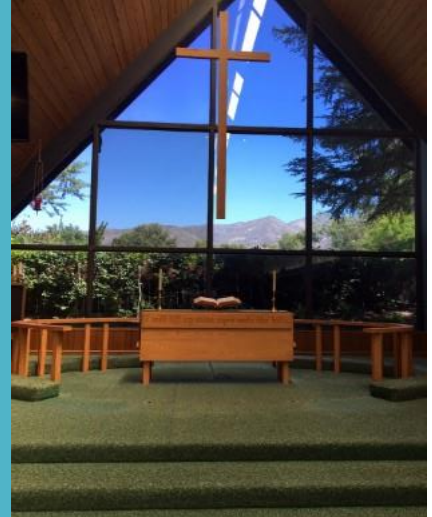


Ojai United Methodist Church

Staying in the Loop

March 28, 2021



“Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What will you give me if I betray him to you?’”

(Matthew 26:14-15, NRSV)

Pastor Jaime’s Mid-Week Devotions on YouTube

Below is the Youtube link for Pastor Jaime’s Mid-week Devotion from last Wednesday (March 24th). 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 March 24th):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5lt86hGrG4&t=1s>

Spend Every Sunday Morning with Pastor Jaime!

Below is the Zoom information for Easter Sunday, April 4th’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 (don’t forget to press the # key when you are prompted!)

Meeting ID: 850 2744 1547

To join by computer, click on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85027441547>

Meeting ID: 850 2744 1547

Scriptures for Easter Sunday, April 4th: Acts 10:34-43; Mark 16:1-8

Day by Day Guide to Holy Week

We invite you to journey through the sacred events of Holy Week that lead us to Jesus’ Resurrection on Easter in this new UMC.org devotional series (link below) written by United Methodist pastors. May you find it to be helpful in your Holy Week reflections!

https://www.umc.org/en/content/devotions-for-holy-week-2021?utm_source=umnow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=members&utm_content=holy%20week03/22/2021&mkt_tok=MDc4LUYUS02NDMAAAF7-MekDhclQmLTvHYm-ouOvuulg83sJpytPjQG-tXhxr22YmreZHwHAP-8Z3XymrvNZrXMAZTL4tnG9bTNh4GMxgZmlG2DCQI_LJI3M7fpMmBXLg

Ojai UMC Re-opens Sunday, May 2nd!

As you know, we have received permission from our District Superintendent to reopen our Sanctuary for in-person, limited capacity worship on Sunday, May 2nd, at 10:00 a.m.! (We will continue to gather at 10:00 a.m. as opposed to going back to our old worship time of 10:15 a.m.)

The “limited capacity” mandate from the County of Ventura and our Cal-Pac Conference means that 25% of our total congregation (47 people) will be allowed in our Sanctuary at one time (the maximum capacity for our Sanctuary is 188 people).

In order to comply with all CDC, State, County, and Cal-Pac Conference regulations, when coming onto our campus and the Sanctuary for worship:

- Everyone must wear a mask (even if you’ve been fully vaccinated).
- Seating will be six feet apart (family groups and individuals).
- No congregational singing, chanting, praying, or recitations will be allowed during our worship services. (*But not to worry - we have come up with very creative ways to keep our in-person services sacred and worshipful!*)
- No Coffee Fellowship following worship (no food or drink are allowed on the church campus except for the pre-packaged Communion elements).
- Everyone who wants to attend worship in person will be required to call the church office and make a reservation.

More detailed information will be forthcoming on how our exciting re-opening rollout!



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 Lyle Stevenson (Nancy Dennis’ brother); Jennie Leidig (recovering from a bad fall and pneumonia); Linda Aldous (recovering from back surgery on March 16th); Kevin Ball (Jean Ball’s grandson, who suffered a stroke); Greg (friend of Angie, Lee Criger’s daughter, recovering from brain surgery); The family of Kathy Pickett (friend of Valerie Tholl’s who is dying of cancer); Brenda Nelson and Bob Murphy (Marie Forrest’s cousins); Jesse Rusch; Lisa (Doreen’s niece); Katie (friend of Soni Wright); Carol Longhom; Aleena (granddaughter of the Dennis’s); Linda Harris; Laurie King; Stella Lorraine Preston.

