Laguna Country UMC
Hope Love & Joy Live Here

The Viewpoint

March 2026





This Month

- New Members
- Men's Group
- How the UMC works
- Lent 2026

So, here we are again in the season of Lent. It is traditionally a time of fasting and praying, following Jesus into the desert. It is seen as a time of cleansing, maybe testing. We are expected to give up something during Lent, a thing or thought or habit that has been part of our life. It seems to be about self-denial, which may have validity, but does not seem to contain the whole truth about ourselves or Lent.

It was years ago, during an all-night vigil with a group of teenagers from our church, that I learned I could not endure physical fasting. It was years later that I learned my inability to maintain physical endurance during a 24-hour fast was because of hypoglycemia, the tendency to have severe lows of blood sugar. At the time, I was very disappointed in myself, thinking that I was weak in body, mind, and spirit. I did not know it was a physical condition that was affecting my spiritual practice. I have since learned to be more compassionate with myself and others.

Most of us know that there are many forms of fasting. We practice self-denial from a variety of products like chocolate, sugar, alcohol, meat, or behaviors like TV or movies. The focus seems to be on the elimination of something, and I'm not sure what we are trying to prove. The other day, I read an article that suggested we "fast from negative and destructive thinking and feast on beliefs and ideas that confirm the oneness of all people." I rather liked that idea, the combination of fasting and feasting, so that it is not so much about subtraction of thoughts or behavior, but is also about addition of thoughts and behaviors that are in keeping with the life and spirit of Jesus.

Perhaps we, as individuals and as a church, can ponder what we can eliminate in our lives that prevents growth and also consider what thoughts or behaviors we can add that would enhance us as individuals and as a community.

Peace and blessings, Pastor David

A Snapshot of the United Methodist Church
How Pastors Are Chosen

In the United Methodist Church, churches don't "hire" their own pastors like most jobs. Instead, pastors are appointed by a bishop. This is called the appointment system.

Each region (called an annual conference) has a bishop who helps decide where pastors will serve. The bishop and other church leaders pray, talk, and think carefully about:

- What each church needs
- The gifts and strengths of each pastor

Then they match pastors to churches. These appointments usually change in the summer.
What Is Itinerancy?

"Itinerancy" is a big word that means pastors agree to move if the bishop sends them somewhere new. This goes all the way back to John Wesley, who sent preachers wherever people needed to hear about Jesus.

This system reminds us that:

- Pastors serve God first
- Churches are connected to each other
- The whole church works together as one big family

How Does Someone Become a Pastor?

Becoming a pastor takes time, education, and a strong sense that God is calling you.
Here's the basic path:

1. Sense a Call from God – The person feels called to ministry and talks with their pastor and church.
2. Candidacy Process – They meet with church leaders, go through interviews, and complete evaluations.
3. College & Seminary – They earn a bachelor's degree and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.).
4. Provisional Pastor – They serve under supervision for a few years.
5. Ordination – After approval and a vote, they are officially ordained by a bishop.

In the United Methodist Church, pastors don't just choose where they want to go — they are sent. The whole system is built on prayer, trust, and the belief that God is guiding the church.



Have You Seen John Wesley? 👀

No, he hasn't escaped the history books—but John Wesley is hiding somewhere in this newsletter! Consider this your official invitation to stop skimming, start reading, and go on a holy scavenger hunt. He could be lurking between announcements, peeking out from an article, or dramatically appearing where you least expect it.

