



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

Vol. 378 No. 3

Published Once A Month

March 1, 2025

# March



**INSIDE:**

- An Article by Penny Schibsted
- New Members
- JOG Guest Speakers: Pastors Samuel & Susana Villafana
- & More!



STAFF

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ANAHEIM

Dr. Jim Schibsted—Senior Pastor  
Rev. Emily Raasch—Associate Pastor  
Susan Fraker—Office Assistant  
Tyler Robinson—Music Director  
Angella Kissoon—Accountant  
Linda Freud—Missions  
Chuck Pennington—J.O.G (Just Ordinary Guys)  
Sandya Costa—Montessori Director

IN THIS ISSUE

CALL Article	2
March Calendar	2
FCCA News	3
JOG Update	4
Missions' Corner	5
Birthdays	7

*"Grateful for the Past—Hopeful for the Future!"*

## **A Letter from Penny Schibsted**

Our church campus is breathing with life provided by God. It is seen through the different people who worship and minister here throughout the week. On Sundays when I arrive, I hear music coming from the sanctuary. It is the people of Unlimited Church. The mostly Pacific Islander congregation has beautiful, strong voices, and they end worship with robust praise to God.

As I walk to the kitchen to prepare coffee and refreshments for FCCA, I hear a female singer rehearsing in the hall for United New Life church. I see people from residential care homes walk in with their care takers as others start to prepare for service. A prayer circle forms and petitions to God are lifted, asking God to bless these people, to be present in worship and to guide them.

Then, different individuals from our own fellowship start to arrive. Some head to the sanctuary to set up the sound system and video. Some practice music. Some set up refreshments. We greet each other. Some of us walk around the beautiful grounds or into the library; greeting, hugging and laughing with people from Unlimited Church. It doesn't matter if we are from different churches, we've gotten to know each other over the years and are friends.

As Sunday School is set up in the Griffith House, music starts in the chapel for Oasis' worship service. This group has their own unique style with a cajón (hand drum) and a contemporary sound. It's fun and earnest.

More gather in the main sanctuary. We hug and catch up with each other. Pastor Emily or Pastor Jim start us with a welcome, announcements and prayer. We join in worship through song. We hear a message. We stay and talk together a good while after. It feels so good to be family together.

Last Sunday we had our Annual Meeting. We ate together and heard about different ministries of the church. Jim Weddell showed wonderful 2024 FCCA highlight videos during worship—one on Missions and Service, and one on Taking Care of Business. It was encouraging to see all that our little church has done and been involved in this past year!

While cleaning up our meal, friends from Iglesia de Dios and El Buen Samaritano began arriving on campus. Iglesia de Dios has been meeting on our campus longer than any of the other groups, almost 30 years. They are a loving and encouraging group. Pastor Samuel will share at our next JOG meeting about an event that recently happened to him. He had an amazing near death experience when his heart stopped, and he was revived. He had a glimpse of the afterlife that was so awesome he did not want to return, but he did. He is still with us and he is glowing from the experience. (Cont. Pg. 7)

## **Connect**

### **Sunday Morning Worship**

***10:45am on Sundays***

### **Sunday School**

Sunday School meets every Sunday in the Griffith House during worship. Kids may go to Sunday School with the teachers before the message.

### **Connect Online**

**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)

### **Small Groups**

***Wednesdays at 6:30pm***

"24 Hours That Changed the World" by Adam Hamilton

A 7-Week Study

Meeting Thru April 2nd

### **JOG: Just Ordinary Guys**

***Monday, March 10th***

***12-1:30pm***

### **Featuring Guest Speakers:**

Pastors Samuel and Susana Villafana

### **Baby Shower Brunch**

***Saturday, March 29th***

***9am-12pm in the Hall***

# FCCA Updates & Events

## NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

On Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup> we officially welcomed Tom Mena, Jordan Kirk and Robert Weltmer as members of the church. Below are short bios that were shared during worship.

