



## *First Congregational Church of Santa Ana*

A diverse Christian fellowship open to all and dedicated to singing God's praises, learning God's word, and loving one another on our journey of faith.

### *A Message from Pastor Leo*

I think most of us have 'the gift' of just knowing some things. It may be as simple as having the right word or advice, knowing just what to say in the moment of a crisis to turn the situation around. What about that moment when you know that the student is struggling to arrive at the right conclusion; you are tempted to disclose that one additional clue; your wisdom compels you to give it an extra moment. The student shouts, 'Aha, I got it!' What about a time when you were looking at a printed recipe and thinking a step is missing, or another ingredient would make this dish taste much better.

How many of you have followed a series of steps in your mind's eye to solve a situation and thought that is not going to work? A step is missing. We all have 'the gift' of just knowing some things. Other times we may just get lucky. Luck counts too!

I was looking at a YouTube video a few days ago about two siblings who were born prematurely. One of the babies was faring well, while the other one, not so much. The nurses feared the worst. One of the caregivers decided to place the two siblings in the same crib so neither would be alone in that cold, sterile, safe environment. The stronger sibling placed her arm around her ailing sister. They somehow knew they had a place. I can only imagine the two siblings feeling, 'I know you' from deep within, 'I know who you are.' Some things you just know.

In our reading, Jesus is in the temple teaching. The crowd is gathering. His listeners are stunned at his teachings -about God. A man walks up to him and says, 'I know who you are.' With a series of verbal exchanges, Jesus silences him. At that moment, a silence fell over the crowd, 'Who is this? They asked, 'even impure

spirits obey him?' -I know who you are.

...hear the word of the Lord.

*Be Blessed!*

*Pastor Leo*

## **Why We Lament**

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck America during the middle of Lent, a season associated with deprivation. Some people made light of the shutdowns, joking, “I didn’t mean to give up *this* much for Lent!” Others asked why the suffering was occurring in the first place.

Professor N.T. Wright, in an essay for *Time*, explains that asking “why?” but receiving no answer is key to biblical lamenting. Adding to the mystery, he says, is that God also laments — grieving at the wickedness of humans, despairing over Israel’s unfaithfulness. Jesus cries at a friend’s tomb; the Holy Spirit groans in anguish.

“Part of the Christian vocation,” Wright concludes, is not being able to explain why but lamenting instead. “As the Spirit laments within us,” he says, “so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities ... new hope.”

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## **Quote of the Month “**

“We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19, NIV). *Valentine’s Day is fun, but I pray, God, that you show me how to share your love every day of the year.*

## **February Worship Theme**

Our worship theme this month is centered around *compassion* for God’s people and all creation.

“And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor political, nor popular, but he/she/they must take it because his/her/their conscience tells him/her/they it is right.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Scout Sunday



Scout Sunday is February 7th! There will not be any pancakes this year, but the Scouts will still be presenting their Honor Guard during our Zoom Worship service at 10:30 am. Let's salute the scouts!

February 7th is also communion Sunday. Please prepare your elements! Remember, you can use the bread recipe pastor Leo sent out. See the attachment.

## Celebrating Love

For 80 years, a couple in Ecuador was an exceptional example of marital love. Julio Cesar Mora Tapia, 110, and Waldramina Maclovia Quinteros Reyes, 104, were wed on February 7, 1941. Until Julio's death last October, they were reportedly the world's oldest married couple. Their large family includes nine great-great-grandchildren!

Good News Network recounts: "Julio Cesar fell in love with Waldramina's beauty, her conversation, and her big heart." Meanwhile, she found in him "a poet with a young spirit." The couple says the formula for a lasting marriage is "love + maturity + mutual respect," as well as patience, compassion and hard work.

That calls to mind Paul's words, often read at weddings: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-6, ESV).

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## Holy Action Meeting

This month's Holy Action/Council meeting will be on Sunday, February 14th, following our service.

## Trustees Meeting

The Board of Trustees will on February 22nd at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

## **A Daily Prayer**

*Whatever happens today, dear Lord, help us remember that you are present. If we find ourselves in the shadows of disappointment or rejection or pain, let us see your comforting light. If we're in the radiant light of success or acceptance or wholeness, may we acknowledge your providence and grace. Wherever we are, grant us the assurance of your nearness. Amen.*

## **Next Drive-In Service**

This month's Drive-in service is TBD. We'll have the date out to you very soon!