Read carefully. No magnifying glass required… but enthusiasm is encouraged.
Happy hunting, faithful newsletter detectives!
Remember, even Methodists can have a little fun 😉

Dial-a-Devotion

Dial-A-Devotion always needs a few more dedicated presenters to supplement the group. If you follow this group via phone, you know that it means presenting a message about every three weeks from your home. It allows you to share a message that was meaningful to you or to others. Let the office know if you would like to try it out. 949.837.5433

March 1st	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	March 16th	Liz Heacock	April 1st	Greg Lewis
March 2nd	Teri Lancey	March 17th	Laura Daillak	April 2nd	Sherry Atkins
March 3rd	Dick Obermayer	March 18th	Don Forden	April 3rd	Laddie Perez
March 4th	Marilyn Nicolas	March 19th	Meg Estrada	April 4th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
March 5th	Judy McCormack	March 20th	David Atkins	April 5th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
March 6th	Elaine Brady	March 21st	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	April 6th	Laura Daillak
March 7th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	March 22nd	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	April 7th	Don Forden
March 8th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	March 23rd	Glenn Miller	April 8th	Meg Estrada
March 9th	LaFee Family	March 24th	Teri Lancey	April 9th	David Atkins
March 10th	Dick Obermayer	March 25th	Dick Obermayer	April 10th	Glenn Miller
March 11th	Greg Lewis	March 26th	Marilyn Nicolas	April 11th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
March 12th	Sherry Atkins	March 27th	Judy McCormack	April 12th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
March 13th	Laddie Perez	March 28th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	April 13th	Teri Lancey
March 14th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	March 29th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	April 14th	Dick Obermayer
March 15th	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	March 30th	Elaine Brady	April 15th	Marilyn Nicolas
		March 31st	LaFee Family		





Usher Schedule

Rex Danford & Connie Gould	March 1st
Art & Judy Feldra	March 8th
Kelly LaFee & David Forden	March 15th
Frank Bristol & Teri Lancey	March 22nd
Kelly LaFee & Amir Atefvahid	March 29th



Walk to Emmaus®
THE UPPER ROOM

There is an amazing 3-day (72 hour) Christian spiritual renewal retreat available to those of us at Laguna Country UMC. It is called "Walk To Emmaus," and focuses on God's grace through 15 talks, worship, and small group discussions. One of our new participants at Laguna Country UMC, Les Keeler, has been active in this ministry since 1990 and is part of the team that will be leading a men's retreat in Pomona at Trinity UMC, March 12-15. A women's retreat will be held at the same location, March 19-22.

Les was an elder in his local Presbyterian church in charge of missions, leading "a week's vacation with a purpose," building a playground for children. When he returned, he was invited to a Walk to Emmaus retreat where he says, "the light switch went on in my heart." (That sounds a little like John Wesley's experience when his "heart was strangely warmed.) He spent the next two years trying to understand what had happened, for he knew he would never be the same. He came to realize that God's love is here for everyone, that we don't earn it; it is a gift of grace.

Les states that prior to this, he was always trying to prove himself, working hard, earning pay raises and promotions in his career with IT. When he realized he didn't have to earn respect, that he was loved unconditionally, his work and his relationships changed. Les became active in Walk to Emmaus and was on the team for 40 retreats. He enrolled in Fuller Seminary, but while there, he heard God say, "You don't have to be ordained to serve. You don't have to be a Biblical scholar to serve."

Shortly after that, he heard the call to bring Walk to Emmaus to prison inmates. It took two years to get permission to do the retreat in a prison. That ministry is called "Kairos", which literally means a divinely appointed time. Les has taken this ministry to a variety of prisons in California, including maximum security prisons. He has many inspiring stories to share of God's grace and provision in that ministry. Les also has many experiences where he, in looking back, can see God's hand protecting him.

You are invited to engage in conversations with Les Keeler during Coffee Fellowship to learn more about his experiences and the Walk to Emmaus. Applications for the weekend experience are available in the church office. We are fortunate to have a man of faith like Les Keeler join us in our mission and ministry at Laguna Country UMC. He is open and willing to share his experiences of God's unconditional love with us.

March & April Liturgist

Mar. 1st	Lily Hong
Mar. 8th	Hanne Booth
Mar. 15th	Pendra LaFee
Mar. 22nd	Frank Bristol
Mar. 29th	Donna Kish
Apr. 5th	Meg Estrada
Apr. 12th	Laura Daillak
Apr. 19th	Sherry Atkins
Apr. 26th	Rex Danford





Please remember that we can give to the needy of our church and community at any time through the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. To contribute to this fund simply write a check to LCUMC and include "Pastor's Discretionary" in the memo. Include your contribution in the Sunday offering plate or send it to the Church Office. Thank You!!



