

Ojai United Methodist Church
Staying in the Loop
January 17, 2021



*“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope,
my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.”*

(Psalm 130:5-6, NRSV)

Pastor Jaime’s Mid-Week Devotions on YouTube

Below is the Youtube link for Pastor Jaime’s Mid-week Devotion from last Wednesday (January 13th). This video devotion is also posted on OUMC’s Facebook Page.

Simply click on the link below and it should take you right to the video! Or copy this link and paste it into your Internet browser.

Pastor Jaime’s Mid-Week Devotion (from January 13th):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXMuMFsmw-l&t=1s>

Spend Every Sunday Morning with Pastor Jaime!

Below is the Zoom information for Sunday, January 24th’s Worship & Fellowship gathering. It will also be sent via email later this week:

To join this Zoom gathering by telephone, dial:

+1 669 900 9128

Meeting ID: 848 4447 9421

To join by computer, click on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84844479421>

Meeting ID: 848 4447 9421

Scriptures for January 24: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

Church Chuckles



A mother called her son on Sunday morning to make sure he got out of bed and was ready for church. “I’m not going!” he replied.

“Yes, you ARE going! Now get out of bed!” the mother demanded.

“Give me *one good reason* I should go,” pouted the son.

“I’ll give you THREE good reasons! One, I’m your mother, and I say you’re going. Two, you’re 40 years old, so you’re old enough to know better. And three... *you’re the pastor* - and you need to be there!”

Courtesy: <https://www.makeitclearnow.org/re humor.html>

FAIRS, FOOD, AND FUN - Oh My!

As we had all hoped and prayed, 2021 has started off positively in our fight against COVID! Vaccines are being rolled out and before long everyone who wants/needs the inoculations will have them! That also means that - *prayerfully* - it won't be too long before we get approval from our state, county, and church conference to open our doors and begin gathering in person (with modified health and safety mandates in place, of course)!

With much eagerness, we have started planning for this exciting time! Our Worship Task Force Committee has been brainstorming on some of the many fun activities our church is looking forward to hosting. Some of the ideas we've come up with are: an outdoor craft fair, weekly/monthly craft classes, a rummage sale, a festive "welcome back" church meal, reinstating monthly bingo, a "themed" bake sale, a "Best in Show" dog show, Wear Your Favorite Hat/Clothes Sundays, a "Pink Flamingo Ransom" event... and the much-anticipated comeback of Bob Roddick's beloved and delicious street tacos!

If there is something YOU would like to see our church do (once we have permission to open), please let Pastor Jaime know! We'll be happy to add it to our list! We're also looking for fun fundraising events we can offer. We've almost made it through this "COVID wilderness," my friends... so let's plan for our future together - *starting right now!*

Pray Unceasingly...

Although we are not currently able to gather in person to worship or pray, we most certainly can still pray together! As the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Romans (Chapter 8), "*Nothing can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus.*" Prayer connects us all, as God's Children. And nothing can ever separate us!

This week let us be in prayer for each other and for our dear brothers and sisters listed below.

For strength and health: The family of Monyeen Harris; Larrilyn Bangs (recovering from Covid); Wilma Coke (recovering from a broken foot); Diana Criger (recovering from a recent seizure); Joan Hager (recovery from a recent back injury); Brenda Nelson and Bob Murphy (Marie Forrest's cousins); Jesse Rusch; Pastor Rachel and Nick (and son Hunter David); David & Barbara Mark (health and financial issues); Franco (neighbor of the Tholl's); Ryan Hayes (Monica's husband); Marilee Sherman; Jeane & Michael (Jennie Leidig's niece and her husband); Donna (Taundra Roddick's mother); Melinda Snider (friend of Laurie King); Lisa (Doreen's niece); Katie (friend of Soni Wright); The Dick MacIntosh family; Marilee Sherman; Carol Longhom; Aleena (granddaughter of the Dennis's); Linda Harris; Laurie King; Linda Aldous; Casey Roddick; Stella Lorraine Preston; Pauline Malos (living at The Artesian); Joel (suffering from COVID symptoms); Richard (dealing with challenging, hard times); Jeff (going through life difficulties).

Our homebound friends: Lorayn Nelson, Robin Chambliss, Bob Unruhe, Norma Mitrany, Elaine Nelson, Allen Spencer, Lynn Hernandez, Jeanne Keyser, Pauline Larwood.

For our Covenant Churches: El Buen Pastor UMC (Santa Paula) and Pastor Lupita Alonso-Redondo; St. Paul's UMC (Tarzana) and Pastor Vernon Kemp.

For our Church Leadership: North District Office; Rev. Jim Powell; staff and district leaders; Cal-Pac Conference; Bishop Grant Hagiya; staff and conference leaders.

Other prayers:

All those effected by COVID-19; all people in the work field battling and working with COVID-19 head on; all who are quarantined; all who are alone in hospitals; all who are facing financial issues due to loss of jobs and/or unemployment; all who are feeling anxious and uncertain; all who are navigating how to remain connected with loved ones; Immigrants and their families; a sense of community among students; our UMC Denomination; Veterans—those serving and their families; Ojai's Homeless neighbors; the continued actions of justice in the Black Lives Matter movement; the young people who are demanding change with respect, peace, and their powerful voices; for the mental health and stability of all people during these trying times...

