

ECHOES Monthly News February 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

FCCE friends and members,

I want to thank you all for your prayers and support in this time. My family and I are in prayerful period trusting in God to give us courage, hope, and strength. My dad is in good spirit. I have witnessed his faithful call when seeing his full trust in the grace of God and the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

I have learned myself that life is never going to be the same. We are taking one day at a time living rather than worrying.

I am blessed to have this church be there for me in this moment of mystery.

Pastor Holgie

From Your Moderator - by Deb Pint



AGAPE Love.

The month of February is a study of contrasts. It is the shortest month of the year, most notable for Black History month, Ground Hog Day, President's Day, Heart Health month and the list goes on. One would argue it is the month in which we celebrate Valentine's Day as a reminder of our love. However, within many Christian circles, the history of Valentine's Day is a contradiction to our values and the relationship to the real meaning of love, specifically "agape love".

Agape love is a Greek word that refers to a pure, unconditional, and sacrificial love that is often considered the highest form of love. It is rooted in ancient religious and philosophical traditions. Jesus taught that agape love is a choice to seek the well-being

Ministries
Leadership Team
Meeting Minutes
Posted in
Fellowship Hall

of others without expecting anything in return. He said that agape love is the way to show love for God and others, and that it is the highest form of love. Agape love is selfless and unconditional, it's a choice to seek the good of others, not yourself, It's a choice to be faithful, committed, and sacrificial, and is a choice to not feel bitterness or desire revenge.

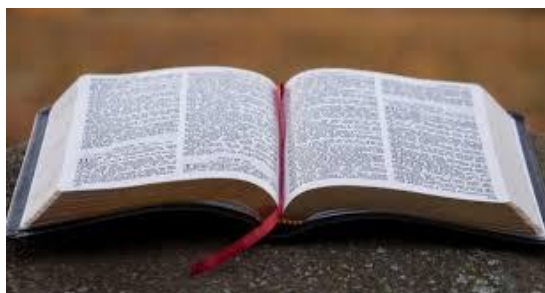
This February 14th, instead of celebrating love in traditional ways, let's also celebrate love the "agape" way.

Deb

Commentary for Luke 4: 21-30, Sunday February 2, 2025

by Rev. Maureen Gates

This coming Sunday's gospel begins with the same verse that ended last Sunday's gospel, with Jesus saying to the people in the synagogue at Nazareth, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," which reveals Jesus' power.



The response is at first positive, but changes to rage. Why the pivot? Jesus announces that the help and healing he has offered to others will not necessarily be provided to everyone. He communicates this indirectly. The fact that it was outsiders with whom Jesus initially worked maddened the crowd—they felt betrayed.

Anger grew when Jesus cited their own prophets Elijah and Elisha who brought healing to the Gentiles (the widow at Zarephath was a Phoenician and Naaman, a Syrian) when many Israelites were suffering. The ethics of Jesus' time required taking care of family and hometown first, and foreigners last. Jesus offers the prophetic word that God's power to help and heal extends to the most vulnerable. People in the synagogue expected Jesus to heal and help only Jews. He wasn't doing this so they became angry. But Jesus was unafraid. He didn't waver; he merely passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Luke reminds us that God's word has the power to help, heal, confront expectations, and change relationships. It reminds us that not all God's words are words of comfort. They have the power to create and shape, but also the power to disrupt, curtail, pluck-up and destroy. (See Jeremiah 1:4-10, another reading for this week.)



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

Did someone tell me we are in 2025?! What? I know we had New Years Day, but I'm still wondering how we got to 2025 so soon!! However, I am always thankful and blessed that another year was afforded to me and another year to praise His Holy name! What does it mean to "worship God"? Here are some responses:

- Tell God that we love Him
- Our reasonable service of gratitude for all God has done for us
- Prizing God above everything else and putting Him first in our hearts

Bullet #3 stung a little bit for me. I know I try to make Him more important in my life, but I have to be honest, that doesn't always occur! Life happens and I believe that's Satan's way of distracting me. *sigh* Even though we're

embarking on the second month of 2025, let's covenant together to make God a priority in our lives. And one way to honor that vow, is to intentionally come on Sunday mornings with:

- the mindset to leave the woes of life behind
- plan to enter the presence of God in order to hear the message He has for me (us) during worship hour
- with a sense of reverence and hearts prepared to worship

FCCE Congregational Meeting!

Please join us for the Congregational Meeting scheduled after worship service in the sanctuary on **Sunday, February 2, 2025**. For your reference, the attached documents include the agenda, proposed 2025 Budget, and minutes from the last meeting held on June 30, 2024. **Click the buttons below to review documents.**

Your participation in this meeting is very important. Join us for Fellowship after the Congregational meeting.