March Birthdays

Michael Daillak	March 4th	Greg Lewis	March 21st
Shig Yoneda	March 4th	Omid Mahmoudi	March 21st
Tanya Yoneda	March 9th	Richard Warne	March 24th
Ben Yoneda	March 10th	Hanne Booth	March 28th
Ollie Whitaker	March 19th	Patricia Brady	March 31st
		Brian Holmes	March 31st

March Anniversaries

David & Sherry Atkins
March 20th



Sermon Themes

March 1st: Communion Sunday – "Born From Above"

In this very interesting exchange between Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, and Jesus, recorded in John 3:1-17, we have the explanation of the distinction between the natural, human birth and being born from above. Jesus finds that Nicodemus, like us, is having a difficult time understanding what Jesus calls "heavenly things." The conversation ends with John 3:16, the most famous verse in the New Testament.

March 8th: "Breaking The Rules" – Rev. Don Forden, Preaching

In one of the most remarkable and shocking stories of the New Testament, we find in John 4:5-42, the wonderful story of Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman at a well. He breaks all of the rules in order to bring his message of love to this woman, to the disciples, and to the people of Samaria.We marvel at his courage to follow the truth of God's love and see his example for us to live beyond the restrictions of religion and culture.

March 15th: "The Power Of Knowing Jesus." – Rev. Glenn Miller, Preaching

The passage in John 24-35 takes place after Jesus has fed the multitudes with five barley loaves and two fish. When Jesus realized they were about to take him by force to make him king, first he withdrew to the mountains, then came down and, with his disciples, crossed the sea to Capernaum. He is again confronted by the crowds looking for a sign. He declares that it is his father who gives the true bread from heaven, and acknowledges that he is the "bread of life."

March 22nd: "My Chains Are Gone!"

The story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11:1-45 has led to much speculation and disbelief. It raises the question of the possibility of a human being raised from the dead and is often interpreted symbolically. However, this is not the only story in the Bible of one being revived after having died. Whether or not we take it literally or symbolically, it is a challenge to our belief in the power of God through Jesus, the Christ.

March 29th: Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday) – Choral presentation

