worship service on Sunday, and then if you can't swing by we will get those beautiful flowers to you.

We can order as usual from the GRAND BOUQUET like we always do when we gather in person, or Brad Bettencourt (long-time florist himself who actually owned a flower shop for years) will arrange some pretty Trader Joe's flowers to be used in the video.

Please contact Frances in the Church Office to be the liaison with the Worship Team to make these plans.



“The organized unit of the United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.”



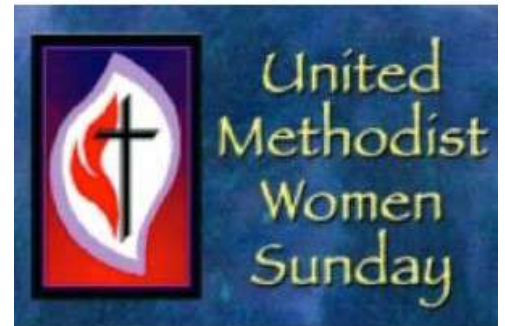
Seems like Christmas took a long time getting here and now, just like that, it's over. I've always liked the idea of celebrating the 12 Days of Christmas. Though it's important to get ready, it's also important to take time to observe the meaning and traditions of the Birth of Jesus. The days leading up to Epiphany give us time to remember the Magi, coming to visit the baby Jesus, bearing their gifts.

As we observe this holiday, we feel comforted to know that even with the limited fundraising opportunities this year we were able to send a check for \$2,000 off to the FUMCAG Children's Center, a check for \$1,000 to the Oceano Beach Elementary and a check for \$1,000 to the 5 Cities Homeless Coalition. It's so wonderful that we can continue to help local charities, in addition to the support we give to the UMW in the world. Good work, ladies!



As we look to the New Year, we would usually be looking at planning our UMW Sunday. I don't really know

what that will look like this year. We live day to day, though we are basically closed



down now. We will continue with plans to recognize three women in our congregation for their support and service to our Church. That will be done with a home "porch" (outdoor) ceremony. As it's usually a surprise, look to next month's Castanet for the names of our special recipients.

This Christmas 2020, I found myself signing my Christmas cards with the greeting, "and the hope for a Happy New Year!"

God bless you and keep you!

submitted by Gerry McGuire



From the editor: The January 3rd message to her students from Carolyn Russell, our Sunday School Teacher, tells of the boy Jesus in the temple. As always, it is a message for all of us.

In the Bible story for today, Jesus is twelve years old. His family has traveled to Jerusalem for the annual festival of Passover. Passover recalls the events that saved the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt long ago.

Families still celebrate Passover. The highlight of Passover is the observance of the Seder, a unique ceremony performed on the first two evenings of Passover. At the Seder, different special foods are eaten, and people tell the story of their departure from Egypt. They sing songs and praises, and say special prayers.

Families in Jesus' time traveled in large groups. Imagine a large family traveling together to another city. As multiple cars travel, it might be difficult to keep track of every family member. If Jesus was with other members, it was only after the festival was over and the family was traveling back home that they noticed Jesus was not with them!

Quickly, Mary and Joseph hurried back to Jerusalem. Amazingly, they found Jesus at the temple. He was gathered there with teachers of the law. According to

Luke's Gospel, the teachers were amazed at Jesus' understanding of Scripture. His parents were surprised. Why had Jesus stayed behind? Jesus gave an answer that seemed wise beyond his years: "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49, CEB).

Although Jesus was still a child, he was very smart and understood his role as the Messiah from an early age. He knew what gifts he had to give. As children and as adults, we need to look to our special gifts. What things are we best at? What can we offer to others? Each one of us is a unique child of God. We have special things to offer. We can help God and Jesus spread His love. What makes you special? How can you help?

One way right now is to make sure we take care of each other by washing our hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from each other. This way, we make sure the virus is not spread to one another. When we do these things, we show that we care for one another.

