



HOPE, JOY AND LOVE RISING

Cast~A~Net

First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande December 2020

As I am writing the Emergency Alert on my cellphone is sounding off announcing a STAY AT HOME Order just when I was about to say, ***“I’m so sorry that we had to cancel both Advent Groups that just started up, that the Wednesday Work Crew won’t be working this week and that the Board of Trustees has had to opt out of their December Meeting in order to comply”.***

What a Journey to Bethlehem we are living!

Our best laid plans have been interrupted time and time again with hope deferred and the postponement of the fulfillment of our needs, wants and desires to do the simple things we usually do unimpeded by restrictions, masks and weariness. 2020 has NOT been what we hoped for! Nevertheless, THANK YOU for hanging in there with us, for being faithful to our congregation and to Jesus whose Birth we will celebrate in the midst of all. Good riddance 2020, and what about 2021?

We will keep filming, sending letters and creating reasons to drive-through. We will start groups and activities as we can. This Sunday, December 13th, we offer you at least a moment of fun as you cruise through our parking lot and receive goodies and a Christmas Eve Candle from our United Methodist Women. For 9 months I have scrambled desperately to get ahead of the curve enough to have days that I can spend calling you. The lack of time has been my #1 frustration since March. I have a nameplate on my desk that says CHAOS COORDINATOR. When your phone rings, and it is I, you’ll know that we have succeeded in catching up with ourselves and me bringing order out of chaos!

Following Jesus and praying for you,

—Rev. Mary Birgelaitis

I commend everyone for continuing their regular tithes and offerings to our Church even when we are not meeting in person. Some have paid as much as a year in advance. This helps our cash flow, though we must not expect this level of contributions to continue when we plan our spending.

We ended the first four months of our Fiscal Year starting July 1 with a small surplus. This was due primarily due to a decrease in Apportionments and pension expenses. Our California-Pacific Conference reduced apportionment payment requirements due to COVID-19, and temporarily suspended payments to the pension funds. The suspension of payments to the pension funds has now ended, so pension expenses will increase to normal levels in future months. Expenses associated with many of our usual activities including worship music and Christian education have decreased since we are not meeting in person. However, expenses for the weekly letter and video service have largely offset these savings.

Our Thanksgiving offering is falling far short of plan, \$1,140 received vs. \$2,200 plan. Please consider making a contribution to our upcoming Christmas Offering. These holiday offerings are an important part of our annual budget and are needed to sustain the ministries of our Church.

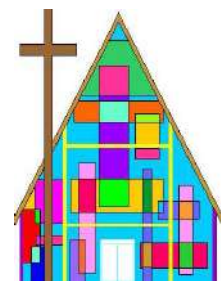
Joel Anderson
Acting Treasurer



North District Covenant Prayer List
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)
December 6	Glendale: Grace Korean UMC	Pastor Jin Ho Han
December 6	Pasadena: Holliston UMC	Pastor Young Chung
December 13	Moorpark UMC	Pastor Kathleen Puntar
December 13	North Hills Hispanic Mission	Pastor Fred Morris
December 20	Northridge UMC	Pastor Joseph Choi
December 20	Pasadena: Scott UMC	Pastor James Stevenson
December 27	Pearblossom: Community UMC	Pastor Glenn Hoskins
December 27	Santa Maria: Saint Andrew UMC	Pastor Eric Scott



*FROM YOUR LAY LEADER**Patti Melsheimer***Christmas will be Different this Year!**

I have said, “Christmas will be different this year” many times in recent weeks! The COVID virus has made most every thing different in 2020! And yet, I remember saying that on other Christmases as my family and I approach the Christmas season. Each year I think, “This year I won’t try to do everything! I’ll change things so I remember the true meaning of Christmas!”

I am known as some one who is very “traditional”. Our family always gets together for Christmas Eve dinner and games with a hearty singing of “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. Christmas morning is always breakfast at our home with the whole family – sons and their families and then the opening of packages and beginning to prepare for Christmas dinner. The family always stays the whole day, playing with all the new toys! It has been that way for years! But not this year!

Because I am such a traditionalist, it will be very difficult for me to think about the restrictions for this year’s Christmas brought on by the COVID virus crisis. I will have to accept change! We will probably not have all our extended family together for the day! We may not gather indoors around the Christmas tree! We may not be able to all sing carols together. Change is difficult at any time, but when there is a pandemic, we are frightened and change is very unsettling. But we nearly always learn from change if only that we can do it! In his book “Christmas Is Not Your Birthday”, Mike Slaughter talks about Christmas as the “season of conspicuous consumption”. Maybe the pandemic will bring some “good” changes! Maybe we won’t be so intent on finding the “right” present for everyone. Maybe we will remember whose birthday it really is!