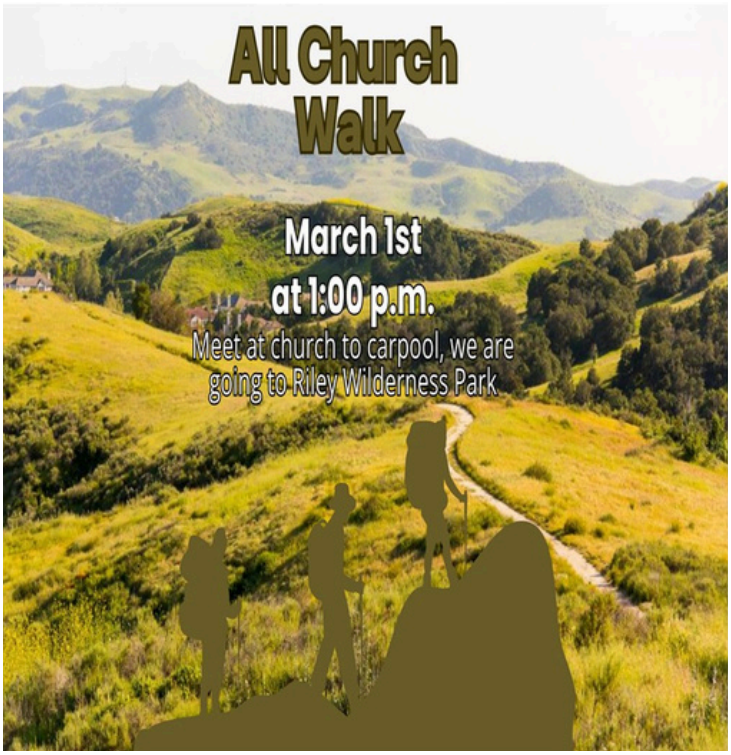


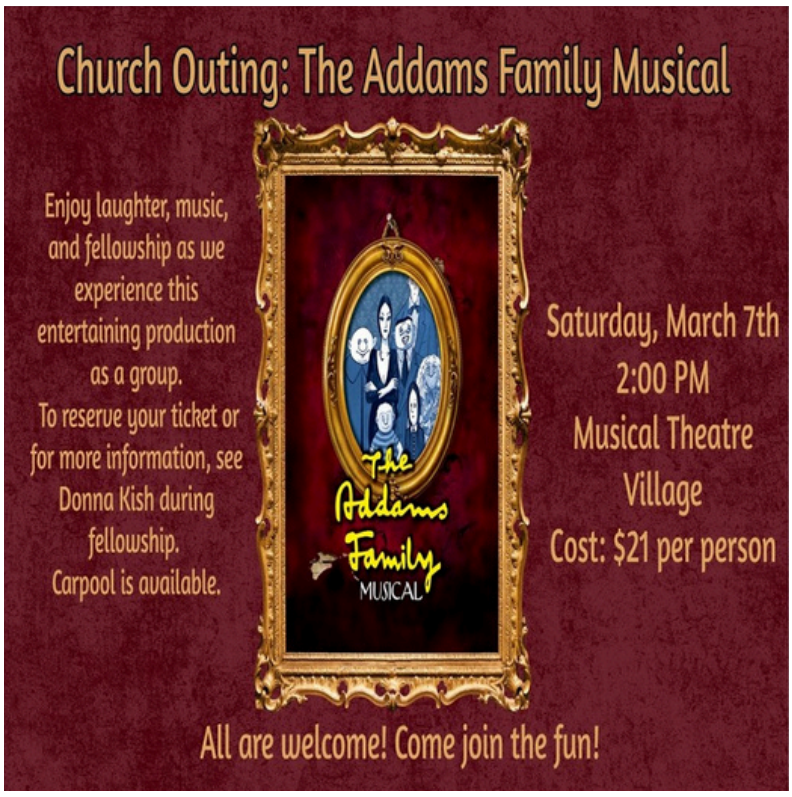
March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 6:30am AA 8:30am Choir Rehearsal 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship Time 11:00am Adult Sunday School 6:00pm AA	2 6:30am AA 12:00pm Al-Anon 2:30pm Fellowship Committee Meeting 7:00pm AA	3 6:30am AA 9:30am Bell Practice 10:00am Prayer Group 6:00pm WW 7:00pm Scouts 7:00pm Circle Of Friends Bible Study	4 6:30am AA 10:30am Tellers 1:00pm OK Chorale 6:00pm Hula 7:00pm Choir	5 6:30am AA 9:30am WW 1:00pm 8 is Enough	6 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW 11:30am The Gathering	7 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW
8 6:30am AA 8:30am Choir Rehearsal 9:30am Worship 10:30am Bread Fellowship Time 11:00am Adult Sunday School 6:00pm AA	9 6:30am AA 10:00am Worship Committee Meeting 12:00pm Al-Anon 12:30pm Non-Competitive Bridge 7:00pm AA	10 6:30am AA 9:30am Bell Practice 10:00am Prayer Group 6:00pm WW 7:00pm Admin Council Meeting 7:00pm Scouts	11 6:30am AA 10:30am Tellers 1:00pm OK Chorale 6:00pm Hula 7:00pm Choir	12 6:30am AA 9:30am WW 1:00pm 8 is Enough	13 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW 11:30am The Gathering	14 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW
