



HOPE, JOY AND LOVE RISING

Cast~A~Net

First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

MAY 2021

MESSAGE FROM REV. MARY BIRGELAITIS

Remember the child's hymn that sings out, **"The church is not a building. The church is not a steeple. The church is not a resting place. The church is a people."** Wow! OUR people have stayed together though apart through a year of pandemic living. We have worshipped online, grown in faith and joined in fellowship in most unusual ways. We have served, giving food and assistance to others and we have sustained our own church ministry. We are the church of Jesus Christ, and a congregation where hope, joy and love continue to rise. BRAVO!

We have socially distanced in a safe, wise ways and staff and leadership have made plans for reopening. We created hand-sanitizing stations and gathered up resources, i.e., disinfectants, masks, and we are ready with air purifiers running, making our spaces safer for you. Church Council, Trustees, Staff and you--we've all been through it. We're ready, willing and yearning to move back in, and I long to be with you in-person for worship, all the while continuing to be safe, not putting anyone at risk.

John Wesley taught Three Simple Rules: *Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.* These rules have guided my ministry for more than 38 years of ordained ministry and 6 years on church staffs prior. May these same rules guide what we as a congregation do in the coming weeks and months, as we move through our reopening. Your grace is amazing and your patience much appreciated as we move the process along.

Our church leaders must continue to monitor the changes in guidelines set by the CDC, our state, our bishop and our local community health officials for reopening of houses of worship. We will make whatever adjustments need to be made along the way.

For the time being we continue to offer our worship videos and in person groups are moving onto the premises. Please continue to pray for our congregation and its leaders as we seek God's wisdom and guidance. And please pray for our denominational leaders at every level that they may be wise and judicious in decision-making, and don't stop praying for us all!

Gracious God,

We ask for your Divine Presence and leading as we continue to pray for healing for those who have contracted COVID-19 and for those who have lost loved ones this year. We ask for patience and trust in you and for guidance for our leaders, clergy and laity who make difficult decisions. May your divine values of love, compassion, and care lead us to make the best decisions for our churches and communities. In Christ's name we ask this. Amen.

Rev. Mary Birgelaitis

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

CHANGES WHEN WE BEGIN RE-GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

As your church leadership works toward re-gathering in the sanctuary for in-person worship we want you to be aware that the experience will be significantly different. Please know that when we re-open the sanctuary, **we most of all want you safe**. For many of you, that means worshipping from home until you and your household have been vaccinated. Please do **not** come to the sanctuary for worship if you are of a vulnerable age or health condition without vaccination, if you are not feeling well, if you have a temperature or virus symptoms, or if you are simply feeling un-safe and insecure.

Here are some things you can expect when we again meet in the sanctuary for worship:

1. Those attending worship will be asked to **sign a waiver** if they have not already done so.
2. **Masks are required** for everyone.
3. **Your ushers** will guide you to your seat. Family groups may sit together, however each family group will be socially distanced from each other. It is unlikely that you will be Seated in your favorite pew. Think of it as an opportunity to see our sanctuary from a new angle.
4. **No vocal music**. Singing, chanting, and unison reading have not yet been approved for Live worship. This means no choir, no hymn singing and no unison Lord's Prayer. We might be able to utilize STAFF MEMBERS ONLY singing behind the acrylic drummer's cage.
5. **No printed bulletins or passed offering plates**. Please leave your offerings in plates provided near the entry ways.

CHANGES WHEN WE BEGIN RE-GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

6. **No hugs and handshakes.** We ask that you stand 6 feet away when talking with others or waiting for your turn to find a seat in the worship space. Please, only air hugs from afar.
7. **No coffee hour or fellowship time.** We can't offer food or coffee after worship. We encourage you to return to your cars and homes as quickly as possible.
8. **Holy Communion.** We will resume Holy Communion when we can be assured it can be done safely.
9. **Video worship** will continue for the time being, so you can worship safely from home. There will be changes to the video worship after we begin in person services. **Worship from home is the safest option.** We encourage you to continue enjoying our weekly video worship. Invite your friends, family members from around the globe, or even neighbors who might like the opportunity to see your church on YouTube to determine if we are the "right" fit for their spiritual needs.

Even after a year of pandemic-living, it is still difficult to write words like this. They sound and feel harsh to me, but you know the drill and we will do everything we can as soon as we can and we are ready to do that. So, I want to thank you once again for your kindness and patience.