GOD... IN YOUR MERCY... HEAR OUR PRAYERS. AMEN!

From the Pastor's Desk...



Greetings, my Ojai UMC Church Family!

In 1991, horror novelist Stephen King wrote a book called, "*Needful Things*." The story is set in a small, fictional New England town called Castle Rock, Maine. In this particular town a new antiques gift shop is opened by a seemingly kind, older gentleman named Leland Gaunt. The allure of the shop is that for each of the townspeople, the shop's inventory includes an item thought to be the thing that person most wants in life. However, none of the people can afford to buy the item. The shop owner, Mr. Gaunt, offers each of them a "trade" - a favor done for him will secure the person's most "needful thing." Each person is to play what appears to be a simple prank on another of the townspeople. Then the residents of Castle Rock begin to turn on one another until at last the whole town is in chaos. Leland Gaunt turns out to be none other than the devil himself. Traveling throughout the countries of the world, he's been selling junk to people who thought they were purchasing the item they most wanted. What the shoppers failed to notice were the words printed above the shop's entrance - "Caveat Emptor": "*Let the buyer beware.*"

In these opening days of 2021, let us consider what *our* most "needful things" are. During the season of Epiphany, we observe the "manifestation" of the Lord. We celebrate the coming of the three Wise Men (or Magi) who brought gifts to the Christ Child and the belief that in the birth of Christ at Christmas, God has entered into our world and into our lives. How do we see God manifested in and among us?

Using Matthew 2:1-12, let's consider that question. The discovery of the "needful thing" for both Herod and the Wise Men begins with a star, and the search for this principal thing also involves a journey. This star, Matthew says, heralds the arrival of the Messiah and the Wise Men go to pay homage to the child they refer to as "the king of the Jews." Well, Herod isn't pleased. *His* "needful thing" is to frantically plot to destroy the tender but mighty One who threatens his throne. So he begins by inviting the Magi to a secret meeting. "Go and search for the child," Herod tells the Magi. "I want to worship him, too." *Herod's a liar!* He isn't interested in worshipping or paying homage; he has no gifts to offer. Instead, Herod intends only to exploit the Magi; to use them as pawns in the hidden, dark agenda he secretly wishes to advance.

So, according to Matthew's Gospel, the Wise Men started in the east and moved west. They left home, the most familiar of places, and ventured out toward a yet unknown destination. The magi's "needful thing" was to search for meaning in life outside of themselves. Money, power, position, and titles were not important to them; they were seeking something that would help them make sense out of what was going on in life.

The discovery of that which is most sacred frequently takes us through and out of some of the darkest times and events of our lives - but as Christians, we know that the darkness shall not overcome the light. As the Apostle Paul declares in the Romans 8:28, "*We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.*"

May we each live out the days of 2021 prayerfully reconsidering what the "needful things" in our lives truly are. Let us ask "God with us" to help us to look beyond where we've been and, led by The Holy Spirit, allow us to journey forth to that place of grand discovery that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior.

Be blessed this week, my friends... and be a blessing to others!

Pastor Jaime

Staying Connected to our Loved Ones

Any time is the right time to reach out to a loved one you haven't seen or spoken to in a while!

We've received updated contact information for a few of our beloved church family members who have moved away. I'll bet they would love to hear from you! Use the information below to say hello and reestablish your "heart connection" with them!

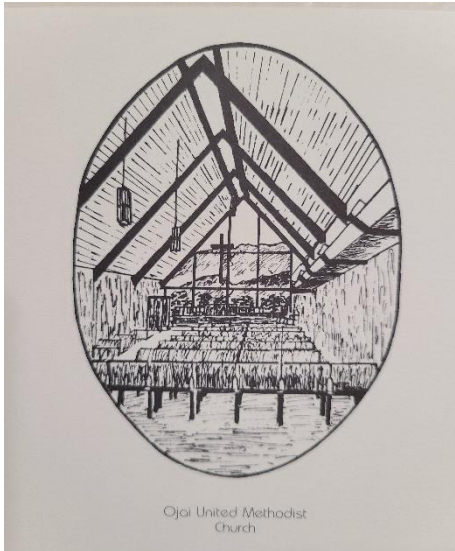
Joanne Sygeel: Sadly, Joanne lost her beloved husband, David, to cancer on January 8th, 2021. His passing was peaceful, and he was surrounded by family at the time of his transition. Joanne's father also recently passed from COVID.

Joanne Sygeel
8809 Lawndell Road
Richmond, Virginia 73229

Lorayn Nelson moved and has a new address! She's doing well and enjoying her new "digs"!

Lorayn Nelson
10949 Telephone Road, Apt #219
Ventura, CA 63004
(805) 673-2409

VERSE TO REMEMBER
Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
(Hebrews 13:8)



Got a question?

Seeking support or conversation?

Contact Pastor Jaime anytime!

Email:

Ojaiumcpastor@gmail.com

Cell: (303) 475-4990