Remember, God is with us always and is watching over us. We must be thankful that God sent Jesus to earth as a baby, to grow into a boy, to grow into a man who brought God's teaching to all of us. We can still learn about Jesus today. We can still follow Jesus' words and help one another. By our faith and love, we can know that Jesus is our Savior, we will be saved.

Love,
Ms. Russell

A Little Levity...

'Twas the end of December and all through the towns, the people wore masks that covered their frowns.

Those frowns had begun way back in the spring, when a global pandemic changed everything.

They called it Corona, but unlike the beer, it didn't bring good times, it didn't bring cheer.

Airplanes were grounded, travel was banned, borders were closed across air, sea, and land.

As the world entered lockdown to flatten the curve, the economy halted and folks lost their nerve.

From March to July, we rode the first wave. People stayed home and they tried to behave.

When summer emerged, the lockdown was lifted. But away went the caution and many folks drifted.

Now it's January and cases are spiking. Wave two has arrived, much to our disliking.

It's true that last year had sadness a-plenty, and we'll never forget the year 2020.

And now has begun another New Year. But why be happy? What reason to cheer?

The house seems now naked, the tree taken down. Only I saw it, no one else was around.

But outside my window, the sun brightly shines, and I think to myself, there'll be much better times!

As I gather my courage, try to forget all my woes, a New Year has dawned, and my happiness grows.

Life is not canceled and neither is hope. If we lean on each other, I know we can cope...

(revised from unknown author, via AAUW)

PROGRAM MINISTRY

Darkness brightened by the Bethlehem star, of which we had the privilege of seeing this year;
 Afraid like Mary and Joseph not knowing what to expect, like us during this time of pandemic;
 Hope brought to us by the Christ Child.

Joy we encountered through the Advent and Christmas services provided by our Worship Committee.
 May the Light of the Christ Child bring us all hope and joy, and may we be together again soon.
 I'm looking forward to organizing some activities when it is safe to do so.

Until then, Bailey and I will continue to camp and Bob will remain the barometer of news in our home
 and the beacon of well-read material of the world.

~submitted by Sandy Underwood

A New Year Prayer

I share a clipping from "Today's Prayer", a daily prayer sent out by UMCdisciples.org

We're on the brink of a new year,
 A new opportunity,
 A new hope.
 And we need a star to guide us
 Because we haven't done so well on our own.

Send us a star that speaks of unity and of peace,
 That showers down acceptance
 That illumines diversity
 And sends us on a journey of building a community of equality and love.



We're scanning the heavens, Lord of all Creation,
 We're searching the skies.
 We need a star to guide us into a new world."



~submitted by Patti Melsheimer

*FROM YOUR LAY LEADER**Patti Melsheimer*

As we look to the New Year, I would like to share with you an email I recently received from our California Pacific Conference, which is a part of the Western Jurisdiction, written by Elaine JW Stanovsky, Bishop, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area:

The Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church has a vision of becoming a “home for all God’s children, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation.” United Methodist leaders in the Western Jurisdiction embrace John Wesley’s plea that we “be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion.” We are dedicating a year to noticing, naming and celebrating the variety of ministries “Where Love Lives” – not because we have a corner on the love market, but because love looks different in every place.

Let’s start by seeing where love lives in the extraordinary details of the Christmas story:

Love lives as a homeless couple, weary after a long day of travel, finds rest in an animal shed.

Love lives as this exhausted couple welcomes the untimely birth of their baby and lays him in a manger.

Love lives when a star shines in the night sky or a song spills from heaven – signs that a new and holy thing is happening.

Love lives where shepherd and sojourners show up in the night, after seeing, wondering and following these signs of hope.

The Christmas story shows us that where love lives, things happen that you never thought possible. Just as God was born in Jesus, God can dwell in us, too, as we grow to love as wondrously as God loves, as extravagantly as Jesus loves our neighbors, strangers, and those we think of as enemies. This is very good news when people live in the shadow of death and under the yoke of oppression. Watch for Where Love Lives.

Love lives where a grandma lays her sweater on the shoulders of a sleeping stranger on a chilly bus.

