



HOPE, JOY AND LOVE RISING

# Cast~A~Net

First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande DECEMBER 2024

## Candlelight

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 7:00 PM

This is a worship service for the entire family. Join us to sing carols, hear the original Christmas story and worship by candlelight. *In Excelsis Deo!* Let us come together on this special night to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.



Advent Crafts Workshop & light lunch Sunday, Dec 1, from 11:30 to 4:00 PM Criswell Hall. \$15 per person or \$25 per family.

Holiday Extravaganza Variety Show Friday, Dec 6, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM in Criswell Hall.

Children's Center Christmas Program Thursday, Dec 12, at 6:00 PM in the Sanctuary followed by a reception in Criswell Hall.

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

## *From the Pastor:*

*By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.---Luke 1:78-79*

ADVENT ~ CHRISTMAS ~ EPIPHANY

December 1, 2024 – January 5, 2025

May hope, peace, joy, love and light be yours as we celebrate Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany 2024. I'm feeling sentimental, definitely *more than a little* nostalgic, as I give thanks for the many Christmases I've been privileged to share with this congregation in a decade together. Yes, this is Christmas #10 with you! Three COVID Christmases lengthened my stay in Arroyo Grande. I wasn't about to limp out "post-stroke" in 2018, nor was I willing leave you high and dry, meeting a new pastor via ZOOM in 2020. Time flies when you're having fun. We've been "back at it" while the mandatory retirement age of 72 has been sneaking up on me.

Let's make this the best Christmas ever as we decorate the sanctuary, come together for special programs and activities and light the pathways with luminarias come Christmas. Invite your friends to worship with us during December as we come full circle and make the trek to Bethlehem once more. May the Holy Spirit guide our feet into the way of peace. Amen!

Advent I – December 1, 2024

A LIGHT IN THE DISTANCE: Hope Keeps Watch  
Jeremiah 33:14-16, Luke 21:25-36

Advent II – December 8, 2024

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS: Faith Prepares  
Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 3:1-6

Advent III – December 15, 2024

A SONG IN THE SOUL: Joy Receives  
Isaiah 12:2-6, Luke 1:39-56

Advent IV – December 22, 2024

A STAR IN THE NIGHT: Peace Shines  
Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve 2024

SPECIAL DELIVERY: Love is Born  
Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-20

First Sunday after Christmas – December 29

FULL SPEED AHEAD  
Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

EPIPHANY SUNDAY - January 5<sup>th</sup>

SHINE, JESUS SHINE!  
Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12

*Rev. Mary Biegelaitis*

# *Thank You!*

A big "Thank You" to Jim and Priscilla Alquist for creating our new church directory. We are pleased to have this updated information as the holidays begin. We look forward to doing a pictorial version within the next year as we move through the 2025 transition in pastoral leadership. Kudos to the Alquists. Directories are available in the office.



## Ring in the New Year!

Many of you have heard the Grande Ringers as they ring on the Third Sunday of the month from September through June. But have you considered being a part of the group? You may have noticed that we have half the ringers we used to have. We are blessed that the ones that are ringing currently are dedicated to ringing bells.

We would love to have more ringers. Our rehearsals are Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00pm to 6:00pm. While reading music is an asset we have had people



join and learn to read music on the fly. Our ringers are very adept at helping each other learn to play.

As hard as it is for me to believe, I've been directing the Grande Ringers since 2000! I appreciate all the ringers I've had the pleasure of serving. When COVID hit, it impacted our handbell choir immensely. We still haven't recovered. Yet our ringers play admirably!

If you have an interest in joining us, feel free to drop by and see if we would be a good fit for you. You may also contact me via the church office at 805 481-2692.