See you then!
Deb Pint

From the Treasurer's Desk

by Carolyn Hammock

December 2024 Financial Report

Expenses:	\$26,395.38
Income:	\$48,338.41
Net Income:	\$21,943.03
Year to date (Jan-Dec):	-\$34,773.01

The 2024 financial report ended the year on a positive note. In spite of the large expenditures incurred for the heat pump replacements and men's restroom repair, we were able to reduce the deficit by over \$15,000.00. This was due to a number of generous end of the year contributions by our members.

The stewardship campaign ended with a total of 39 pledge units, totaling \$169,784.00. This total is approximately \$1,500 more than pledged last year, and by 5 fewer pledgers!



FCCE Annual Census

by Claire Dyekman, Christian Life Ministry Team

Rev. Diana has updated our current membership statistics as of 1/6/2025 and we would like to share these results. Active members are 87 (this includes 10 homebound members and 3 members who have moved out of the area). We have 13 active friends who attend (some of these are seasonal guests). 8 members have withdrawn their membership. We have reached out to our 13 inactive members who have either moved out of the area or no longer attend our services. Their responses will be recorded and their memberships adjusted. Many thanks to Pastor Diana for keeping these records updated.

One of our goals for 2025 is to add 10 new members to our rolls. So, we thank you all in advance for being so welcoming to our guests each Sunday. Looking forward to an exciting new year here at FCCE.

MSJ News *by Sue Leech, MSJ Team Lead*

Each month we will try to highlight a program from **Interfaith Community Services**. This month we highlight their **Transitional Youth Academy (TYA)**. This program was established in 2008 and supports low-income and vulnerable youth between the ages of 14 to 18 who are at risk of dropping out of high school due to various problems. Students work with experienced ICS staff members to keep motivated and stay in school. The results are outstanding. Last year 100% of the TYA senior students graduated and either went on to college, trade school or joined the armed forces. To help these graduating seniors fully participate in their graduation activities, which can be out of reach for low-income families, ICS has a Sponsor-a-Senior program which helps with costs like yearbooks, cap and gowns, prom, grad night, senior pictures and on-going education applications. This year we are sponsoring one senior and if you would like to help, please contact someone on the Missions and Social Justice team.



African American Contribution to the United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago



Black History Month was created to focus attention on the contribution of African Americans to the United States. It honors all Black people from all periods of U.S. history, from the enslaved people first brought over from Africa in the early 17th century to African Americans living in the United States today. In his essay, African-American Contribution to the United Church of Christ, Jeremiah Wright offers a historical look at the intersection of the UCC and the contributions African Americans. As senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, IL, where he served 36 years, Dr. Wright combined his studies of African Traditional Religions, African music, African American music and the African American Religious Tradition with his studies of Judeo-Christian thought to create ministries which addressed the needs of the community and enriched the lives and faith of his congregants by moving ministry, as stated in his own words, "from theory to praxis." Dr. Wright said in a published article: "I have tried to bring those two different worlds together [the academy and the pew] in the context of pastoral ministry in an effort to move an ignored people from hurt to healing and from hate to hope. My mission at Trinity was to bring those worlds together by using the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the life of Christ as a model for what is possible, of what might be, and of what our faith really is—the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.'

In Loving Memory

Of Lorraine Boyce Dr. William (Bill) and Lorraine Boyce joined FCCE on December 13, 1959. They were both beloved and influential participants in the life of our church. Bill Boyce passed away in 2015. **Lorraine passed away peacefully on January 15, 2025, at the age of 97.**

Lorraine Boyce was a woman who faithfully served her community for 60+ years. She was a loving wife and nurturing mother to six children, several grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Among her countless accomplishments were working as a registered



nurse in Obstetrics in Los Angeles; serving on Escondido City Council from 1970-1978; elected as the first woman mayor of Escondido in 1974; helping to establish the Escondido Planned Parenthood Clinic; serving on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Early Child Development Programs; creating the Early Childhood Development Center (ECCDC) in 1974, which continues to provide affordable childcare for working families; empowering women in community business and politics, supporting women's reproductive rights, and advocating for affordable housing in Escondido.

In 1987-89, First Congregational Church was building the new campus at 1800 N. Broadway. Lorraine worked with church leaders, city, and state officials to create and accredit an early child development preschool on the new campus. The "Dove's Nest" soon became a leading preschool in Escondido. We fondly recall the Boyce's painting classrooms, installing coat racks, and performing medical well-checks on children. Their many selfless acts of community service are a testament to their lifelong Christian faith.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude for the life and good works of Lorraine H. Boyce. May her impressive legacy be a shining light in the lives she touched, and in the community programs she helped establish. **A Celebration of Life will be held at First Congregational Church of Escondido on Saturday, February 8th at 11:00 a.m.**



Of Marilyn Dannenberg

Marilyn Dannenberg, our longest time member, died on December 24.

A gracious and lovely woman, **she was 100** and had been living in Ventura near one of her sons for a few years. She grew up and raised her family in Escondido and was a life-long member of this church. Pastor Holgie led a committal service for her at Oak Hill Memorial Park with many family members gathered from across the country and several members of our congregation.

