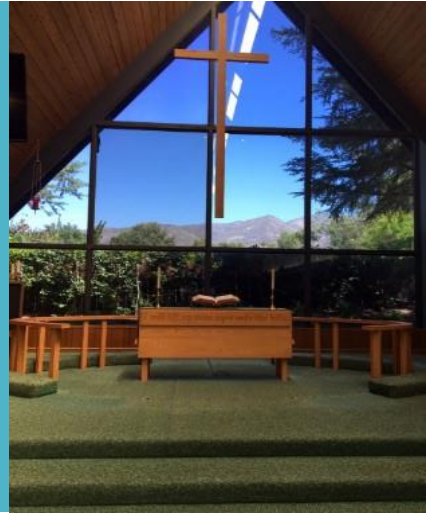


# Ojai United Methodist Church

## Staying in the Loop

April 4, 2021



***“Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!”***

*(Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, The United Methodist Hymnal #302)*

### **Pastor Jaime’s Mid-Week Devotions on YouTube**

Below is the Youtube link for Pastor Jaime’s Mid-week Devotion from last Wednesday (March 31st). 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 31st):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3POW6QQsQP8&t=2s>

### **Information about Sunday, April 11<sup>th</sup> Worship Service!**

Are YOU in for a treat! In order to give all of the pastors and “tech” people (who work on the online worship services every Sunday) a much-needed break, our Cal-Pac Conference has created a special online worship service for Sunday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, that you may view anytime!

Simply click on the link below anytime (not just at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday!) to watch various pastors and leaders in our Conference coming together (virtually, of course!), to bring us a wonderful worship service for April 11th:

<https://vimeo.com/531536944>

Our regular OUMC Sunday Morning Zoom Worship Services will resume on Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup>!

Scriptures for April 18: Philippians 2:5-11; John 20:1-18

### **The History of United Methodist Easter Sunday Sunrise Services**

On Easter Sunday morning, many United Methodists will rise before the sun to attend a sunrise worship service. Easter sunrise worship services take a variety of forms, but all have one thing in common - the people gather early in the morning to worship our resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Click on the link below to learn the history of United Methodist Easter Sunday Sunrise Services:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/easter-sunrise-services-a-celebration-of-resurrection>

## Reservations Needed for In-Person Sunday Worship Services

Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> is getting closer and closer... and soon our beautiful Sanctuary will be open for in-person, limited capacity Sunday morning worship services!

If you would like to attend an in-person worship service (from May 2<sup>nd</sup> on), please remember that **everyone must make a reservation prior to physically coming to church.**

To make a reservation, **please call the church office OR contact Pastor Jaime (via phone call, text, or email) BY 12:00 NOON on the THURSDAY right before the Sunday worship service you would like to attend.** Be sure to tell us how many people will be coming with you (and therefore seated next to you), and whether or not everyone in your “party” has been doubly (or fully) vaccinated. Please also remember to bring your mask with you to wear during worship service (even if you have been doubly/fully vaccinated).

More information will be coming out in the following weeks - but if you have any immediate questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Pastor Jaime.



### 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:** Bob Rusch (recovering from bronchitis); 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 16<sup>th</sup>); 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 passed away from cancer); Linda Margeson, 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, Pauline Malos, Lynn Hernandez, Jeanne Keyser, Pauline Larwood.

**For our Covenant Churches:** La Cañada UMC and Pastor Karin Ellis; Pacoima First UMC and Pastor Lydia Waters.

**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...



During my first pastoral appointment back in 2014, I served two small United Methodist churches in the rural (*and equally as small*) communities of Stratton and Kirk, Colorado. One day I had the pleasure of driving to Burlington, Colorado (a city about 30 miles east of Stratton, almost to the Kansas state line) with the oldest and dearest member of Stratton UMC. Her name was Dorothy Brown. She had a few things she needed to tend to in Burlington, as did I, so I offered to drive her. Well, pulling into - and out of - Dorothy's driveway was a bit of a challenge: it was a very long and narrow driveway. So, as I pulled into her driveway Dorothy came from her kitchen door. Dorothy and I greeted each other as she climbed into the front seat. And as I was backing out, I had a little trouble navigating that narrow, long driveway. I couldn't really tell how far over I was to one side or the other and feared I might back out crookedly and end up wiping out her beautiful flower garden! So, Dorothy said, "You see that big tree in my neighbor's yard across the street? *Just keep that big tree in the center of your rearview mirror*, and you'll come out just fine." There was Dorothy, the quintessential, caring, nurturing, retired teacher, *unknowingly* providing me with a wonderful Christian message!

*"Keep the big tree in the center."* Is there any more vital direction for us Christians?! No matter how crazy and busy our lives get; no matter in how many directions we're pulled or how many times we meet ourselves coming and going; as long as we "*keep the big tree in the center*" - keep God in the center of our lives as our spiritual grounding - we'll come out fine. Psalm 119:33-37 says, in essence, the same thing: "*Lord, teach me what your statutes are about, and I will guard every part of them. Help me understand so I can guard your instruction and keep it with all my heart. Lead me on the trail of your commandments because that is what I want. Turn my heart to your laws, not to greedy gain. Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. Make me live by your way*" (Common English Bible). All we need to do is to look for and center "the big tree" to *see* God and remember the Holy Spirit is the *absolute center* of our lives. But sometimes that's easier said than done, isn't it? In reality, the busyness of our human nature and our innate desire for control often times "squeezes" God into the background - the back seat - and the rear-view mirror. When we become aware of that happening, it's important to remember that we need to *focus* on keeping God in the center - and front - of our lives every moment of every day.

The more we keep God as the center in our lives, the longer and better we're able to keep ourselves on course. Because we're human, there'll be times when we veer too much to one side: the material, the greedy, the easy, the shallow - or to the other side: the lonely, the hurting, the angry, and the lost. But if we keep the big tree in the center of our rearview mirror, we'll come out just fine. (*Better* than fine, in fact!)

If we can raise ourselves up to a new level of "God consciousness" and "God perception," we can expand our possibilities of experiencing God even more deeply and profoundly than before. The invitation, this week, is to focus on God as the center of your life and to allow the full, abundant, undiscovered capacity of the Holy Spirit to stay in the center of your view and transcend your heart.

And to think this long, introspective reflection was born from an innocent comment Dorothy made so that I wouldn't mow down her flowers by backing out of her driveway crookedly. I guess life truly *is* all about perception!

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!

### **~ Scripture to Remember ~**

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again;  
death no longer has dominion over him.

The death he died, he died to sin, once for all;  
but the life he lives, he lives to God.

So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 6:8-11)



***Got a question?***

***Seeking support or conversation?***

***Contact Pastor Jaime anytime!***

***Email:***

***Ojaiumcpastor@gmail.com***

***Cell: (303) 475-4990***