Leonard G. Lutz, Handbell Director

## WORSHIP LITURGISTS



### DECEMBER 01

8:30 a.m.-----Joe Brown  
10:30 a.m.-----Cristy Van Hook

### DECEMBER 08

8:30 a.m.-----Joel Anderson  
10:30 a.m.-----Michelle Richardson

### DECEMBER 15

8:30 a.m.-----Mary Thronson  
10:30 a.m.-----Joyce Singelman

### DECEMBER 22

8:30 a.m.-----Susan Thronson  
10:30 a.m.-----Rosslyn Clauson

### DECEMBER 29

8:30 a.m.-----Sharon Roemer  
10:30 a.m.-----Judy Leonard

~ submitted by Carolyn Anderson

## NORTH DISTRICT WEEKLY COVENANT PRAYER LIST FOR DECEMBER 01 to DECEMBER 29, 2024

Prayer week begins on:	Church/Ministry	Clergy Leader(s)
12/01/24	Grace Korean UMC Moorpark UMC	Church Leaders Pastor Kristi Smith
12/08/24	Northridge UMC Northridge UMC	Pastor Douglas Dickson Pastor Ralph Kwon
12/15/24	Knollwood UMC Woodland Hills UMC	Pastor Kalesita Tu'ifua Pastor Seung-il Whang
12/22/24	Glendale First UMC Glendale First UMC	Pastor Angela Galanis-Price Pastor Stephanie Rice
12/29/24	Estero Bay UMC First UMC of Paso Robles	Pastor Steven Poteete-Marshall Pastor Kathi McShane

## NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOMED INTO THE CHURCH



Jo Anne Napoles on November 10<sup>th</sup>



Steve and Jinna Gillean's photo at the 140<sup>th</sup> Celebration

## FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

**Sunday, December 1**, we look forward to beginning Advent with a light lunch of soup, salad, roll and cookies followed with a Craft Workshop after church. We already have people lined up to lead a craft and would love to have more helpers.



There will be gingerbread house making, cookie decorating, Advent wreath making, beaded candy canes and more! What fun!

This takes place in Criswell Hall from 11:30 AM to 4 PM, and only costs \$15 per person or \$25 per family.



**Friday, December 6** from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM is the **CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA VARIETY SHOW**. It was so much fun

last year you won't want to miss it. There will be memorable performances by talented people. No charge for a great show.

As we enter the New Year of 2025, on Saturday, **January 25, 11:00 AM** we will take a field trip to visit the elephant seals. We will depart at 10:00 AM and may stop for lunch in Cambria. Sign up in the Narthex.







## United Women in Faith

**United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.**

December, 2024

Last month I asked for help in order to make the Boutique the best ever. We did it! With your amazing help, you never let us down. Thank you for baking, planting, attending the craft workshops, making wonderful things for us, helping set things up, and packing things away when we were finished. It took all of you. The final count isn't complete but so far, we've done over \$ 5,229.



We are excited to announce the formation of a new circle, designed for working women. It is set to start

meeting in January. They will meet in the early evening. Time, day and place will be decided. If you are interested, contact Susan Thronson. Help us support the forming of this new group!

### CIRCLES and GROUPS

All women are invited to attend.

Mary, Martha Esther Circle meets on the last Wednesday of the month. They will be off for the holidays. See you back in January.

Joy Circle meets the third Tuesday of the month, 3 to 5 PM in members' homes. Check with Kerren Brown for more information and for meeting location and date.

Sew And Sews meet every Tuesday in the McMillen Room 10 until 1. Bring a sandwich if you want to stay for lunch. We encourage those interested in quilting, crocheting, knitting, and just plain visiting to join us.

Book Club will meet 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday, in the library, at 10:30. Contact Judy Leonard if interested.

---submitted by Gerry McGuire, UWF President



### DECEMBER 2024 UWF BOOK CLUB SELECTION: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

At our October UWF Book Club meeting, we discussed Out of the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis. The group enjoyed it so much that we decided to read its prequel, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe also written by C.S. Lewis, as our December book. This classic fantasy follows four English siblings who step through the back of a wardrobe into the land of Narnia. The White Witch has used her power to freeze Narnia into an eternal winter. When the Great Lion, Aslan,

returns, they regain hope that things may change. This story captivates readers with its religious symbolism and engaging characters.