**Tom Mena:** *"I grew up in and near Colorado Springs, Colorado, yet was born in Phoenix, AZ, to which I refer myself as a desert rat. I love the mountains, hiking, travel (my beautiful wife Maria and my wonderful son Tom, Jr. [now with our Lord Jesus in paradise] adventured to Puerto Vallarta, Hawaii, Jamaica and several national parks as a family). I came to know Christ Jesus as Lord and savior at a Baptist church in*



*Norwalk, CA. I'm a retired high school music teacher who still loves to sing (I sing with the Pacific Chorale locally) and conduct choirs, recently here at Christmas. I hope to be used here as I continue my journey of serving our Lord here at FCCA. I also love to read, eat at a nice restaurant with my wife and family and friends, and visit my son at Loma Vista Memorial Park, Fullerton."*

**Jordan Kirk:** *"Hello my name is Jordan Kirk. I was born and raised in Southern California. I was baptized into a Christian church as a baby. I decided to make my belief in Christ in adulthood permanent by being baptized a second time. Though I was baptized and grew up going to church, I am far from perfect or "angelic." I was born to parents who are both alcoholics and were abusive and neglectful during my childhood. This made me question God at times when I was a teenager. It also led me to stop going to church because when I would go to church on Sundays with my family, I would get yelled at right after coming back home from a lovely time at church. In spite of all the imperfections in my life, God still supernaturally showed up in the most random ways in my darkest moments when I felt alone and wanted to waste my life away. God taught me forgiveness even from my worst enemies. Now as an adult, God has brought me to this church, and I am determined more than ever to further my education and to become a registered nurse in order to be there for other people in their darkest moments."*



### ***(New Members Continued...)***

**Robert Weltmer:** *"I am a plumber and an air conditioning contractor. I was born in Hawaii and raised Catholic. You may have seen me with my German Shepherds—I have trained many service dogs over the years. I first met Pastor Jim on the basketball court and that eventually led me to visit this church. I have enjoyed completing various facility projects for the church. I also attended the International Congregational Fellowship Conference in Fiji in the summer of 2023. I look forward to officially joining the church."*

### **FEBRUARY WOMEN'S LUNCH**

Women from the church surprised Pastor Emily at the women's lunch in February with a shower for Baby Raasch. It was a joy-filled time with wonderful food, fun games, special gifts and words of love for baby and mom. Thank you to all who made the day possible and participated in the joy!



### **JOG: Just Ordinary Guys**

*Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 12-1:30pm in the Hall*

***Featuring Guest Speakers: Pastors Samuel & Susana Villafana***



Come hear Pastors Samuel & Susana Villafana's amazing story. Last year, Samuel had a near death experience in which he had a glimpse of heaven. He was shocked back to life in the hospital, and the doctors said his recovery was miraculous.

*Join the guys & gals of JOG for lunch, comedy, music and a unique speaker each month. Speakers share how their personal relationship with Jesus has changed their lives. Each month is unique! We invite you to come and check it out.*

**Cost: \$12, First-time Visitors: Free**

# Missions' Corner

With praise and thanksgiving, I am happy to report that \$1,217.00 was raised by our congregation in January and February for California fire relief. We rounded that up to \$1,300.00 and sent a check to the National Association's One Great Hour of Sharing campaign in mid- February. Your generosity continues to amaze me!!

This month I share some information on two of our supported missions. One local, Grandma's House of Hope, and one international, the Congregational Mission of Jardin, Argentina. It is wonderful to be reminded of the work being done by our supported missions to help those in need.

Faithfully, Linda Freud and Your Mission Board

## From Irene Basdakis, CEO of Grandma's House of Hope

What a year! As we reflect on our accomplishments, we can't help but share them with you, our supporters, who help make all this possible.

**Four New Homes:** In 2024, we were honored to be chosen to join a county pilot program **opening FOUR new homes** - Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program. One of these homes is exclusively for male veterans.

**Conditional Use Permit Victory:** We were victorious in the lawsuit against the City of Anaheim. This groundbreaking court ruling **eliminates the need for operating permits for transitional and supportive homes with seven or more residents**. The City of Anaheim is proud to support and work with Grandma's House of Hope - and the feeling is mutual!

**The Team Behind the Mission:** We've brought on an **all-star team** of Program Managers to run our 12 homes AND a powerhouse Executive Team to lead the organization forward.

**We've Moved:** Our new **headquarters** at 765 The City Drive South, Suite 105, in the City of Orange now combines our Program and Administrative Offices into one central hub, one unified mission.