15 6:30am AA 8:30am Choir Rehearsal 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship Time 11:00am Adult Sunday School 6:00pm AA	16 6:30am AA 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm AA	17 6:30am AA 9:30am Bell Practice 10:00am Prayer Group 6:00pm WW 7:00pm Scouts 7:00pm Circle Of Friends Bible Study	18 6:30am AA 10:30am Tellers 1:00pm OK Chorale 6:00pm Hula 7:00pm Choir	19 6:30am AA 9:30am WW 1:00pm 8 is Enough	20 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW 11:30am The Gathering	21 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am Men's Group 9:30am UWF 9:30am WW 1:00pm Trustees Meeting
22 6:30am AA 8:30am Choir Rehearsal 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship Time 11:00am Adult Sunday School 6:00pm AA	23 6:30am AA 12:00pm Al-Anon 12:30pm Non-Competitive Bridge 7:00pm AA	24 6:30am AA 9:30am Bell Practice 10:00am Prayer Group 11:00am Men's Group Planning Meeting 6:00pm WW 7:00pm Scouts	25 6:30am AA 10:30am Tellers 1:00pm OK Chorale 6:00pm Hula 7:00pm Choir	26 6:30am AA 9:30am WW 1:00pm 8 is Enough	27 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW 11:30am The Gathering	28 6:30am AA 8:00am WW 9:30am WW 10:00am Vision Team Meeting
29 Palm Sunday 6:30am AA 8:30am Choir Rehearsal 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship Time 11:00am Adult Sunday School 6:00pm AA	30 6:30am AA 12:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm AA Monday Night 12 & 12	31 6:30am AA 9:30am Bell Practice 10:00am Prayer Group 6:00pm WW 7:00pm Scouts				

