



"To Discover and Grow in God's Grace and Love"

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January

*Make the Most of the
New Year*

THE NIGHT IS NEARLY OVER;
THE DAY IS ALMOST HERE. SO
LET US PUT ASIDE THE DEEDS
OF DARKNESS AND PUT ON THE
ARMOR OF LIGHT.
ROMANS 13:12

STAFF

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ANAHEIM

Dr. Jim Schibsted—Senior Pastor
Rev. Emily Miller-Todd—Associate Pastor
Beverly Aye—Office Assistant
Tyler Robinson—Music Director
Angella Kissoon—Accountant
Linda Freud—Missions
Mike Austin & Chuck Pennington—J.O.G (Just Ordinary Guys)
Sandya Costa—Montessori Director

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It's 2021!

Penny Schibsted

It's the first week of 2021! Yeah!!!

Now I know we are all hoping, with 2020 over, all of its problems will be over too and at this beginning of 2021 we'll get a whole new package! And in some ways we will. Each moment, in fact, is new and full of possibilities. But also we are in the middle of some problems that started in 2020 and viruses don't read calendars! Having recently started working in the "hot" COVID units I am very aware we are in the middle of the largest wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, unless a miracle happens or more people start becoming responsible with masks and social distancing, the numbers of cases, hospitalizations and deaths will continue to climb.

But, we also have something new; we have a vaccine! It was developed with so much effort and I think is a very good thing. I feel so fortunate to have been able to get my first dose on December 23rd. The process of getting it out to all the people who need it has not been the most organized, but I believe it will get better. We have this seed of hope and we need to hang on. Things ARE going to get better.

Saturday I heard the most wonderful children's book read on the radio. It was read by a child and called "A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds" and it told about the profoundness of seeds. These little miracle machines are created by God, protected, delivered and planted. And if planted in good soil, given water and sunshine, they grow into wonderful plants that feed us, give us oxygen and so much beauty!

God has given us many good seeds. We don't know exactly what will grow around us in 2021 but we have power to help some of the seeds grow. We can and MUST do our part to look for the good. To have faith. To be reasonable and safe but also to do our part to help others. We are the hands and feet of Jesus and Jesus was all about helping the poor, the sick and the discouraged.

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Connect

Sunday Morning Worship

10:30am, Sundays

We are holding worship in person and on Facebook Live.

Please plan to wear your mask, social distance and remember that each person may have a very different comfort level.

Encouragement for Today

Pastor Jim, Pastor Emily and friends are sharing short encouraging videos on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday each week through Facebook Live.

What is the name of our church Facebook Page?

"Anaheim Chapel at First Congregational Church of Anaheim"

What if I don't have Facebook?

No problem! Go to our church website at www.fccanaheim.org. On the home page, click on the link that says "Join Live." That will take you to our church Facebook Page. Scroll down to see postings. Click on videos to watch.

What do I do when Facebook asks me to login?

You can click "Not Now" at the bottom of the pop up window, or you may click on the small x that appears in the top right corner of the login pop-up.

Unlimited Church Food Distribution

Wednesday, January 6th and Wednesday, January 20th from 5:00-6:00pm. Setup will start at 4:00pm.

Email fccaoffice@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer.

FCCA December Updates

Robbie Robinson: Guest Preacher

Robbie Robinson preached in worship on the first Sunday of Advent! He and Pastor Jim were accidentally twins with their gray suits, white shirts and brown shoes! We are grateful for Robbie's wisdom and encouragement. Robbie reminded us that trials are part of life and that a life of faith includes perseverance. He and Marsha have been such an inspiring example of faithful perseverance! Marsha has been hospitalized twice in the last couple of months. Thank you to all who sent meals to the house after her appendectomy this month. Robbie and Marsha – we love you, we



are praying for you and we appreciate all of the encouragement you offer so many of us!



Handmade Wooden Toys for Christmas

This Christmas, Carson Davis and the Scroll Saw Association donated handmade wooden toys again for kids in the congregation. Thank you, Carson! It was fun to see Jayden and Rishon pick out their toys. They were very grateful!