Love lives where a caregiver holds a smartphone or tablet to connect a dying patient with a loved one.

Love lives when a local church welcomes strangers, widows and orphans seeking safety.

Love lives when people who are sorting out their sexuality and identity have a place at the table of faith.

Love lives where Christians live their baptismal promise to ‘resist evil, injustice, & oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.’

Love lives when a passerby tapes a violent, racist atrocity on her phone for the world to witness.

Love lives in the anguished cry for justice and love.

Love lives when a church offers space for people evacuated from wildfires to store their belongings, or board their pets.

Love lives when any of us find our hardened hearts open and ready to heal a broken relationship.

I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

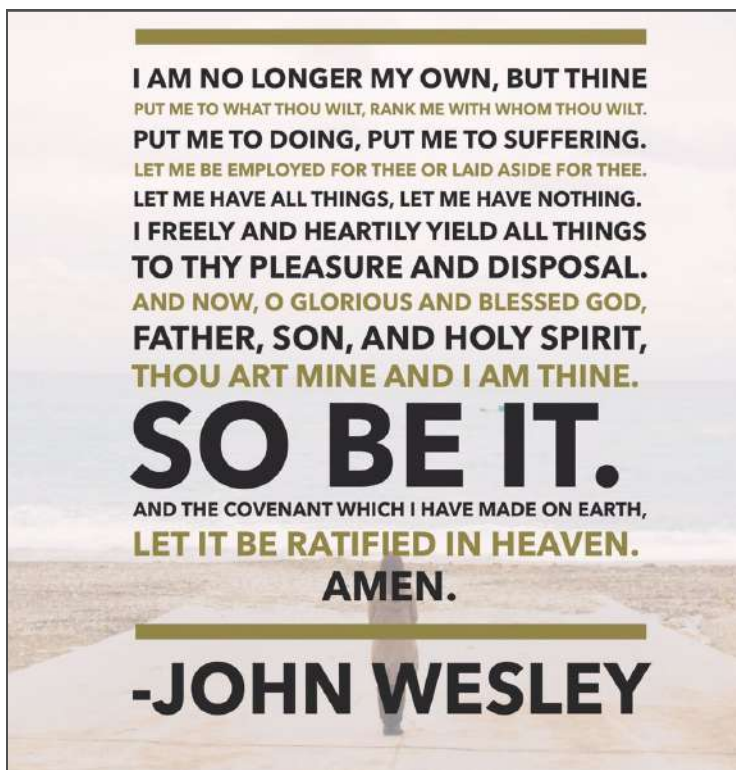
News from the Mission Team

by Judy Atwood, chair

MISSION TEAM: January 2021
Judy Atwood

GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE...IN ACTION

At the beginning of the year, I read again the Wesley Covenant Prayer. I do this to help reflect on the past and think about the future.



This is a way for me to reflect on where I am on my Christian journey and how I might renew my baptismal covenant. So, I thought others of you might also do this and think of ways we can strengthen our missional journey as the First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande.

This might be done by thinking about attitudes that might be helpful to improve or acquire. Some that came to my mind were attitudes, compassion, gratitude, humor, hope, inspiration, joyful, laughter, prayer, patience, respect, understanding and wisdom.

After I thought of attitudes, I thought of actions that would be good examples. These might include acceptance of all people wherever they are; calling someone who is most of the time by themselves and would enjoy hearing another voice; encouraging someone you know that would welcome a kind word; justice for those ways we treat others to show a way of caring that might change the injustice; prayer for those who have health issues, are lonely, big decisions to make; respect for those who have differing opinions or ideas; share visions of possible actions with others and work together to make them happen.

This prayer describes a way of life with Christ in His mission. This prayer can help us remember what the Jesus-way of life looks like and what loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourself requires of us.

The prayer reminds us who and whose we are. This can make a great way to begin the new year as Christ's representative in the world that needs to know and see his love and justice.

BLESSINGS AS YOU SEEK YOUR MISSION FOR THE NEW YEAR!


