The December book club meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 A.M. in the church library. If you would like to join us, see Mary Whitson for a copy of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

---submitted by Judy Leonard

## CHARGE CONFERENCE WAS A SUCCESS



Thank you all for a wonderful Charge Conference on Sunday November 17. The day started off with lively, Spirit-filled services and fabulous music with the combined Chancel Choir and Bell Choir at both services. Our new **District Superintendent Rev. Garth Gilliam** gave an energetic sermon on “GRIT” with the congregation providing “amens” and even a “hallelujah” or two! After the second service there was a light lunch organized by Gerry McGuire followed by our Charge Conference led by Rev. Gilliam. It was our first single church, in-person Charge Conference in over a decade and one of the few single-church Charge Conferences in the “north end” of the North District. Dennis Eiler opened the Charge Conference with his peppy rendition of “Do Lord.” Susan Thronson presented an excellent video that reviewed our church’s many activities as they related to our new Mission Statement. Required church business was efficiently conducted at the Charge Conference and the conference concluded within an hour. Rev. Gilliam was impressed with our church and commented a number of times about what a wonderful congregation we have here in Arroyo Grande. He said to Mary B. *“these people have got it going on!”* *“This church is a jewel on the Central Coast”* and other complimentary words that make a pastor proud. Our Nominating Committee presented the fruit of its ongoing year-round labor, which is a solid list of leadership for 2025, the year ahead. Copies of this list are available in the office. You, too, can participate as part of a team.

## THIS MONTH’S SCAM ALERT



A recent scam! Fraudsters send e-mails supposedly coming from your bank or credit card company alerting you to a suspicious charge, such as airline tickets, Best Buy purchase or Bitcoin purchase. The fraudsters want you to click on the link in their e-mail to sign into your account, thus giving them the log-in name and password to your bank or credit card account. They also give you the option of phoning them with your card number. To avoid being scammed **DON’T USE THE LOG-IN LINK OR PHONE NUMBER IN THE E-MAIL.** If you want to check your account, log-in to your bank or credit card company through the web browser or call the card company using the number on the back of your card.

## What is your church story?

As part of our 140th anniversary celebration the Communications Committee has been asking everyone to tell their church story. These will be collected and published as part of our celebrations. This December issue of the Cast~A~Net newsletter is featuring another special story, and we are looking forward to receiving yours!

### My Church Story by Rev. Mary B.

My dad, Ed Birgelaitis, came from a Roman Catholic family in Grand Rapids, Michigan and my mother, Ethel, came from another Grand Rapids family that was “unchurched.” Little did they know that in my grandma’s Lithuanian Catholic Parish it was a “no-no” to get married during Lent. There was no actual “rule” forbidding marriage during that season, but my grandma’s parish discouraged such. After all, Lent *IS* considered a penitential season for reflection and self-denial. My parents went ahead with a small celebration with only their parents and two witnesses present.

My mother’s best friend who we called “Aunt Ruthie” was Methodist. When children came along Aunt Ruthie took my three older sisters to church before my twin brother, Dan, and I were born. Dan and I were baptized at Second Street Methodist in Grand Rapids and later joined my siblings in Sunday School.

After a move to San Diego, California my parents searched for a new church and we landed at St. Mark’s UMC in North Clairemont. We laughed out loud as we sat in the pews listening to the preacher because that preacher had a drawl that sounded like Snagglepuss! Remember Snagglepuss? We were swiftly reprimanded for making fun of that pastor. It was funnier still because that preacher looked kind of like my dad. One year several people complimented my quiet engineer father on the Easter sermon! I attended St. Mark’s from fourth grade through college years at San Diego State and participated in small group studies, the Evangelism Committee and as a third grade Sunday School Teacher during a

wonderful season of great pastors at that church. Though I’d attended for over 10 years I had never joined the church. When I needed a reference for a college application, the Sr. Pastor, Rev. Don Shelby told me he wouldn’t write one unless I was in the next New Member Class! He might have been kidding, but I believed him and definitely needed that letter of recommendation, so I signed up for the next membership class. I was shy and embarrassed so didn’t even tell my parents I was joining. I didn’t want to go up front in front of all those people, especially folks I knew. Luckily, we had three services 8:30, 9:45 and 11:00 a.m., so I told the pastor I’d join at 11:00 instead of the 8:30 service my family attended! My plan backfired because the rest of the membership class chose other service times and I, who didn’t like attention, didn’t want to be seen, nor singled, out was the only one to join at 11:00 a.m. and had to go up front alone.