I have been amazed at some of the changes in the advertising this year as we approach Christmas. Have you noticed the J.C. Penny’s television ads? They emphasize “Joy, Comfort, and Peace”! I don’t ever remember “Peace” or “Joy” being part of a commercial ad! Other ads mention that if you buy their product, they will make a donation to a charity of your choice! More and more commercial ads are mentioning those in need. Maybe Christmas will be different in more than one way! Maybe we can think more about the true meaning of Christmas!

Slaughter goes on in his book to say – “Christmas may have brought the unexpected to your life this year. But even in the midst of the unexpected, God shows up. Sickness, death, divorce, unemployment. Life gets messy, but in the midst of your mess, God shows up! No matter what you are struggling to overcome, no matter what life issues have come your way, God promises to show up. Christmas is God’s vivid reminder that amid the uncertainty, *God shows up to bring you peace, purpose, joy, hope, and wholeness*”. Have a merry, different Christmas!

HAVE A MERRY, DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS

Membership Care Phone Tree

There have been some very special members of our church who responded to a call from Pastor Mary to reach out to each church member on a routine basis as we had to close the sanctuary to indoor worship this year.

There are 10 Membership Care Phone Tree ladies. They have been faithful Shepherds and deserve to be recognized for their outreach. You will recognize their names:

Thank you to Judy Atwood, Irene Kliesch, BG Perrigey, Mary Hawkins, Patti Melsheimer, Barbara Reineke, Jan Treat, Marjorie Ott, Sharon Roemer, and Priscilla Alquist.

They have been your faithful church contacts for the last 9 months. Because of their diligence, we have been able to update our membership contact information, check in with you to make sure that your needs were being met, to pray with you as challenges have come, and to pass on information from Pastor Mary and the Church Council as needed. Through these calls we have been able to provide your input to our Worship Team as they developed our on-line weekly Worship Service.

I know you will join me in thanking your Phone Tree Shepherd the next time you talk together.

*~submitted by Kerren Brown
Membership Care Chair*



An Invitation from the Sunday Worship Team

If you would like to receive our weekly video worship services on a DVD, please contact the church office.



"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."



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th

10 AM to 12 Noon

Drive-Through in the Parking Lot

With Christmas right around the corner, the UMW elves have been working behind the scenes creating a special Christmas bag for each of you. You will find some goodies to enjoy, a special candle to celebrate the birth of our savior and an ornament for your tree. Come drive through the parking lot Sunday, December 13, between 10 and 12 noon and pick up your bag. You'll see the church decorated for Christmas and maybe hear some favorite music. For the homebound, please call Mary Hawkins or Gerry McGuire (numbers in our directory) for a special delivery from the UMW elves to you at home.

It's been a hard year for us and we've learned a lot. Enjoy the season, get in touch with those you've missed, and love yourself. Remember why we celebrate this special holiday and keep God's love in your life. Have a blessed holiday and remember that your church family loves you.

~submitted by Gerry McGuire



**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF ARROYO GRANDE
RETURN TO SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE SURVEY
INITIAL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

Thank you to all those that responded to our "Return to Sunday Worship Service Survey". The results will help us plan video worship services and our eventual reopening of in-person worship.

Reported as Number of responses to an option and % of surveys received
Responses will not add up to 100% due to multiple responses or non-responses.

1. Name (optional). **59 TOTAL RESPONSES (# RESPONSE = %)**

2. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you attend worship?

54 = 91.5% Weekly
5 = 8.5% 2-3 times per month

0 Once a month
0 Less than once a month

3. How often do you view our on-line worship video service?

36 = 61% Weekly
10 = 16.9% 2-3 times per month
4 = 6.8% Once a month
1 = 1.7% Less than once a month
7 = 11.9% Never

4. Would you like to get a copy of the video worship service on DVD? **2** Yes **51** No

5. What aspects of our PAST IN-PERSON worship were most important to you"

(Please choose no more than 5)

26 = 44.1%	Greeting one another		
23 = 39.0%	Prelude, Offertory & Postlude (instrumental music)		
19 = 32.2%	Liturgy (Call to Worship, Prayers of the People/Lord's Prayer, etc.)		
34 = 57.9%	Congregational singing	7 = 11.9%	Offering
25 = 42.4%	Praise Team Music	25 = 42.4%	Communion
34 = 57.9%	Chancel Choir Music	8 = 13.6%	Announcements
27 = 45.8%	Scripture	2 = 3.4%	Benediction
54 = 91.5%	Sermon	23 = 39.0%	Fellowship Time

_____ Other: **Children's Moment, Bell Music**

SURVEY RESULTS CONTINUED

6. What aspects of our video worship are most important to you *(Please choose no more than 4)*

22 = 37.3% Piano/Organ prelude & Postlude	47 = 79.7% Message
29 = 49.2% Hymns and praise songs	14 = 23.7% Prayers/Lord's Prayer
20 = 33.9% Words to music	17 = 28.8% Puppets
21 = 35.6% Scripture	21 = 35.6% Pictures of members
	11 = 18.6% Inspirational images

7. When we restart services in the sanctuary, we are required to follow safety protocols, i.e. screening, waiver, social distancing, masks, no singing, no responsive readings, no social hour, etc. How likely are you to attend with these limitations?