Fellowship Opportunities







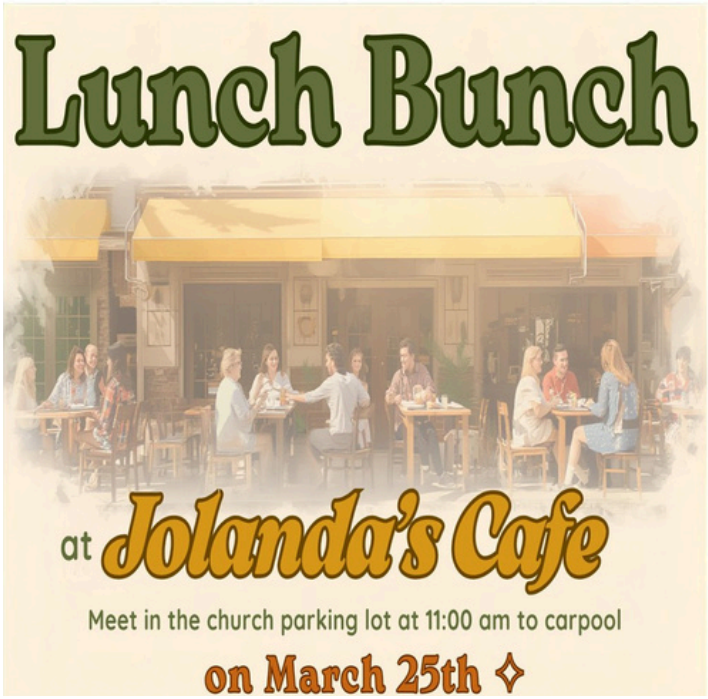


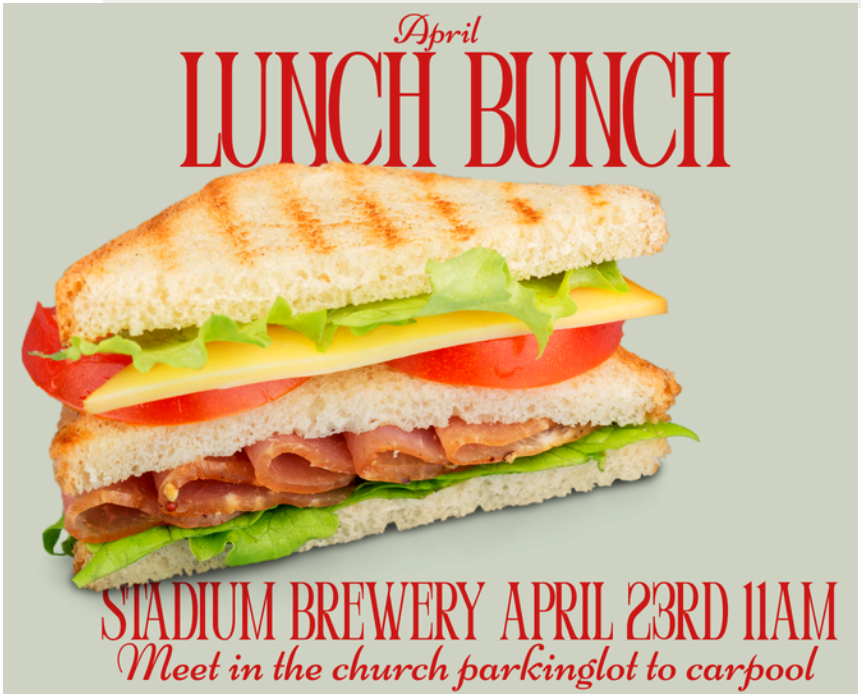
Shuffle, Deal, and Laugh a Little!

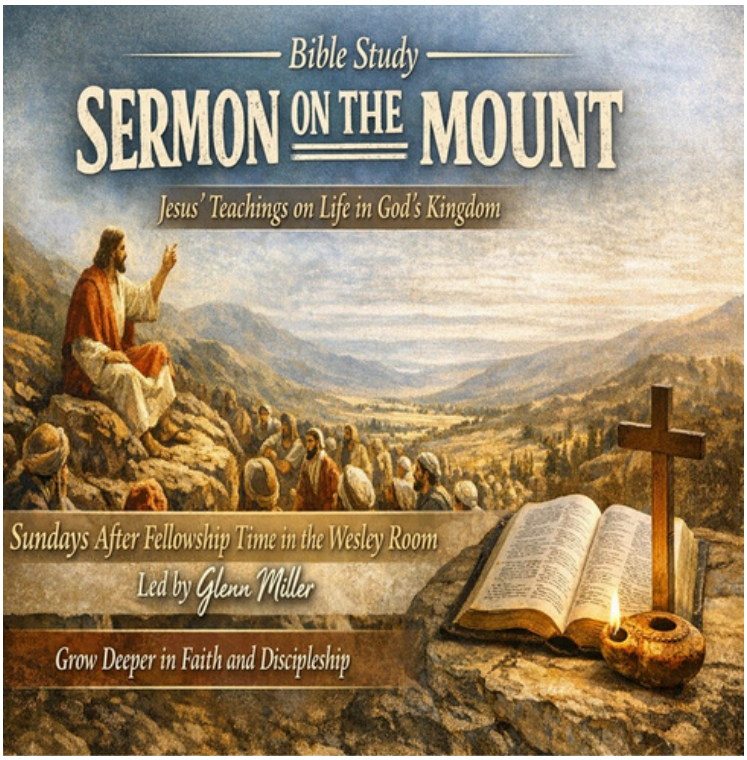
Love playing bridge, but not the pressure of high-stakes games? Join our church bridge group for fun, fellowship, and plenty of laughter. We're all about good cards, good company, and maybe even a few good snacks.
No trophies, no stress—just friends around the table. Come play a hand (or two)!

Check out our services at
Lagunacountryumc.org
or on
Laguna Country UMC
YouTube

Fellowship Opportunities









New Member Reception

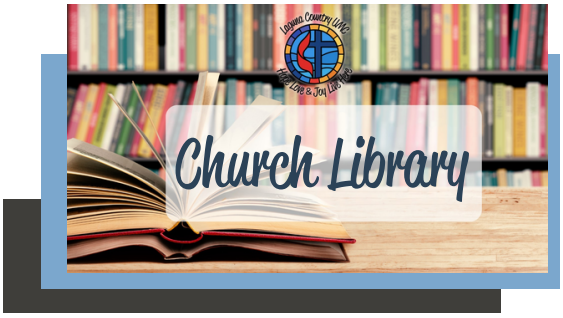


Barbara Gile

Barbara transfers her membership from the Whittier United Methodist Church where she has been active for many years. Her first contact with Laguna Woods Church was at The Gathering Lunch at Restaurant 19, several months ago. She attended our History of the Bible Seminar in October or 2025, then came to worship services here. We welcome Barbara. Kim Lee is her sponsor.