A THOUGHT FOR MEDITATION.
 DON'T ASK GOD TO GUIDE YOUR FOOTSTEPS,
 IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO MOVE YOUR FEET.



January



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 	2
3 Epiphany Sunday	4 Alex Paredes Birthday 	5	6 Epiphany of the Lord	7 Norman Henderson Birthday 	8 Marjorie Ott Birthday 	9
10 Baptism of the Lord	11	12	13	14	15 Carolyn Russell Birthday 	16
17 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany Nancy Baughman Birthday  Elwood Hyden Birthday 	18 	19	20 Jim Alquist Birthday 	21	22 	23 Judy Leonard Birthday
24 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany	25 Violet Bauske Birthday 	26	27 Lynn Stewart Birthday 	28	29 Jordan Henderson Birthday  Eileen Odom Birthday  Mary Thronson Birthday 	30
31 4th Sunday after the Epiphany						



Church Office: (805) 481-2692
E-mail: fumcag@sbcglobal.net
Find us on Facebook at: United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande
www.facebook.com/fumcag

Senior Pastor:
 Rev. Mary B. Birgelaitis
E-mail: mbirgelaitis@gmail.com
Missionary (retired): Judy Atwood
Lay Leader: Patti Melsheimer
Office Administrator:
 Frances Robertson
Website Manager: Jamie Foster
Choir Director: Julie Burns
Praise Team Director: Mike Clark
Choral Pianist: Dennis Eiler
Handbell Choir Dir.: Leonard Lutz
Bishop: Grant J. Hagiya
District Superintendent:
 Rev. James Powell

AG UM Children's Center
Director: Madrigal Quaglin
E-mail: agumcc@sbcglobal.net
Office: (805) 481-2223



Layout Editor: Frances Robertson
Proofing Team: Rev. Mary Birgelaitis, Priscilla Alquist, Judy Atwood, David Beaman, Judy Leonard, Patti Melsheimer.
Other contributors:
 Varied Teams / Committees

PLEASE NOTE:

Layout Editor reserves the right to cut and edit articles to meet space limitations.

PEOPLE'S KITCHEN NEWS



By the time you are reading this, we will have successfully provided meals for those with hunger challenges through the People's Kitchen.

When we began this ministry again, we were given an opportunity to serve on months that have five Tuesdays. As we complete 2020, we have been back a total of six times.

On the Monday prior to our "fifth Tuesday" we continue to prepare the casseroles which the people enjoy. They are glad to know that we are back serving again.

If you wish to support this ministry financially, **designate your donation and place it in the offering plate or drop it off in the office during the week.**

Thank you in advance for supporting your ministry.

I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD

Birthdays In



Alex Paredes	01/04
Norm Henderson	01/07
Marjorie Ott	01/08
Carolyn Russell	01/15
Nancy Baughman	01/17
Elwood Hyden	01/17
Jim Alquist	01/20
Judy Leonard	01/22
Violet Bauske	01/25
Lynn Stewart	01/27
Jordan Henderson	01/29
Eileen Odom	01/29
Mary Thronson	01/29



Have we missed **your** birthday? If so, it is not listed in our data base. Please contact the church office and we will be glad to add your birth date to our monthly birthday list!

Hope, Joy & Love Rising



First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

275 North Halcyon Road
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420

Visit us on the web at worshipweekly.com

Find us on Facebook at United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande
www.facebook.com/fumcag

January 2021

• IN THIS • ISSUE

COVER STORY:

Message from Rev. Mary Birgelaitis

- North District Superintendent Message.....2
- Jean Cawelti Note, The Angel Tree.....3
- N District Covenant Prayer, Altar Flowers..4
- United Methodist Women5
- Sunday School, "A Little Levity"6
- Program Ministry, New Year Prayer.....7
- From Your Lay Leader.....8
- Mission Team News.....9
- Calendar.....10
- People's Kitchen, Birthdays.....11
- Happy New Year.....12

Children's Center Chronicle