Unlimited Church Food Distribution

Thank you to all who have volunteered to help us support the Food Distribution! On Wednesday, December 16th we served 94 families – over 400 individuals. The Food Distribution started up again after the holidays on Wednesday, January 6th. It will continue every other Wednesday from 5:00-6:00pm.



December Updates Continued...

Christmas Mission Focus: Mary's Kitchen

This Christmas we focused our attention on Mary's Kitchen. Mary's Kitchen provides food, clothing, showers and other services for the homeless of Orange County. Thank you to all who donated clothing, non-perishable food items or financial gifts this season. We raised a total of \$1,011 for Mary's Kitchen this year.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



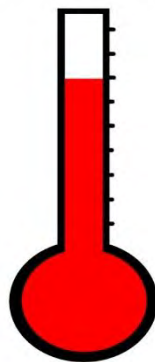
On Christmas Eve, we held the Candlelight Service indoors – broadcasting through Facebook Live. Thank you Mike Villa-Real and Salend Krishna for your help with the service! Raffia Thomas sang beautiful carols accompanied by Tyler Robinson, Pastor Emily played violin, and Pastor Jim shared a meaningful Christmas message. The sanctuary

was beautiful for Christmas thanks to Susan Fraker, Linda Freud, Jim Weddell and Bev Aye. We hope you enjoyed joining us from the comfort of your home on Christmas Eve!

Burn the Mortgage, Not the Burgers

The end is in sight!! We have a balance of \$13,988 left on the mortgage. In December we received a \$1600 matching gift that was matched! If you would like to help us chip away at the mortgage, mark your offering on Sunday morning or mail a check with "Mortgage" in the memo line to the church: 515 N. State College Blvd.; Anaheim, CA 92806.

Burn the Mortgage
\$ 35012 raised of \$ 49000



Missions' Corner: O Hurtin' Town of Bethlehem



Dear Friends,

Karen and I hope that you are still enjoying the afterglow of your Christmas holidays. Christmas was very different for us: the first one alone together since we were married forty-six years ago! We shifted gears and enjoyed a quiet time. Our highlight was a Zoom call with our kids on Christmas day.

A recent surge of the pandemic has been a blow to the Holy Land. The headlines of an Israeli newspaper say it all: "For the First Time in 1600 Years: No Tourists in the Holy Land." During our weekly worship services via Zoom with the East Jerusalem International Church, one of our members, Bishara Awad, the founder of Bethlehem Bible College, has shared with us that Bethlehem is especially hard hit as it is so dependent on tourists. It is a shock to see the Church of the Nativity's empty courtyard in Bethlehem. In addition to the absence of tourists, a *third* national lockdown has crushed the economy. The situation in Bethlehem has become so dire that a colleague said Palestinians are openly approaching her and begging.

This surge in Israel and on the West Bank has slammed the door on our return on January 14. The Israeli government has canceled *already issued* special exception entry permits. So, we will wait a few more weeks. Thank you for continuing to pray with us. It has been a challenge to prepare to depart time after time, only to cancel. The silver lining in this current delay is that we can hopefully get our vaccinations before we travel. Also, Israel is conducting an aggressive vaccination plan and expects to complete it by March. So, when we arrive, it should be a much healthier country.

Continuing to work on our programs for the Bethlehem Institute of Peace and Justice is very rewarding. This week, I had several fascinating exchanges with a Jewish professor of public policy and the theology of Judaism at New York University. He is one of the unique lecturers in a course on peacemaking we will offer online. We discussed the rabbinic and Christian teachings on when war is justified and the process of reconciliation between enemies.

I also look forward to introducing you to a Christian Dalit – or member of the 'untouchable' caste in India – and the South African Christian leader in an impoverished township. They will also be contributing to our courses.

It is so valuable to listen to other perspectives than one's own. Learning to listen well to other's views is a foundational value of our program. To be sure, to be peacemakers, we have to critique our long-held assumptions. We can only expect others to change their views if we are willing to do so as well. Someone once said to me, the definition of grace is to grow old without growing bitter. We also could say it is to grow old without growing set in our ways! The new life that Jesus gives is ever-renewing.

Karen and I pray that you will enjoy the ever-renewing grace of Jesus throughout this new year! Thank you for your enduring support as we reach out to help impoverished families in the Philippines and as we sow seeds of peace in the Middle East!