Answer on scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 would not attend, to 5 Definitely would attend): _____

1 7 = 11.9% 2 4 = 6.8% 3 12 = 20.3% 4 10 = 16.9% 5 14 = 23.7%

8. How soon are you likely to return to Sunday Services with these limitations:

26 = 44.1% As soon as they start
4 = 6.8% Spring 2021
0 Summer 2021
14 = 23.7% When COVID-19 vaccine is available or risk of COVID-19 has passed
4 = 6.8% When services return to pre-COVID normal.
9 = 15.3% Don't Know
1 = 1.7% Other

9. When we first restart services in the sanctuary there will only be one service. What time should this service be held?

5 = 8.5% 8:30AM **9 = 15.3%** 9:00AM **13 = 22.0%** 9:30AM **20 = 33.9%** 10:00AM

9 = 15.3% 10:30AM **1 = 1.7%** 11:00AM **0** 4:00 PM **0** 5:00PM ___ Other: _____

10. Would you attend an Advent Vespers service held in the sanctuary on Sunday Nov. 29 at 4PM
15 = 25.4% Yes **15 = 25.4%** No **26 = 44.1%** Maybe

13. Are you willing to attend in-person meetings? **36 = 61.0%** Yes **19 = 32.2%** No

14. Are you interested in joining a small group to continue to connect with people in our church?

49 = 32.2% Yes **33 = 55.9%** No

Survey results from responders were prepared by Joel Anderson.

Thank you, Joel!



The Angel Tree



We received gift tags from the Department of Social Services for the Angel Tree again this year. The Angel Tree is set up in the narthex and is ready for you to pick up gift tags from the tree. The tags can be picked up on Tuesdays from 10:00 am to noon during Prayer Time and can be returned on Tuesdays 10:00 am to noon. You may also drop your gifts at the Church Office after contacting the Church Secretary, Frances Robertson.

The deadline for bringing gifts to the church is Tuesday, December 22nd. We still have a few tags available.

There will be duplicate tags on the tree. One, the original, is for you to take and purchase a gift and return, attached to the gift. On the second tag, please sign your name on this duplicate and leave it on the tree. The duplicate is used in case your

original tag is lost, and it also helps me to contact persons who may have not returned their gift.

The Angel Tree gifts are for foster children and other children in need in San Luis Obispo County. The children's names and ages are provided by Social Workers and Eligibility Staff from the SLO Department of Social Services.

Thank you all again for your generous giving spirit to help children in need at Christmas! Your gifts do make a difference in their lives.

If you have questions you may contact me. My phone number is in the Church Directory.

The Lord's Blessings to you all.

~submitted by Jan Treat



PROGRAM MINISTRY

Merry Christmas, church family!

We have much to be thankful for,

especially the reason for the season, Jesus' Birth!

While we are still holding off on worshipping together in person,

there is some movement with small group activities! Hurray!

Stay safe, wear your mask and use hand sanitizer often! Big hugs!

~ Sandy Underwood



News from the Mission Team

by Judy Atwood, chair

MISSION TEAM: December 2020

Judy Atwood

MISSION HIGHLIGHTS:

1. [God's Steadfast Love...in Action](#)
2. [God's Love in Action in Arroyo Grande](#)

1. GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE IN ACTION

This information comes from the Global Village Foundation: Edy may walk again after Mobility Cart restarted his life, on the day Edy stepped from his wheelchair to an exercise bicycle. Edy is 25 years old. He lives in a small village in North West Bali. Married in 2013 at age 18 to his childhood sweetheart, the newlyweds were quick to start a family, with a beautiful baby boy arriving in the first year.

In 2016, disaster struck when Edy fell 5 meters from a coconut tree, fracturing his spine while harvesting coconuts. He spent several weeks at the public hospital before returning home paralyzed from the waist down. His young wife, unable to cope with the stress of caring for her newly disabled husband, soon left the family home, and moved to the city. Edy remained bedridden and depressed for 3 years after the accident, never venturing outside of his house. The muscles in his legs, the flesh on his body, slowly wasted away.

