

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ANAHEIM  
515 N State College Blvd., Anaheim, CA 92806  
Phone: 714-776-0960    Email: [fccaooffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaooffice@gmail.com)  
Check us out on the web at [www.fccanaheim.org](http://www.fccanaheim.org)

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# The Call

First Congregational Church of Anaheim

“To Discover and Grow in God’s Grace and Love”

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“Grateful for the past — Hopeful for the future”

# Letter from Penny Schibsted



It's 2026! A New Year!

January is a time after an often rushed and emotionally mixed holiday season. It is hopefully slower. A time we can pause and reflect about where we've been and where we're going.

I'd like to share a New Year's practice I started doing about 10 years ago that has become helpful to me. Journaling is an old practice started when I was 14 years old, inspired by a close friend. One January, when Jim & I went on a little personal retreat, I decided to look over my journal entries of the previous year. I started highlighting some of the key experiences and also lessons I thought I'd learned. In the years since, that January activity has become a habit and something I look forward to.

Recalling cherished memories does my heart good. I almost relive them and feel they become even more a part of me. Lessons learned are often lessons needing to be re-enforced or even re-learned. For me, they often fall into two categories: 1) New or forgotten perspectives I came to see and 2) Finding the right balance between two opposite things, (like rest & exercise, personal time & time for others, focusing on the positive & watching the news).

I loved Pastor Emily's sermon today (Dec 28<sup>th</sup>) where she spoke of the story of the wise men coming to look for the new king that was born. (Cont. Pg. 7)

## Connect

**Sunday Morning Worship**  
Sunday, 10:45 a.m.

**Sunday School for Kids**  
Children are welcome to leave with the teachers before the sermon, and meet in the first room of the Griffith House. .

**Staff**  
Dr. Jim Schibsted — Senior Pastor  
Rev. Emily Raasch — Assoc. Pastor  
Susan Fraker — Office Assistant  
Tyler Robinson — Music Director  
Angella Kissoon — Accountant  
Linda Freud — Missions  
Chuck Pennington — J.O.G.  
Sandya Costa — Montessori Dir.

**Other Ways to Connect**  
**Facebook:** Anaheim Chapel  
at First Congregational Church  
of Anaheim.

**YouTube:**  
First Congregational  
Church of Anaheim

**Instagram:** FCCAnaheim

**Website:** [www.fcca.org](http://www.fcca.org)

**FCCA email:**  
[fccaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaoffice@gmail.com)

**FCCA Office Phone:**  
714-776-0960

**JOG: Just Ordinary Guys**  
Monday, January 12, 2026  
12-1:30 pm (See page 5)

**MomCo**  
2nd and 4th Tuesdays  
10:30am-12pm  
*\*Babies welcome, No childcare.*  
MomCo exists to nurture the heart and soul of moms and to connect them with a community of other moms.

**Women's Lunch**  
Monday, February 2nd  
11:30 am-1:00 pm  
Bev Aye's Home  
*Please contact the church at [fccaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaoffice@gmail.com) to RSVP and for more info.*

# Letter Continued... (Cont. from page 2)

Her sermon title was “Rerouted” and she described how the wise men who came from a far-off land were not familiar with Jewish traditions or writings. Somehow, from within their own practices of looking at the stars, God led them but they also had to be rerouted. The wise men were attentive enough to adjust their course, unlike Herod. Herod had built his identity on a rigid sense of personal power and didn't allow for another (Divine) perspective.

From both my personal experiences of the past New Year's reflections, and from similar themes in this morning's sermon by Pastor Emily, I hope to be an earnest seeker, willing to adjust my perspectives and to stay humble before God. I also pray God helps me see and live in balance. When I wake up I want to first do practices that help me stay grounded in my faith and feel at peace. To pause before looking at my phone, hearing the day's news or rushing out the door. As I get on with my day, it may be good to listen briefly to reliable news sources and seek to do actions helpful to others. Morning quiet times, day activity times, evening settling times mixed with practices throughout the day that encourage, educate, calm and focus me are what I am trying out. This year I plan to add a few reminders to make it more likely I do them! A few new posted photos to remind me of key people to pray for. A pair of walking shoes kept in my car to let me take a walk nearby instead of sit in traffic. A couple of new novels (currently by excellent author Lisa Genova) kept at my bedside. A mantra to say when I transition from one place to the next. (“Thank you God for.... (what I just saw). Let me see you at work (where I'm going”).)