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: Camarillo UMC and Pastor Elbert Kim; the Cal-Pac Conference: Bishop 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...

Do you know the story of “the miracle of the return Swallows” of San Juan Capistrano, California? This divine phenomenon of life takes place each year on March 19th, St. Joseph’s Day.

Legend has it that these tiny birds took refuge in the Mission San Juan Capistrano from an irate innkeeper who destroyed their muddy nests. With the advent of early dawn on St. Joseph’s Day, the Swallows begin to arrive each year to rebuild their nests, which are clinging to the ruins of the old church. The arches of the two-story high vaulted Chapel were left bare and exposed, as the roof collapsed during the earthquake of 1812.

The Swallows now return to the old, ruined church each spring knowing they will be protected within the Mission’s walls. And as these beautiful little birds wing their way back to the village of San Juan Capistrano, the community takes on a fiesta air and visitors from all parts of the world and all walks of life gather in great numbers to witness the “miracle” of the return of the swallows.

Then, after spending the summer within the sheltered walls of the Old Mission, the Swallows take flight again, and on the Day of San Juan, October 23, they leave the city after circling the Mission as if to say “farewell.” This *resurrection* - or renewal of new life and promise for the future through these delicate, winged creatures - happens every year. To the faithful witnesses in that California community the impact of this vision is as meaningful each year as it was the very first time it occurred.

Does this story sound familiar? Every year, we faithful witnesses in the Christian community celebrate “the miracle of the return” of our Risen Savior Jesus Christ. And this perfect, beautiful, heavenly entity nests in a more humble destination: the “ruins” of our broken, unworthy and dilapidated hearts, bodies, and souls - clinging to whatever hope he finds there. Like the physical structure of the Old Mission we, too, have become weathered and worn down through exposure to the various “elements” of our lives. But, unlike the Swallows our Messiah *can* and *does* return to us more often than just once a year - when we are courageous enough to “roll away the stone” that’s blocking Jesus’ entrance into our lives.

What does your stone look like? Is it anger? Resentment? The feeling of despair, failure, or worthlessness? An addiction or physical ailment? What is your stone that prevents Jesus’ return into your life? What is the stone that is keeping God’s promise of new life through Jesus Christ from you?

Let us all take to heart the true meaning and implication of the physical resurrection by allowing this divine phenomenon of wholeness and healing to happen spiritually in our lives not only once a year, but every single day! Let us thank God for His many “miracles of the return” - including every new opportunity the Holy Spirit gives us to become resurrected ourselves - to begin life anew and re-invent ourselves over and over again as an interminable Phoenix risen from the ashes of our broken world.



May we all be as faithful as the Swallows, knowing that we will be protected and nurtured in Jesus’s love no matter how “rundown” we are. And may we also, as the villagers of San Juan Capistrano, gather together in our Churches - not once a year, but weekly - to witness the “miracle” of the return of Jesus Christ within each one of us, every day.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jaime



It Takes a Village...

As we slowly begin to open up the Sanctuary and meeting spaces in our church for worship and fellowship, we are excited that we can open the church office to more people, as well! And it will take more people to help assume and oversee the daily tasks of the church!

The wisdom of the proverb, *It takes a village to raise a child*, points to the fact that many people (and their help and involvement) is critical to achieve a greater goal. In the church's case, that means **welcoming our previous volunteers back - and welcoming new volunteers** - to help with the daily life of the church. Such things might include sitting in the church office to answer the phone and greet occasional visitors to our campus, collating materials, stuffing envelopes, typing up meeting notes, sending cards to church members, and/or helping to create templates for special bulletins (for all you computer-savvy, creative types!)



If YOU would be interested in working in the church office a day or two a week, and if you have something special you would like to help with, please contact Pastor Jaime or call the church office! **WE NEED YOU** - and would greatly appreciate any way in which you would like to serve!

Holy Communion is THIS SUNDAY - EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 4TH!

Please remember to print out the Communion liturgy or have it otherwise available for worship service this Sunday. Don't forget to have your Communion elements with you, too!



~ Scripture to Remember ~

And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

(Mark 15:34)



Got a question?

Seeking support or conversation?

Contact Pastor Jaime anytime!

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