

# FCCE Echoes May 2025

## First Congregational Church of Escondido

*an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

**FCCE Mission Statement**  
*Furthering the mission of Christ, Embracing Diversity,  
and Serving ALL with Love and Grace*



### From Your Pastor – by Holgie Choi

Several years ago, I was having dinner with some of my friends. One of my friends expressed his curiosity by asking me about my sermon preparation process. He asked me, “How do you prepare a message for Sunday? I always saw the sermon as a story told by an old man from the pulpit?” I was bit offended by his question because it echoed some discrimination. Not all preachers are “old men.” In fact, I had to correct him by stating that we have phenomenal preachers of all ages. I even shared with him that some of the best preachers that I heard from my past were women preachers.

Worship Bulletin  
for May 11, 2025

Missed service last Sunday,  
[click here](#)

The sermon preparation for me is a one-week journey. I am happy to share with all of you my approach:1. After Sunday morning worship, I do a post-worship analysis. I ask myself questions such as, “Did I spend enough time explaining the text for the morning? Did I use enough illustrations? Was I able to connect the message of Jesus with our current context?”2. On Tuesday morning, I study together with the Bible study group, the upcoming Scripture lessons for Sunday. I appreciate the insights that this group provides for me. The Bible study group serves as a “round table” preaching session where their voices help shape the organic composition of my Sunday message. 3. Wednesdays are my research days. I spend a day exegeting the texts by studying the history and theology surrounding the Scripture lessons.

4. On Thursday, I begin to jot down some key issues that our congregation is dealing with at the present time. This helps me to craft the application part of my sermon.

5. By Saturday, I put all my notes from the week together.

6. On Sunday mornings, I will look over my manuscript one last time. Then I pray before entering our sanctuary.

The sermon is more than just “storytelling.” It is a journey that involves studying the history, theology, and relevancy of the Scripture readings. The Word of God has power for us today because of its depth and richness. We, as listeners and readers, have a wonderful calling in helping to share this Word in our world that is constantly changing.

---

## From Your Moderator - Deb Pint



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? friends, to say these are difficult times is a total understatement. I feel as though I have been on an emotional rollercoaster for the past several months. I feel it my head, but frankly, I feel it more in my gut. Sadly, we are living in a country that is experiencing increasing levels of resentment, fear, anger, frustration, and even outrage and shame. There are moments when I wonder what's next? Who, or what, will be the next target of injustice? Who will suffer the most from random decisions made that impact the health and well-being and future of our citizenry? But these are the times we are living in.

Regardless of how we feel, we will weather this storm. Yet, some of us will personally experience the negative impacts looming around us. So, this is not the time to be disengaged. Let's step up as individuals, and as a faith community, to act and protect all that is under attack. We are called to speak-up, protest, and collaborate with others in this effort. Many of our FCCE members are doing just that! This is not the time to be alone either individually, or as a church. Each one of us must make our own decisions about our level of involvement. However, I urge us to turn our anger into actions and work for what we believe in, looking for places we can help and taking whatever actions, we can. I also encourage all us to turn our energy to healing, to joy, and to community—maybe together we can share stories rather than ruminate over all the news of the day. Being the light is a spiritual imperative. Please reach out for support and encouragement. Connection is the most important thing for humans to do in times like these. A relationship with God is a powerful personal connection characterized by HIS love for each one of us.

## Treasurer's Report *by Carolyn Hammock*

### **March 2025 Financial Report**

Expenses:           \$22,360.68  
Income:            \$35,371.17  
Net Income:        \$13,010.49  
Year to date (Jan-Mar)   -\$9,184.15

The month of March presented us with a sizable increase in our income. Over \$7000 of which reflects the money received for the 2nd Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser. However, there will be expenses that still have to be paid out. This increase in income and decrease in expenses has lowered the year to date deficit by \$11,183.79.

This is a friendly reminder that we still haven't received the per capita dues of \$17.00 per member from a few members. If you no longer have the yellow envelope, a note on the memo line of your check is all we need!

The ONA Team sends out a big thank you to everyone who contributed to the \$300.96 collected on Blessing Jar Sunday (3/30), to help cover expenses for the Family Pride Event in June.



## Musical Ministry Highlights

*by Rev. Jim Duvall, Director of Music Ministries*

### The Message of Easter Resounds Through Our Music

Easter is more than a day; it is the heart of our faith, and its message continues to echo through every hymn, song, and melody we share as a church. Through music, we proclaim the resurrection, celebrate redemption, and rejoice in the everlasting hope Christ gives us. Whether in joyful praise or quiet reflection, our voices and instruments carry the truth of Easter beyond the season—into the hearts of all who listen.

As we sing, we are reminded that Christ's victory over death is a song that never fades. In every gathering, service, and worshipful moment, the message lives on, stirring souls and strengthening faith. Let our music be a living testimony that Easter is not just a memory—it is our daily anthem.