We all have different practices and reminders that can help us make 2026 better. January might just be the time, with God's help, to intentionally seek them out, make adjustments and plans to do them.

May God help us all have a peaceful and purposeful New Year!

Penny Schibsted, RN, MFT

## January Birthdays

- 1-Jan Shalend Krishna
- 3-Jan Rachel Rolnicki
- 11-Jan Greg Ramsay
- 11-Jan Grace Hoke
- 15-Jan Cindy Hamann
- 21-Jan Dennis Johnson
- 24-Jan Jeffrey Williams

# FCCA Updates

## Operation Bless Distributions (Led by Unlimited Church)

In December, Unlimited Church led two distributions—one for food and another for toys. It was wonderful to see so many local families blessed this Christmas. Thank you to those who gave financially and to those who volunteered.

## Christmas Cheer

Following a Sunday morning filled with Christmas worship, a group from the church caroled for a handful of church members that live locally. It was a joy to spread some Christmas cheer! We were also grateful to the Sunday School class—all of the Sunday School boys participated in lighting the Advent Wreath during worship in December.



## Women’s Lunch

**Monday, February 2nd; 11:30am-1pm**

**Location:** Bev’s Home; RSVP at [fccaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaoffice@gmail.com) for more information

Join women from the church for lunch, fellowship, a devotion and always a fun activity.

## MomCo

**2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month**

**10:30am-12pm in the Library**

We are excited to be launching a

MomCo group here at the church!

MomCo exists to nurture the hearts and souls of mothers and to connect them with a mom community.



**Starting in January!**

At a MomCo Meetup, you can link arms with other moms to tackle this motherhood thing together!



**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays**  
10:30 AM - 12 PM  
First Congregational Church of Anaheim  
\*Babies welcome



From topics around raising kids to relationship, finances, spiritual life and more, mothers receive the support they need at MomCo. MomCo is creating space for moms to discover their true purpose and fulfillment.

**Join Our Mom Community!**

Contact Emily at [fccaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaoffice@gmail.com)

# Mission Corner

## A NOTE FROM LINDA FREUD, MISSION CHAIR:

To start the new year of 2026, I would like to highlight Christ to the Villages Mission in Nigeria. The original founders were Rev. Solomon and Mary Oladele. I first met them in 1995 when Sandy was pastoring a Congregational church in Monrovia. Going back in FCCA records, we have been supporting them since the mid-90’s. In 2009 upon the death of his father, Rev. Matthew Oladele took over leadership of the mission which includes numerous village churches, a primary, a high school, and a college. We received their newsletter November 22 and I couldn’t wait to share it with you in January. Then 2 short days later another letter came explaining how they had to close the schools due to the dangers of violence in the country against schools and churches. I asked Pastor Emily to include them on our prayer list and you may have seen that in the e-news. The following came directly from Matthew’s letter.

**“Please join us in praying for:**

**Immediate Peace and Stability:** Pray against the forces of violence and for a significant return to security across Kwara State and Nigeria.

**Safety for Students and Staff:** Pray for the safekeeping of all our students, teachers, and their families while they are scattered across the region.

**Financial Stability:** Pray for the provision needed to manage the unexpected operational costs and logistics resulting from this abrupt closure.

**Wisdom for Leadership:** Pray for the Management team as we monitor intelligence and plan for the eventual, safe resumption of the school year.

**Thank you for standing with us through this intensely challenging season. Your financial support and, most importantly, your prayers are critical to helping us navigate these crises and sustaining the mission.”**

I am grateful for your generosity and prayers for all our missions and missionaries.