Let's keep encouraging one another.

--- MBB



TUESDAY PRAYER TIME IN THE SANCTUARY

Starting Easter Sunday, April 4, the Season of Easter extends through Trinity Sunday, May 30th. We are celebrating Easter Joy for two months!

You are invited come into the sanctuary on Tuesdays between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon to offer prayers for friends, family and our world.

A simple sign in, a signed waiver on hand, a quick temperature check is all it takes to enter. Judy Atwood or Mary Hawkins will be there to meet you and usher you in. Brad Bettencourt will often be playing softly at the organ to set the tone for reflection and contemplation.

Sometimes there are only one or two people present and other times more. Nevertheless, the sanctuary is a place of prayer for you. We welcome you.

SANCTUARY OPEN FOR PRAYER
TUESDAYS Between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon



History of Mother's Day



Celebrations of mothers and motherhood can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honor of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele, but the clearest modern precedent for Mother's Day is the early Christian festival known as "Mothering Sunday."

Once a major tradition in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, this celebration fell on the fourth Sunday in Lent and was originally seen as a time when the faithful would return to their "mother church"—the main church in the vicinity of their home—for a special service.

Over time the Mothering Sunday tradition shifted into a more secular holiday, and children would present their mothers with flowers and other tokens of appreciation. This custom eventually faded in popularity before merging with the American Mother's Day in the 1930s and 1940s. The American incarnation of Mother's Day was created in 1908 and became an official U.S. holiday in 1914.



United
Methodist
Women
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

“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.”

UMW MAY REPORT



Finally it looks like we may be opening up our world. We have waited patiently and prayerfully. Now with some care we can start to come out of our homes and greet our friends, renew the friendships we enjoyed in our congregation. If we use caution we can safely meet in our small groups.

Points to remember: wear your masks, social distance, and stay home if you have a fever or feel sick. When greeting your friends you've been apart from, remember “no hugging”. When given the opportunity, get vaccinated. (This is the key that has helped us get to this level.)

Your church leaders are diligently working at keeping the meeting rooms properly sanitized and set up for social distancing. This month we will see the **Sew and Sews** meeting on Tuesdays at 9:30 AM in the McMillan Room, and the **Mary Martha Esther Circle** meeting the 4th Thursday of the month, also in the McMillan Room. The **Joy Circle** is readying to meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month; check with Lucy Jacob

and Barbara Reineke for meeting place. Patti Melsheimer is the contact person for the **UMW Book Club**. I hope you all find a place or two to exercise your need for camaraderie.

“God,...Let our work be good for our church and our church be good for your world.”

Quoted from Tara Barnes, editor *Response magazine*.

As we begin this “opening up”, please make a note that the UMW will be having a **Friendship Tea in honor of Mothers Day**. We love tea parties. It will be held Saturday, May 8, 11:30 to 1:30 in the Preschool courtyard of the church. A light lunch of finger sandwiches, scones, cookies and strawberries, served with tea and coffee. The cost is \$15. RSVP's are mandatory by Tuesday, May 4, as space is limited. Contact Gerry McGuire or Mary Hawkins (check church directory for phone number.) Tickets will also be on sale at the May 2nd Sing Along and from Judy Atwood at Prayer Times on Tuesday morning, May 4th.

submitted by Gerry McGuire





From the editor: The April 25th message to her students from Carolyn Russell, our Sunday School Teacher, tells the story of Jesus and the Great Commission of his disciples (Matthew 28:16-20). This is a message for all of us.

It's Springtime! Have you been noticing all the flowers? First there were only a few, and then more and more began to grow. Now there are fields of yellow mustard flowers, brilliant orange poppies and purple lupine! Flowers in planters and beds are opening. Succulents are blossoming! Springtime is a time of growth!

It is a time of growth for Christians, too! It is the time when Christians think about how Jesus died on the cross. We remember how we can renew ourselves when we ask for forgiveness. We learn about what he went through and think about his disciples. We think how it might have been for them.

In our story today, Jesus returns to his disciples and asks them to continue carrying out his work in the world. They were to go and tell the good news about Jesus to all people. Jesus wanted them to go and make new disciples of Jesus everywhere.

And Jesus said, "I will always be with you."

They were kind of like the first few flowers of spring. The work and love they did began to spread. Like the field of flowers, Christianity spread around the world. It spread through-out time! Now there are Christians everywhere. We heard the news. We joined in. Jesus wants us to continue to spread his word.