It’s true! I was blackmailed by the pastor who twisted my arm to get me to join the church. I never regretted it. A call to ministry came later. I tried to get ministry “out of my system” by doing a stint in our two-year at home mission program as a US-2 in campus ministry. It didn’t work. The calling was clear, so to the chagrin of my mother, though I already had a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, I enrolled in an M.Div. Program at the School of Theology at Claremont. “Many moons” later I have served in San Gabriel, Lancaster, Temple City, Reseda, Whittier, Tustin, and Ventura along with a stint in Development at the School of Theology and I am happy to have landed on the beautiful Central Coast with all of you.



## Honoring Rev. David Burgeson

A group from our Church, including Maddy, Mary, Cristy, Bernie and Tina drove south to Camarillo to attend the Memorial Service for Rev. David Burgeson on November 23. It was held at the Camarillo Methodist Church. Please continue to keep Sarah in your prayers. If you would like to send a card, contact the office for Sarah's address.



## LAY LEADERSHIP 2025

Lay Leadership is in place for 2025 and the list of chair people and group members is available in the office. Members are added to each team throughout the year.

We are proud to announce that our Lay Leader for 2025 is Carolyn Anderson. A brief bio and explanation of what "Lay Leader" means will appear in our January edition of the Castanet. Lay Leader is different from Lay Member to Annual Conference. We welcome Carolyn and all our new committee members and leaders and look forward to serving together in the coming year. Thank you to one and all and especially to our new members and newcomers coming on board.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

We ended October with at \$9K deficit, due largely to October contributions being almost \$8K below plan. I am counting on strong stewardship in November and December to make up for this deficit and put us ahead coming into the New Year.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas Offering are an important part of our budget. As of November 24, the Thanksgiving offering was \$1533 short of what is required to sustain our programs. Please give generously.

If for tax purposes your donation check needs to clear your bank by December 31 (e.g. Required Minimum Distribution from an IRA) please make your contribution early in the month. Banks will be closed mid-week for Christmas and New Year's resulting in fewer days for checks to clear at month end.

Joel Anderson,  
Treasurer





# News from the Mission Team

A flyer was made for our congregation to guide their donations for the Five Cities Christian Women's Food Pantry titled "Helping Hunger in our Community." Your food donations are taken to the Pantry on a regular basis.

People's Kitchen expressed a need for warm winter clothing and the congregation responded! Donated clothing and toiletries were taken to People's Kitchen.

We shopped for groceries, prepared and served about 100 meals at People's Kitchen on October 29. We had 2 new volunteers helping us, Evelyn and Deb Bradley, who had a great time and were very helpful. There are now 4 double servings of chicken casserole in small freezer take-out containers available to members in need, stored in our church freezer. In addition, all staples for our December 31 serving at People's Kitchen have been purchased.

We helped the Pre-School collect for Noisy Offering.

Our Alternative Christmas Fair on November 10 and 17 was a great success. Information about the 5 Non Profits was featured. Empty Bowls were picked up from 5Cities Homeless Coalition, jewelry and felted hand crafts were ordered and shipped to us from Nepal by our missionary Katherine Parker, jewelry was ordered from Women At Risk International (W.A.R.), promo supplies were ordered from Heifer International, and

Habitat of SLO was contacted to join us in person at the event. Total sales per organization were as follows: W.A.R. \$293;

Habitat for Humanity of SLO \$255; Missions of Nepal \$261; Heifer International \$2045; 5Cities Homeless Coalition \$325; for a total of \$3179. Endowment will send an additional check to Heifer International for \$2045 to match the generous giving of the congregation. This makes Heifer's total funds received from our church \$4090 and total money generated from the whole event \$5224. According to Jake at Heifer, they have a generous donor that will match our funds by 3X! We felt the event was a big success!







Your Mission Team voted at their November 7 meeting to donate an additional \$1000 each to the 5 Cities Christian Women's Food Pantry, the People's Kitchen and the 5 Cities Homeless Coalition. This request was taken to the Endowment Board on November 10 and granted.