**Rebranding:** We're rolling out a rebrand of Grandma's House of Hope in early 2025. Stay tuned—it's going to be **transformative**.

**Big things are happening. And we're just getting started.** Supporting Grandma's House of Hope helps take the most vulnerable in Orange County off the streets and gives them hope, healing and restoration.

# Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregacional

*NACCC Mission Partner Spotlight*

February 2025



Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregacional (ACCC) cares for poor Spanish descendants located in Jardin America, northeast Argentina.

Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregacional also provides worship opportunities, evangelization, Sunday school, youth groups, and Bible study. In December, they celebrated the baptism and confirmation of 14 youths in their community!



ACCC provides education, health care, and a soup kitchen for children in their community, as pictured above.

ACCC maintains a community garden to provide land for family gardening. This year, they're hoping to improve the garden's capacity to support the increasing demand for produce.







## March Birthdays

- 2-Mar Linda Freud
- 3-Mar Samuil Stanev
- 7-Mar Donald Stephens
- 11-Mar Doug Ramsey
- 12-Mar Rishon Krishna
- 12-Mar Kevin Rapp
- 13-Mar Jim Weddell
- 18-Mar Susan Cannady
- 24-Mar La Nona Hoke
- 26-Mar Noel Hummel
- 28-Mar Raffia Thomas
- 28-Mar Rachel Haas
- 30-Mar Bev Aye

If you would like to have your birthday included in the CALL, please contact the church office at 714-776-0960 or [fccaooffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaooffice@gmail.com).

*(A Letter from Penny Continued...)*

Monday through Friday families drop off their children at the Montessori School. Chapel is held in the classrooms. Children laugh, play and learn. On Monday evenings, people from Teen Challenge and different group homes come to the campus to share a meal, worship and pray for each other at NorthEast of the Well's Dinner and Worship night. These people are going through desperate situations. Many are in recovery from addictions. While they struggle, they also care well for each other. I could go on. There is an Easter Seals group that meets mid-week in the library. There are different volunteers who come to the church to work on projects and while doing so feel a sense of purpose and connection.

At a time when we daily hear of struggles and conflicts in our country and around the world, it is good to see people working together, encouraging each other, helping the vulnerable, sharing a sense of common emotions, faith and hope. It is so refreshing.

Today I was reading an update from a mission I support called Hope International. Peter Greer, HOPE's president and CEO, addressed inquiries about how different regions they serve are faring with the cuts in USAID funds. While Hope International does not accept government funds, they do ministry in many impoverished areas that do.

Peter Greer writes, *"While people of good faith will continue to debate whether it is within or outside the role of the U.S. government to intervene in challenges beyond our nation's borders, Scripture is clear that it is the place of Christ's followers to care for the vulnerable and love our neighbors, near and far (e.g., Proverbs 31:8-9, Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 25:40, Genesis 22:18, Luke 10:25-37). We must not confuse our national response with our Christian mandate. This time of uncertainty and financial precarity for many humanitarian initiatives is a time for the Church to step forward to welcome the stranger, care for the sick, feed the hungry, and invest in communities in poverty. Matthew 25 still provides clarity on our mission to see and respond to those in need, as if we are serving Christ himself."*

Reading this felt hopeful to me. I see small things being done on our church campus that remind me that with God's help we can do some good in the world. We can do what we can locally and we can support others who are doing good work for the needy further away. At this time I hope we consider the opportunities we have to help further.

May God guide us as opportunities to serve come our way.

*~Penny Schibsted*

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ANAHEIM

515 N State College Blvd. Anaheim, CA 92806  
phone 714.776.0960; email [fccaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fccaoffice@gmail.com)  
Check us out on the web at [www.fccanaheim.org](http://www.fccanaheim.org)

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
ANAHEIM, CA  
PERMIT # 323

«First» «Last»  
Or Current Resident  
«Address»  
«City», «State» «Zip»

Member: National Association of Congregational Christian Churches—Since 1956

Member: Cal-West Association—Since 1964

Please consider sponsoring an issue of “The Call”.  
Your donation of \$50 can help offset the cost.  
Please contact the Church Office for details at 714. 776.0960