How can you tell others about Jesus? How can you show love? How can you care for others? We can talk about the stories we learn about. We can be kind and helpful to family, friends and others. We can continue to do the things Jesus wanted us to do. We can have faith and pray and follow Jesus' teaching. We can be as beautiful as the flowers God gave us to enjoy! We can be a source of joy and love for others.

See what you can do this week to spread God's love.

Love,

Ms. Russell

North District Weekly Covenant Prayer List May 2 — 30, 2021

from District Superintendent, Rev. James Powell

*"Pray for the continued mission of the UMC in the California-Pacific Conference:
To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."*

Prayer Date	Church/Ministry	Pastor(s)
May 2, 2021	Quartz Hill: Christ Our Savior UMC	Pastor Ken Gardner
May 2, 2021	Lompoc First UMC	Pastor Joy Price
May 9, 2021	San Fernando First UMC	Pastor Pastor Sandie Richards
May 9, 2021	North Oxnard UMC	Pastor Erin McPhee & Pastor Matt McPhee
May 16, 2021	Tujunga UMC	Pastor Tom Kendall
May 16, 2021	Paso Robles UMC	Pastor Joshua Zulueta
May 23, 2021	Atasadero UMC	Pastor Steve Poteete-Marshall
May 23, 2021	Pasadena: St James UMC	Pastor Malyong Yi
May 30, 2021	Oxnard: St Paul's UMC	Pastor Rachel deBos-Haigler
May 30, 2021	West Hills: Hindi-Urdu Mission	Pastor Lamuel Jacob



Last Call for ELT Scholarship Applications



If you are going to attend a college or trade school in the 2021-22 school year, we encourage you to apply for the Everett Lee Taylor Memorial Scholarship. We have available scholarships!

First-time and returning college students may apply by completing the application available at www.worshipweekly.com. College students will need to attach a college transcript verifying a minimum 2.5 GPA. Other requirements are listed on the website.

The ELT Scholarship application is due by **May 15th**. You may submit it online to the church office by sending it to fumcag@sbcglobal.net or bring it to the church office.

The ELT Scholarship Committee

submitted by Judy Leonard

Do you like to shop Amazon? Another great way to support AGUMCC is through AmazonSmiles Program. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the **AGUMCC**. Just sign up under ***The First United Methodist Church Corporation*** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.



Check out our school website at www.agumcc.org for a direct link to shop at <http://smile.amazon.com>.

*Submitted by Maddy Quaglino,
AGUMCC Director*

*FROM YOUR LAY LEADER**Patti Melsheimer***What is today's CHURCH??**

A recent article on the Methodist website "Rethink Church" had some interesting questions and thoughts for us to consider. The article began by saying that "The year 2020 may have forever changed our picture of church". It goes on to ask – "What does church look like in your mind? Most of us imagine church as an event happening at a specific place and a specific time. Often that place is a building with stained glass and rows of seating. That time we imagined is a Sunday morning. There are other people in our imagined picture... we may softly sing along with the congregation at appropriate times. We close our eyes at the appointed times and join our gathered community in prayer."

BUT the events of 2020-2021 have changed that image of church, for most of us, probably forever. We are learning that church is more than an event. As demonstrated by our own church, Church is community in action! We have been and need to continue to be creative in how we engage in community. Our pastor and the Worship team have stretched their knowledge and skills and with their leadership we too have learned much and hopefully stretched. How many of us had previously watched programs on "You Tube"? How many of us had ever attended a meeting on "Zoom"? These are not just recordings of in-person worship services and posting them online. They are creating worship experiences specifically for online worship. Church Council, Trustees and other groups have had Zoom meetings with great success. The Finance committee reports that giving has actually increased, partly because we can now give "online".

The United Methodist Women have found ways to involve the women of the church in outreach and have provide opportunities for connection thru their "drive-by" events almost monthly for everyone. The Mission team has created ways to continue serving our community by having food drives and preparing packaged meals for the homeless. By sending out a weekly letter, Rev. Birgelaitis has kept the congregation updated and connected with each other.

As we begin to "reopen" we must be prepared to try more new things, and to continue to do things differently. Our church leadership has identified that we need to hire additional staff who are trained in digital age skills. And all of us need to be willing to learn. The Rev. Mark Nakagawa, the West District superintendent in the California-Pacific Conference, said, "For the church, COVID-19 has brought the future to our doorstep and it has compelled churches to make changes they've been meaning to make for decades....It is "out of the question" to stop online efforts after the pandemic passes."