Melanie Makakaufaki

Melanie's family immigrated from Tonga 45 years ago. They moved to Laguna Hills about 40 years ago and became active at here at Laguna Country Church in the early 80's. Melanie and her three siblings were all baptized here. Melanie and her mother have been attending the Free Church of Tonga in Riverside for several years, and Melanie comes to reinstate her membership here at Laguna Country Church. We welcome you back, Melanie. Kim Lee requested to also be Melanie's sponsor.



Help Us Start Our Church Library!

We're excited to share that our church is starting a brand-new library! Our hope is to create a cozy little corner filled with books that encourage faith, inspire hope, and bring joy to readers of all ages.

To get started, we'd love your help. If you have gently used books—Christian living, devotionals, Bible studies, children's stories, or even good, wholesome fiction—please consider donating them. Every book will help build a collection that our whole church family can enjoy.

Donations can be dropped off in the church office during the week or placed in the library donation box in the foyer on Sundays. Thank you for helping us plant the seeds of a library that will bless our community for years to come!

Lent at LCUMC







Missions

Supporting Young People Through Orangewood Foundation

Thank you to everyone who has generously supported our latest mission collection! Our church partnered with the Orangewood Foundation in Santa Ana to care for young people in Orange County who are transitioning out of foster care, experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of human trafficking.

Orangewood serves youth ages 16–24+ with compassion, stability, and practical resources that help them build independence and hope for the future. Because of your generosity, we were able to collect essential, full-size hygiene items, canned goods for their food pantry, and gift cards to places like Target, Walmart, local grocery stores, Uber, and Lyft. These gift cards not only meet practical needs but also help teach valuable money management skills.

Every donation—large or small—makes a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable youth in our community. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ and for showing such generous support as we concluded this important collection.



Summary of Men's Breakfast Discussion, February 21st

At our recent Men's Breakfast, eleven men gathered to reflect on a challenging question first raised at our January planning meeting: Why do we wear masks? What initially felt like an intimidating topic led to a meaningful and honest conversation. The morning began with a thoughtful devotional by Glenn Miller, which set the tone for open sharing.

Many expressed that we hide our true selves out of fear—fear of rejection, failure, or exposure. Like Adam and Eve in the garden, we often try to cover what we perceive as our shortcomings or sin. We may wear masks to gain acceptance, to appear stronger than we feel, or to prevent others from seeing our struggles. At times, this can become a form of hypocrisy—presenting ourselves as something we are not because we doubt that we or others can handle the truth.

Biblical and cultural examples helped illustrate the point. Moses wore a veil after encountering God. The Phantom of the Opera and the Wizard of Oz were mentioned as images of masks hiding deformity, weakness, or insecurity. Humor, competence, or positivity can also serve as masks—covering depression, self-doubt, or what one participant called "delusions of adequacy."

Yet the discussion also acknowledged that masks are not always negative. Sometimes we "wear" one to protect others—such as holding back our own grief to support someone else, or taking health precautions during COVID to protect ourselves and our neighbors.

In the end, the conversation revealed something deeper: beneath every mask is a longing to be known and accepted. We all desire the reassurance expressed so simply in Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood: "I love you just the way you are."



March Men's Breakfast Seeking Peace of Mind Together

In a world that feels increasingly busy and noisy, many of us are quietly asking the same question: How do we achieve peace of mind?

Is it found in slowing down? In stronger faith? In deeper friendships? In learning to trust God more fully?