## ..“An Ancient Lullaby” Commentary on Psalm 23 for 5/11/25

by Rev. Maureen Gates

Although we are very familiar with this psalm, which seems like an ancient lullaby, do we really feel and understand the depth of it each time we hear or say it? Let us revisit it here, digging a little deeper for its meaning.

First, this is definitely one of the best examples of a psalm which shows a complete confidence in God. This is illustrated by the fact that it begins and ends with God, just as our lives should.

But at the same time, it shows the troubles the psalmist has had, and implies some trouble will continue, even with God in their life. They have experienced want, a broken relationship with God, fear of death, needed comfort, and had enemies.

We are troubled like the psalmist. We feel anxiety, grief, financial worries, and sometimes focus on what we lack, rather than being grateful for what we have. It can be overwhelming.

God responds to all our troubles by being our shepherd, making us lie down, leading, protecting, comforting, anointing, and being with us. Our response to all of this is to not be afraid, to accept God's goodness and mercy, and know that God has promised to be with us.



## A Springtime Update on Our Master Planning *by Kurt Hunker, Team Lead*

Your Master Planning Team has been busy this spring! Looking back to March 11th, we met with our UCC advisors from AIM Development, Sandra and Heather, to determine how to move forward with the affordable housing component that is a significant part of the master plan. As a follow-up, two weeks later members of the team met with

City of Escondido Planning Department staff for an informal discussion. Among our takeaways from that meeting was learning that city staff do not yet have familiarity with Senate Bill 4 (SB4), the key piece of recent California legislation that enables us to pursue affordable housing on our campus without being limited by the conditional use permit under which the church was originally approved. The next step with the city will be a “pre-application meeting” in which we receive feedback from a range of municipal departments. We are not quite ready for that.

In April, the team met again with our AIM advisors to recap the city meeting and discuss the kind of document to be developed for engaging an affordable housing development team. For us, the “development team” will be comprised of a developer, an architect and a builder (which is sometimes the same as the developer). Out of this April 8th session came four assignments for the team:

- Determine whether we will issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to development teams, or a Request for Proposals (RFP). These documents do have differences.

- Decide what level of involvement the church will have in the housing development and management process.
- How we work with Element Education, our current tenant, through the process.
- What criteria we want development teams to address in their proposals.

At our meeting on Tax Day, April 15<sup>th</sup>, the team tackled the first two items. We determined that a “hybrid” document might best serve our needs, an RFQ with some elements of an RFP (we’ll spare you the details here!). And of five role options our AIM advisors presented for FCCE to develop and manage affordable housing, we decided to study the alternatives further.

We met again April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> to cover the last two assignments and continue the discussion about FCCE’s level of involvement. Regarding that part, we are leaning towards two possibilities: a ground lease arrangement, whereby an outside entity manages the housing and pays us “rent” for the ground the facility sits on; or a joint-venture, in which we partner with a developer. As always, the team keeps in mind two key facts: FCCE itself does not have the financial resources to create and build housing, nor do we have the capacity to manage it once built. Our recommendation will be presented to the congregation in due course.

Also from the meetings: we asked members of the Resources Team to meet with Element Education representatives soon, and we began to discuss what specific criteria should go into the RFQ. We’ll be busy in May! Stay tuned...

---

### **Congregational Life & Ministry Team by *Claire Dyekman, Team Lead***

During Easter week, our CLMT members delivered 25 Easter Lilies to our Care List members and our wonderful FCCE staff. We had some great visits with our homebound members and hopefully reminded them that they are not forgotten.

I would like to thank our CLMT members who took the time out of their busy schedules to do these visits – they are Rev. Diana Augsburg, Diane Kirby, Cynthia Poole, Rev. Maureen Gates, Susi Hansen, and Carol Vasbinder. Special thanks again to Carolyn Hammock who orders our plants for us and delivers them to the church. I have included a few photos from our visits (see below).

We look forward to continuing our service to these members through visits, cards, and phone calls. If you know of someone in need or are concerned about the well-being of a member, please feel free to contact one of our team members.

*There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting someone up!*



Jim & Tina Talley

Joyce Brown

Marge Kelley

Sue Macy



## Mission and Social Justice News

by Sue Leech, MSJ Team Lead

### Sack Lunches

We want to give a big **THANK YOU** to everyone for your help in preparing our monthly sack lunches for Interfaith Community Services. On May 4<sup>th</sup> we made 102 sandwiches and sack lunches which were delivered the next morning to ICS. They are always grateful for our help and are very appreciative of the sandwiches with meat and cheese that we provide. Our next date for preparing these lunches will be June 1 and in July we will prepare them on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Special 5 for 5 Offering

As many of you are aware, we are a **5 for 5** congregation. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, Pentecost Sunday, we will participate in the UCC Special Offering to **Strengthen the Church**. This offering reflects the shared commitment of our UCC to cooperatively build up the United Church of Christ at both the national and conference level. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ. Special envelopes will be available in the narthex and as always, your support is greatly appreciated.