The Global Village Team first met Edy in October 2019 when asked to deliver to him a wheelchair. We delivered to him a MOBILITYWORLDWIDE Mobility Cart which was perfect for his needs. FUMCAG has provided funds for mobility carts.

Edy's immediate mobility problems were solved. Overnight, he became a happier, more positive young man. The more he used the mobility cart to get around, the stronger his body became, with some feeling returning to his legs.

For the past year, the Global Village Foundation team has been visiting regularly and working with Edy to build up his strength with exercise advice and regular food aid support, including food supplements and vitamins to boost his general health.

With today's food parcel we were pleased to deliver an exercise cycle, as part of our goal to get Edy back to great health. One year ago, Edy could not believe he would ever walk again. He has come a long way in 12 months. His determination and motivation to get better in such tough life circumstances is truly inspiring. Edy and his young son (now aged 6) are supported by Edy's parents in their simple family home. Edy's parents make a small income (\$2-\$3 a day) collecting firewood from the forest to resell and they do other occasional jobs. This is what the family would normally survive on.

Since COVID began, that income has dropped. Casual work opportunities have dried up, and many more people are now collecting firewood in the same area to sell, pushing down the price per bundle.


We continue to bring food aid parcels to Eddy and his family every 2-3 weeks. We are hopeful, and Edy is confident that within a few months, he will be back on his feet, supporting his family, and again, leading a full, active, and productive life.

Check out [MobilityWorldwide.org](https://www.MobilityWorldwide.org) for videos and more stories. You will be amazed at what God's love in action does.

2. GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION IN ARROYO GRANDE

We will do our final feeding for this year at People's Kitchen in the end of December.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December</h1> 		<p>1</p>  <p>Judy Heiney Birthday</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>David Beaman Birthday</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Gary Thompson Birthday</p>  <p>Stephen Wise Birthday</p>
	<p>6</p> <p>Second Sunday of Advent</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>  <p>Adeline Bottorff Birthday</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Eva McClure Birthday</p>  <p>William Russell Birthday</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Michael Clark Birthday</p>  <p>Nancy Sperling Birthday</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Third Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Deborah Lewis Birthday</p>  <p>Susan Thronson Birthday</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Karen Brown Birthday</p>  <p>Julie Burns Birthday</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Fourth Sunday of Advent</p> <p>Kent Unsworth Birthday</p> 	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>  <p>Cydee Rohla Birthday</p>  <p>Christmas Eve</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>CHRISTMAS DAY</p>	<p>26</p>
<p>27</p> <p>First Sunday after Christmas Day</p> <p>Joseph Leonard Birthday</p>  <p>Jed Moore Birthday</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Harry Egan Birthday</p> 	<p>31</p> 		



From the editor: This week's message to her students from Carolyn Russell, our Sunday School Teacher, tells of the Love of God in this Advent season. As always, it is a message for all of us.

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PLEASE NOTE:

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

Long ago, God had a plan for his people. It was a plan told to Abraham. It was a promise of love. Today we celebrate the Love of God in this Advent Season (the season of Christmas celebration).

We look at the story of Mary and Joseph. Mary was a young woman who was promised to marry a carpenter, Joseph. The story tells how Mary was chosen by God to give birth to Jesus. Jesus is the promise from God. Imagine a young Mary being visited by an angel! That is what happened. Joseph was confused and hurt when he found out that Mary was to give birth. He did not know what to do. God sent an angel to give him a message. The message was part of the promise. God was sending something special to Mary and Joseph and to the world.

This wonderful time is a reminder that God always keeps his promise. He sent his son Jesus to live on Earth as a human. He entrusted Mary and Joseph to be Jesus' parents on Earth. Our story today is about Mary being visited by an angel. It is also about Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth. God made it so that Elizabeth, who was old, could have a child. The angel told Mary to not be afraid. God's plan was happening! God sent an angel to Joseph so Joseph would understand and not be fearful.

God helps us in time of fear, because God always has a plan. God loves and protects us. Make sure to spread the Love of God! Always remember that God loves you.

Love from Ms. Russell



Judy Heiney.....12/01
 David Beaman.....12/03
 Gary Thompson.....12/05
 Stephen Wise.....12/05
 Adeline Bottorff.....12/08
 Jamie Foster.....12/09
 Eva McClure.....12/09
 William Russell.....12/09
 Michael Clark.....12/10
 Nancy Sperling.....12/10
 Gene Heiney.....12/12
 Deborah Lewis.....12/13
 Susan Thronson.....12/13
 Karen Brown.....12/16
 Julie Burns.....12/16
 Kent Unsworth.....12/20
 Cyndee Rohla.....12/24
 Joseph Leonard.....12/27
 Jed Moore.....12/27
 Harry Egan.....12/30

Hope, Joy & Love Rising



First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

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DECEMBER



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