On Saturday, March 21st at 9:30 AM, the men of our church are invited to gather for a special Men's Breakfast—a morning of food, fellowship, and reflection centered on this important topic. Over coffee and a hearty breakfast, we'll spend time encouraging one another and exploring what Scripture teaches about true peace—not the kind that depends on circumstances, but the kind that steadies the heart even in uncertain times. Peace of mind isn't something we manufacture on our own; it grows as we deepen our trust in God, strengthen our community, and open our hearts to His presence.

This will be a relaxed and welcoming time together. Whether you've attended before or this is your first time, you are invited. Bring a friend, an appetite, and an open heart.
We look forward to sharing this meaningful morning with you.

Support & Wellness Groups

Meeting On Our Campus

Our church is grateful to provide space throughout the week for several support and wellness groups that serve both our congregation and the wider community. These gatherings offer encouragement, accountability, and a place to walk alongside others on the journey toward healing and wholeness.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Three AA groups meet regularly at our church, each offering a confidential and welcoming environment for anyone seeking support in recovery.

- Daily AA Meeting — Every morning at 7:00 a.m.
- Monday Evening AA — Mondays at 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday Evening AA — Sundays at 6:00 p.m.

These groups follow the long-standing AA tradition of mutual support, honesty, and shared experience. Newcomers are always welcome.

Al-Anon

Al-Anon provides support for family members and friends of those affected by alcoholism.

- Al-Anon Meeting — Mondays at 12:30 p.m.

This group offers a compassionate space to find understanding, strength, and hope.

Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers meets several times each week, offering guidance, community, and encouragement for those pursuing healthier habits.

- Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.
- Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.
- Fridays at 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.
- Saturdays at 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

These meetings provide practical tools and supportive accountability for anyone seeking a healthier lifestyle.

By opening our doors to these groups, our church participates in a quiet but meaningful ministry—offering space where people can find strength, connection, and renewed hope. All groups welcome newcomers, and all gatherings are held with respect, confidentiality, and care.



Laguna Country | United Women in Faith

Carrying Our Blessings Forward

Yellow: Life in Christ; Green: Sisterhood; Orange: Action; Blue: Faith

Who are we? We're a sisterhood acting in faith to tackle the hard work of the world without hesitation.

The Mission: United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

The Vision: Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

The Purpose: We are a community of women whose purpose is to know God; to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

"Justice for Women, Children and Youth: Justice is Love in Action" was the theme of the Cal-Pac UWFaith 2026 Mid-Winter Event. Laura Daillak, Lulu Emery, and I attended the event at Claremont UMC on February 21, 2026. The attendees were divided into three breakout groups: Immigration, Navigating Transitions in Life, and Human Trafficking. We heard about the program and services of David and Margaret Youth and Family Services. Local Units that met the requirements of the 2025 Mission Today and Reading Program were recognized, Laguna Country UWF was one of them in both categories. Congratulations, Laguna Country UWF!

We mailed out 14 Valentine's cards to homebound/shut-in members. Thank you, Meg Estrada, for making the beautiful cards

Our next UWF general meeting is on Saturday, March 21st, at 9:30 am. Our guest speaker is Lulu Emery. Come hear what life was like for someone who was born and grew up as a Palestinian Christian in Palestine. Don't miss it.

We need your help to create a cookbook. We are excited to announce that we will be collecting recipes to be included in the cookbook. More detailed information will follow

As always, we welcome your comments and input. Please see any of the UWF officers; we'd love to hear from you!

Thank you for all your support and contributions. Laguna Country UWF is unstoppable!

Laddie Perez, President





faith
action
sisterhood





Meetings That Work Start With a Reservation

Please Reserve Church Spaces in Advance

To help keep our church running smoothly and ensure everyone has the space they need, all meetings held at the church must be scheduled in advance. Rooms and meeting times need to be reserved ahead of time—unfortunately, we're not able to accommodate groups who simply show up or request space the day of.

Planning ahead helps us avoid conflicts, communicate clearly, and be good stewards of our shared spaces. If you're organizing a meeting, we encourage you to reserve your room and time as early as possible.

Ashleigh is happy to help with communication for your meeting, including announcements or reminders. Thank you for your cooperation and for helping keep things running smoothly for everyone!

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