### Blessing Jar Sunday

June is one of the months this year that has 5 Sundays, so we will continue with our **Blessing Jar Sunday** on the 29<sup>th</sup>. This time any money we collect will go toward our Sack Lunch program.



## Golf Tournament Hits a Hole In One!

*by Don Dohanyos, Golf Fundraiser Team Lead*

The 2nd Annual Jack Owens Memorial Tournament, held on Monday at the Welk Resort, was a big success! Sixty golfers hit the fairways under cloudy but dry skies for a fun morning. Twenty or so members and friends joined us for the church putting contest and lunch.

Look for more a full recap and more pictures in next week's Echoes!!

Thanks to everyone who volunteered, purchased a sponsorship and/or participated!!





Tell Congress:  
NO CUTS to Federal Support for Mothers and Children!

As Mother's Day approaches, we know that all our moms deserve much more financial, emotional, and physical support. Children are blessings, who model for us what it means to follow Jesus and help all of us see Christ's love for the world.

Yet Congress is currently considering cutting the funding it provides for children and new parents. Cutting this funding would reduce assistance that helps children in families with low incomes get enough to eat, see a doctor when they are sick, and meet their basic needs and thrive. This assistance is essential for our children's health and wellbeing.

**Learn more about the proposed cuts and take action to protect support for mothers and children!**

**Take Action NOW to Protect Federal Support**

---

## **"HONOUR ...THY MOTHER"** *by Janet Redd, Fellowship coordinator*

A **Mother's Day Celebration** in Fellowship Hall this Sunday, May 11, will be a festive affair. **Rev. Diana Augspurger** and **Diane Kirby** of the **Congregational Life Ministry Team (CLMT)** will host with a delicious menu of goodies, and the Fellowship Team will decorate in "shining silver".

Last Sunday, May 4, CLMT members **Claire Dykeman** and **Maureen Gates** have already hosted a colorful Mayo **Cinco de Mayo**. Following the Mother's Day Celebration, on Sunday, May 18, CLMT members **Cynthia Poole** and **Susi Hansen** will delight with a bevy of goodies. Highlighting her **Norwegian heritage**, Cynthia will serve traditional Norwegian fare, including Norwegian Krum Kake, which are cone-shaped waffle cookies served with chocolate flavored whipped cream.

Rounding out the month, on Sunday, May 25, CLMT members **Claire Dykeman** and **Carol Vasbinder** will celebrate **Memorial Day** with hot dogs, potato salad and all the trimmings. The Fellowship Team will assist the events with food and ambiance. A special thanks go to a **"band of angels"** who have helped with setup, preparation and cleanup, including **Susi Hansen, Jan Steiner, Dana Stevens, Jody Sorlien, Carol O'Neil, and Elisabet Wolford**.

---



## First Wednesday Circle

On May 7, about 20 FCCE women and guests gathered in Plymouth House to celebrate our mothers, and other women who mentored us as mothers, the grandmothers, aunts, sisters, friends, and daughters who helped raise us to be the compassionate women we are!

It was a special treat to have Dana's mother, Sheila and sister, Dee join us this month.

What a fun time of family storytelling, laughing, reminiscing, and learning about some strong mothers who changed history for the rest of us.

Many thanks to Deb Pint, Jody Sorlien, and Dana Stevens for the food, flowers and games.

We will meet again on June 4 for lunch out! Watch for a message from Carolyn Hammock with more details.

*Celebrating Mothers and all the roles that women play sister, daughter, grandmother, aunt, mentor, and friend!*



May is  
Mental Health  
Awareness  
Month



Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed during the month of May in the United States since 1949, reaching millions of people in the United States through the media, local events, and screenings. FCCE joins other faith organizations throughout the county to raise awareness around mental health. Many of our members, friends, and their families are affected by mental illness. Join us this month to educate, support, and end the stigma associated with mental illness. Here are

some resources:

- San Diego County Health and Human Services: <https://211sandiego.org/health-wellness/mental-health-services/>
- UCC Mental Health Network <https://www.mhn-ucc.org/>
- Faith-based Mental Health Academy Training register at: <https://tinyurl.com/FBAmay2025eng>

## FCCE Happenings

May 13 10am Bible Study

May 20 10am Bible Study

May 27 10am Bible Study

May 30 – 31 Southern California / Nevada Annual Gathering in Pomona

June 1 – Sack lunches for Interfaith will be prepared in the Fellowship Hall

June 28 – “Pride on Broadway”

June 29 – Blessing Jar Sunday



### May Birthdays

Sheree Dohanyos 4

Fenn Wilson 7

Jim O'Neil 19

Marilynn Patterson 22

Janet Redd 24

Louise Phillips 25

Sue Macy 29

### May Anniversaries

Tommy & Rebecca Jarboe 13

John & Christine Mickus 14

Kurt & Ruth Ann Snider 23