# December



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>1</b></p> <p>8:30 AM Contemporary Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service</p> <p>11:30 to 4 PM Advent workshop &amp; lunch</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>6 PM Gerry's Quilt Class-CH</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>10 AM Sew &amp; Sews-MMR</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>1 PM Bible Study-CH</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal-HR</p> <p>7 PM Trustees-MMR</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>9 AM Church Work Morning -CH</p> <p>10 AM Fellowship Committee-L.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal-HR</p> <p>6:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal-S</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>3 -5 PM Christmas Extravaganza-CH</p> 	<p><b>7</b></p>
<p><b>8</b></p> <p>8:30 AM Contemporary Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>6 PM Gerry's Quilt Class-CH</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>10 AM Sew &amp; Sews-MMR</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>1 PM Bible Study-CH</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir-HR</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>9 AM Church Work Morning -CH</p> <p>10 AM UWF Steering-L</p> <p>1:30 PM Mission Team-MMR</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal-HR</p> <p>6:00 PM Children's Center Performance-S</p> <p>6:30PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal-S</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> 
<p><b>15</b></p> <p>8:30 AM Contemporary Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>6 PM Gerry's Quilt Class-CH</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>10 AM Sew &amp; Sews-MMR</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>3 PM JOY Circle-at homes</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir-HR</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>9 AM Church Work Morning-CH</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>9 AM Senior Exercise-CH</p> <p>10:30 AM Staff Parish--PS</p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>4 PM Children's Center Board-MMR</p> <p>5 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal-HR</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>10:30 AM UWF Book Club-L</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> 
<p><b>22</b></p> <p>8:30 AM Contemporary Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>4:30 PM-Communications-</p> <p>6 PM Gerry's Quilt Class-CH</p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>CHRISTMAS EVE</p> <p>11:00 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service-S</p>  <p>Christmas Eve</p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>CHRISTMAS DAY</p> 	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>11:00 AM Chair Yoga -CH</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>
<p><b>29</b></p> <p>8:30 AM Contemporary Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>6 PM Gerry's Quilt Class-CH</p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>11 AM Chair Yoga-CH</p> <p>New Year's Eve</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abbreviation Legend</b></p> <p>CH-Criswell Hall HR-Handbell Room #115 K-Kitchen                      L-Library Room #123 MMR-McMillen Room #113                      PL-Parking Lot PS-Pastor's Study S-Sanctuary</p>			

# Meet Our CHURCH STAFF

Church Office: (805) 481-2692  
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**Choral Pianist:** Dennis Eiler  
**Handbell Choir Director:**  
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## TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY



Bible Study

Facilitated by Nancy St. Laurent

Meets on  
 Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. In Criswell Hall

The group is currently studying  
**An Unlikely Advent**

by Rachel Billups

**Books are available from Nancy.**

**All are welcome to join us!**

## BIRTHDAYS IN



Judy Heiney.....12/01

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

Deborah Lewis.....12/13

Susan Thronson.....12/13

Karen Brown.....12/16

Julie Burns.....12/16

Kent Unsworth.....12/20

Cyndee Rohla.....12/24



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO HONOR A LOVED ONE WITH FLOWERS?

Do you enjoy the beautiful flower arrangements placed on the altar on Sundays? Dates are available for Sunday morning flower dedications in upcoming months. Your floral tributes are welcomed and will be placed on the altar for both services on Sunday. You can pick up your arrangement after the second service.

Contact Frances in the Church Office

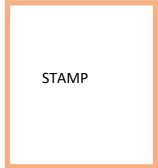
**The cost for altar flowers is \$30.**

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 birthday to our monthly birthday list!



# First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

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Find us on Facebook at United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande  
[www.facebook.com/fumcag](http://www.facebook.com/fumcag)

## DECEMBER 2024

### SUNDAY HOSPITALITY SNACK HOSTS

- DEC 1 Staff-Parish
- DEC 8 Endowment/ELT
- DEC 15 Trustees
- DEC 22 Mission Team
- DEC 29 Fellowship Ministry

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#### Children's Center Chronicle

### Mission Statement of the First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande

The First United Methodist Church of Arroyo Grande is a joyful, active and fun-loving faith community. We worship on Sunday mornings and offer opportunities for Christian growth, fellowship, health and increased well-being all week long. Members represent a wide range of theological and political views and commit to treating each other with love and respect in the midst of differences. We nurture spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of God's love in Christ as we work together to spread the love of God in our community and in the world.