Faithfully,

Linda Freud and the Mission Board

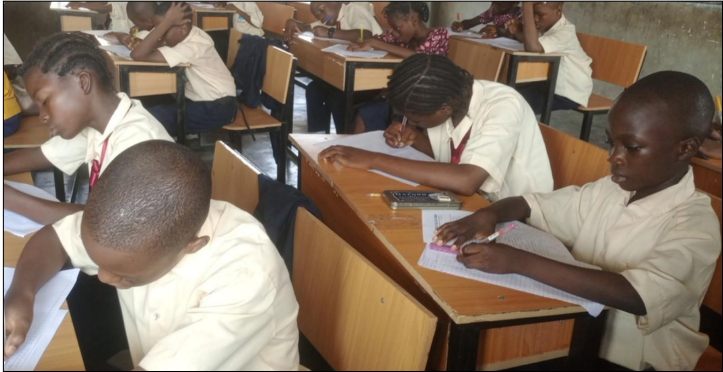
On page 4, see information from Christ to the Villages that was included in their recent newsletter.

(Cont. on Page 4)

## Excerpts from Christ to the Villages November 2025 Newsletter

### Dear Friends and Partners,

On behalf of all of us, thank you so much for your continuous love, care, and steadfast support for the mission here. Your partnership is everything to us. Whether you've prayed for us, shared our story, or supported us financially, your generosity means more than we can adequately express. You are not just supporters, you are integral to the work and knowing we have your support and belief means the world to us every single day.



We genuinely hope this email finds you and your entire family doing well. We know life in the USA presents unique opportunities as well as challenges and demands a lot from everyone, so we are keeping you all close in prayer for your well-being, peace, and good health. If you have any specific news or prayer requests for your family, please don't hesitate to share—we would truly love to hear from you.

**Outreaches:** Spreading the Gospel with Joy This year, our mission covered extensive ground, reaching many villages with the life-changing gospel of Christ Jesus. It is a profound honor to serve as bearers of God's light, and we approach every encounter with infectious joy and sincere love. We also focus on personal connection by visiting individuals right in their homes, offering heartfelt prayers, and addressing their specific situations and needs with dedicated attention and care.

**A Successful School Year and New Start:** What a whirlwind of energy and accomplishment we had before closing out the last academic year! The 2024/2025 session officially wrapped up on July 25th, but not before we celebrated the brilliant achievements of our students with three memorable graduation ceremonies at Alpha Nursery and Primary School and Omega College, Shao. After a well-deserved summer break, we were absolutely delighted to swing the gates back open on September 15th for the start of the new 2025/2026 academic session!

**Economic challenges, Power failure, Insecurity:** Our mission is currently navigating challenges. Economic pressures are severe couple with taxation. Prices for essential goods are high, compounded by Naira's instability against foreign exchange. High fuel and transport costs have created a logistical crisis. This has led to unavoidable staff changes as personnel struggle with the commute.

Power failure is another constant hurdle. Electricity has been out in Shao for months, forcing us to carefully ration our solar power.

However, the most urgent concern is the rapidly deteriorating security situation. Kidnapping incidents are now frequent, posing a terrifying and immediate threat to our entire community. We urgently request your fervent prayers for safety and stability across Kwara State. Out of 16 Local Government Areas (LGA), that is counties, in Kwara State, 9 LGAs are critical, and schools have been closed there since September. We are in one of the LGAs that are still running schools. There has been threat in our area as well.

## JOG: Just Ordinary Guys (& Gals)

### Meet Aaron Zapata, MBA



Aaron Zapata is the founder of IMPACT Properties, Crosswalk Mortgage, and Beacon Escrow. Aaron is a Certified John Maxwell Speaker. He hosts the “REAL Impact Show” and “Home Seller’s Advantage Podcasts”, and is the author of “Reaping A Real Estate Harvest” and the "12 Principles of Follow Me.”

Aaron has been a real estate Broker for 22+ years and is ranked in the Top 1% of Real Estate Agents Nationwide. He is a key partner with the Bald

Brothers team with over \$350M in closed sales in his career.

He is a graduate from BIOLA University and California State University, Fullerton. Aaron and his wife, Dawn, live in Yorba Linda.

**When: Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

**Where: McKenzie Hall**

**Cost: \$12**

Enjoy the music, as well as the humor from the football coach, Tom Meiss. We will have an excellent meal planned with tables always filled with good fellowship.

Please RSVP via email at [chuck@penningtons-inc.com](mailto:chuck@penningtons-inc.com) or call Chuck at 714-350-8983.