Thank you especially for your prayers and support in December. We welcome those who supported our ministry for the first time. Karen and I are humbled and honored by your partnership. We want you to have the joy of knowing you are bringing life to forgotten corners of the world.

Andrew & Karen

Andrew and Karen Bush have served internationally for almost 35 years. They seek to make the love of Christ Jesus known through servanthood in the way of the cross. Matthew 16.24

Donations may be mailed to: Mission Ministries; PO 11210; Costa Mesa, CA 92627
(Checks may be written to 'Mission Ministries' and noted for 'Bush')

Thank you, Beverly Aye, for blessing us!

Bev is moving to Hawaii this month! We are sad to see you go, Bev, and we wish you love and joy back in your home state. Bev has helped the church enormously with her organization and planning. Thank you, Bev, for offering your gifts and talents and for sharing yourself! You are loved and you will be missed. Below is a portion of a letter that Bev shared with the church this fall:

It is with mixed emotions that I write this letter. I will be leaving California in the near future and moving to Hawaii. After losing my husband three years ago, I was so thankful that I found FCCA and became part of your family. You helped me heal and move forward with my life. I have tried to help the church in areas that I felt I could contribute my services to. I'm especially thankful that I was able to provide my assistance to Pastors Jim and Emily. Their love and kindness to me was more than I could have ever hoped for. It was fun helping to organize the Tea Party that our ladies were able to enjoy. Being part of the work crew for JOG was such a blessing in that we helped feed some men who didn't have three square meals a day. The 94th celebration of the Griffith House was the highlight of my contributions to the church because it was such a memorable event.

Once my house is sold, I hope to find a home in Kaneohe or Kailua to move to. I have two cats that will go with me, one outside and one inside, so I need a house that will accommodate their needs. I am told that this is a buyer's market so I may be gone sooner than I realize. I will see you before I go but I thought it important that you know what my plans are.

My love to all, Beverly





January Birthdays

3-Jan Rachel Rolnicki

5-Jan Noah Torres

11-Jan Greg Ramsay

13-Jan Francisco Morales

21-Jan Dennis Johnson

24-Jan Jeffrey Williams

25-Jan Andrew Ramsay

27-Jan Kim Collier

If you would like to have your birthday included in the CALL, please contact the church office at 714-776-0960 or fcceaoffice@gmail.com.

Sunday's January 3rd Worship Service Prayer by Penny Schibsted:

Dear God, our creator, here we are now, before you, in this moment of life you have given. Some of us are here sitting spread out on the beautiful lawn of First Congregational Church of Anaheim. Others of us are in different places. But wherever we are, we are aware at this moment we are breathing the breath of life you have given. And we are grateful.

Right now we are pausing from our distractions to remember you God, the giver of life, and to see if there is something you want to show us. We know you have guided each of us through so many things in our lives. And at this time, the beginning of 2021, with a pandemic going on and people believing all kinds of ideas that put them at odds with each other, it just seems there might be better things you want us to pay attention to! Some of us have had our own COVID scares and are grateful to be alive. Some have had our livelihoods radically changed or ended and need jobs. Others have had friends, family members and colleagues who have had their own hardships while we have been unscathed and are wanting to help. Some of us have been isolated and want so much to be with others.

Dear God, maker of life, we pray you give us eyes to see and ears to hear what we should. In the moments of this worship service may we recognize something. Understand something. Confirm something. May we get a sense of presence and direction from you. May we know better what it is you would have us do and what it is we need to let go of and let you do.

We pray also for the loved ones from this church who have been struggling with poor health, financial hardships and loneliness. ...We pray for the different groups who meet on this campus or on Zoom. For the people who will be coming for food here this Wednesday. For the many who are lying right now in hospital beds all over this county and country. Lord, I pray you give them comfort and peace and a sense they are valued and loved. Above all else, a sense of your presence.

We continue to pray for clarity, grace, wisdom and guidance following the national election and in this upcoming week's election of US senators. We pray for peace. That in spite of our differences, we realize how much we all care about the same things.

Dear God, help us know how to be a light in this world in 2021.

In the name of Jesus, our Savior, Lord and Guide, we pray these things. Amen.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ANAHEIM

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