Someone recently said ours is a congregation of "old people"! Maybe many of us are "old" in chronological age but we must be "young" in our thinking and accept new ways of going forward as a church of the future.

News from the Mission Team

by Judy Atwood, chair

MISSION TEAM: May 2021

Judy Atwood

MISSION HIGHLIGHTS:

GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE...IN ACTION

We provided the opportunity for mission and ministry and you responded! Thank you! We will be forwarding enough funds to support four (4) students in the developing Sewing Ministry on the island of LaGonave in Haiti.

You may remember that many of the students have no funds for continuing their education and this ministry is to provide an opportunity for them to learn a skill by which they will be able to provide a needed service for others and support for themselves and their families.



Enichson Villiere, the pastor of that small church in Haiti, had the idea of a Sewing Ministry to teach students skills.

If you are interested in helping support this ministry, let us know and we can continue to help make that happen. Checks can be sent to the Church marked Sewing Ministry towards this challenge.

LOVE IN ACTION IN ALASKA

Around conversations about the sewing ministry, I was recently asked about the layette ministry we have supported in Alaska. It has been a while since we have sent a box to Nome. So I was wondering if some of you, while you have spent more time at home during the pandemic, have been being creative with items for layettes. It would be nice to be able to send them a box again.

As always, I want to say thank you, to the congregation for being a blessing to our community as well to others of God's people around the world.

So, my challenge to myself, and others who wish to join me, continues to be what challenge are you and I willing to take to help make a change for someone else?



The classroom at the Church



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<p>MAY 1</p>
<p>2 FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</p> <p>Hilary Henderson Birthday</p>	3	4	5	6	7	<p>8</p> <p>Karen Wise Birthday</p>
<p>9 SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</p>	10	<p>11</p> <p>James David Birthday</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Judie Neufeld Birthday</p>	13	14	15
<p>16 SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</p> <p>Doris Douglas Birthday</p>	17	<p>18</p> <p>Vinnie Paredes Birthday</p>	19	20	21	<p>22</p> <p>Paul Jacob Birthday</p>
<p>23 DAY OF PENTECOST</p>	24	<p>25</p> <p>Robin N. Isakson Birthday</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Roger Ridley Birthday</p>	27	28	29
<p>30 TRINITY SUNDAY</p> <p>Arianna Davis Birthday</p>	<p>31</p>					

Meet Our
CHURCH STAFF

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 www.facebook.com/fumcag

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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
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PLEASE NOTE:

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

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ORDER FLOWERS FOR VIDEO WORSHIP?



You are invited to 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, if you can't swing by to pick them up, 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 who is the liaison with the Worship Team to make these plans.



Hilary Henderson	05/02
Karen Wise	05/08
James David	05/11
Judie Neufeld	05/12
Doris Douglas	05/16
Vinnie Paredes	05/18
Paul Jacob	05/22
Robin N. Isakson	05/25
Roger Ridley	05/26
Arianna Davis	05/30

Program Ministry

April's recovery for me and Bailey brings travel plans for May to Oregon in the motorhome with BG and the pups! I fractured my ankle and Bailey was diagnosed with Addison's Disease.

I'm hopeful we will be together in person again soon! Til then, if you have suggestions for programs, send my way!



Submitted by Sandy Underwood

P.S. Bailey says "Hi" (Woof!)

Hope, Joy & Love Rising



First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

275 North Halcyon Road
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420



2021

Visit us on the web at worshipweekly.com

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Children's Center Chronicle



**I WAS HUNGRY AND
YOU GAVE ME FOOD**

**IT'S TIME TO HELP REFILL THE SHELVES FOR
THE 5CITIES CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FOOD PANTRY!**

**IN ADDITION TO THE REGULAR CANNED AND
PACKAGED FOOD STAPLES, HERE ARE SOME
SPECIAL REQUESTS:**

**Regular sized boxed cereals, peanut butter, shelf-stable
milk, surplus garden vegetables and fruits, brown paper
bags (not plastic) for distributing the food.**



Food can be brought to the Church Office
Mondays-Thursdays from 9 AM to 1 PM.

Church members who help out at the pantry
will take the items to the Pantry location.