The *Good Shepherd* stained glass window in our Fellowship Hall was given by Marilyn's parents in celebration of Marilyn and Dale's marriage September 1, 1946. This was installed in FCCE's first building at 3rd & Maple St. On September 25, 1977, the window was moved from 3rd and Maple to the "Church on the Hill" at 4th & Hickory in memory of Hazel E. Reed, Marilyn's mother. When this property was built, she had it moved to our Fellowship Hall.

Master Plan Workshop Draws Exciting Possibilities

By Kurt Hunker, *Master Plan Team Leader*

On Sunday, over 25 members attended an interactive workshop guided by the Master Plan team which includes Dana Stevens, Don Dohanyos, Mike Dyekman, Cynthia Selbrede, Jim Gates, Carolyn Hammock, Tom Galyean, Kurt Hunker, Pastor Holgie, and Deb Pint.



FCCE members divided up into 4 tables. Each table was given the opportunity to think creatively about how our property might be configured. Each table group was given a site plan (to scale) and four sets of scaled construction paper objects (representing housing, educational building, wellness center, outdoor space and "other"). The goal was to determine where best to locate these spaces. There were lots of interesting conversations happening as each team worked independently. At the end of the activity, each group shared their ideas with the larger group. What emerged were very similar ideas placing housing closer to the current entrance and the educational building at the eastern end of the campus. These ideas had much in common with what the Master Plan team has been working on.

These findings will be shared with our consultants and developers to determine the feasibility of developing our property to serve our mission and sustain our church for generations to come.



Join the Justice and Peace Action Network

The Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet) is our denomination's grassroots advocacy network composed of individual members and local UCC congregations across the country. The JPANet both educates and engages its members in shaping public policy and keeping with God's vision of a just and loving society. Our work is grounded in General Synod resolutions, consonant with historic UCC witness, and formed by a biblical understanding of prophetic ministry.

[Learn More & Sign Up to Receive Action Alert at www.UCC.org](http://www.UCC.org)

Faith Expressed Freely – Statement [from UCC] on congressional response to Bishop Budde's sermon

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. - Isaiah 1:17

Preaching at the National Prayer Service, the Right Reverend Mariann Budde offered a *Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. - Isaiah 1:17*

Preaching at the National Prayer Service, the Right Reverend Mariann Budde offered a sermon that was timely and prophetic following the inauguration of the 47th president. Her message offered a vision of hope and unity that is not easily lived and is needed now:

Unity is not partisan. Rather, unity is a way of being with one another that encompasses and respects differences, that teaches us to hold multiple perspectives and life experiences as valid and worthy of respect; that enables us, in our communities and in the halls of power, to genuinely care for one another even when we disagree.

The introduction of H. Res. 59 "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the sermon given by the Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde at the National Prayer Service on January 21st, 2025, at the National Cathedral was a display of political activism and condemning its distorted message" is problematic as is the condemnation of the Bishop by the President. Our country's rich history of religious freedom prohibits elected officials from dictating the message of religious communities, so their characterization of her sermon as "distorted" is deeply troubling.

Hear Rev. Budde's Sermon here: <https://youtu.be/xwwaEuDeqM8>

News from Interfaith Community Services

Update from City Hall! On February 28, the **Escondido Planning Commission voted 6-1 to recommend approval of our detox expansion** through a permit modification to the Escondido City Council.

This outcome would not have been possible without the **20 supporters in attendance** and the **290 letters of support gathered from our community!**

Expanding these services is about more than just numbers—it's about people. We're one step closer to helping more people access critically needed detox services in Escondido. **But we still need your help!**

What: Escondido City Council Meeting – Interfaith Detox Expansion

When: Wednesday, Feb. 19th at 5 p.m.

Where: Escondido City Hall ([201 North Broadway, Escondido, CA 92025](#))

Dress: Wear blue as a visible show of support for Interfaith

Welcome Valarie Stallings!

We are happy to welcome Valarie Stallings as our new Administrative Assistant! She is a mother of two and a long-time Escondido resident.

Valarie's work experience includes working extensively with the public where her customer service, organizational and clerical skills were much appreciated. She looks forward to meeting and interacting with everyone as opportunities arise.

Welcome, Valarie



FCCE Happenings

February 2 Intergenerational Sunday, Communion. Congregational Meeting Sunday following service

February 5 First Wednesday Circle 10 am watch for details in Echoes

February 6 Master Plan meeting with UCC Consultants (via zoom) 1:00 pm

February 8 Memorial Service for Lorraine Boyce 11 am (detail in this Echoes)

February 17 Ministries Leadership Meeting 6:30

February 23 Sack Lunch Sunday after worship



February Birthdays

Judi DePuy 3
Diane Kirby 10
Holgie Choi 15
John Chandler 21
Jo Ann Galyean 29

February Anniversaries

Jim & Tina Talley 13
Will & Karen Bayles 17
Jim & Carol O'Neil 20



Church Directory: Pick up the most recent edition of the Church Directory in the church office during office hours. **Church Website:** www.FCCEonline.org