## **A Letter from Friends**

Dear Church Family,

We are disappointed that we cannot be with you in person to turn our pledge for 2021. You may wonder why we continue our pledge, even though it has been several years since we have had the joy of worshipping with you in person.

The people of First Congregational Santa Ana are so important to us for many reasons, and we continue to be in community with you, even if only in our hearts.

You were there when Lenny returned to the faith of his youth. You were there when Louise embraced a new faith. You enthusiastically welcomed us as members. You put us to work, which further strengthened our faith as we put Jesus' teachings into action. You supported us with your prayers as we presented our story of disillusionment, despair, hope and healing to hurting marriages in over 30 Retrouvaille weekends. You continue that support to marriages by providing facilities to Retrouvaille of Orange Coast for their monthly meetings and special events, even though we are no longer directly involved with that community. That is a commitment of about 15 years to date.

When Lenny discerned his call to ordained ministry, you were there to support and encourage him to act upon that call. Lenny's ordination in 2009 was such a joyous occasion for all of us! Each opportunity to preach in his parent sanctuary was a pleasure. It was a privilege to serve you in the weeks following Pastor Larry's untimely death.

And so, dear friends, it is important to us to continue to support our "home church" as best as we are able. May the Lord bless you and keep you, always.

Peace,  
Lenny and Louise

## **Hymns requests**

What is your favorite hymn? We are taking requests. Let pastor Leo or Susan Semotan know what hymn you would like to hear at the next worship service.

## **Fasting from Criticalness**

Most fasting involves temporarily giving up something you enjoy. When you long for a cookie or a favorite show, you instead turn your attention to God, reorienting yourself to his best.

Catherine Marshall, in *A Closer Walk*, presents a different approach she calls fasting from “criticalness.” God dealt with her judgmental spirit by prompting her to spend 24 hours without criticizing “anyone about anything.” At first, Marshall felt rather empty when she didn’t engage in a heated political debate. But friends and family didn’t seem to miss her comments. Plus, God replaced the energy she’d spent attempting to correct others with energy and creativity to positively influence them.

A critical spirit can make us lose perspective, joy and even relationships. It also can prevent the good work God wants to achieve through us. Consider what could happen as a result of your own “criticalness fast.” Pray for God to do the correcting while you focus on building up others.      -Jenna Firestone

## **Lay Readers Needed**

Please select a month that best complements your schedule.

**January** - Darvie Aquino

**February** - Jim Wueve

**March** -Susan Semotan

**April**- Steve Semotan

**May**- Linda Eslinger

**June**- Chloe Castillo

**July**- Patricia Lynch

**August**-Samantha Castillo

**September**

**October**

**November**

**December**



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**Worship services are held virtually** every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom.

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## Scripture Readings:

- February 7: Isa 40:21-31  
Ps 147:1-11, 20c  
1 Cor 9:16-23  
**Mk 1:29-39**
- February 14: 2 Kings 2:1-12  
Ps 50:1-6  
2 Cor 4:3-6  
**Mk 9:2-9**
- February 17: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17  
**Ash**  
**Wednesday**  
Ps 51:1-17  
2 Cor 5:20b-6:10  
Matt 6:1-6, 16-21
- February 21: Gen 9:8-17  
**First Sunday**  
**In Lent**  
**Ps 25:1-10**  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:9-15
- February 28: Gen 17:1-7, 15-16  
**Ps 22:23-31**  
Rom 4:13-25  
Mk 8:31-38



# FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>  Jan. 7th- Linda Eslinger	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>7</b> 10:30 am Zoom Worship <b>Communion Sunday/            Scout Sunday</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 10:30 am Zoom Worship <b>Transfiguration            Sunday</b> 	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 10:30 am Zoom Worship <b>First Sunday in Lent</b>	<b>22</b> 7:00 pm Trustees Zoom Meeting	<b>23</b>  Feb. 7th- Dick Rubidoux Feb. 14th- Kaia Stewart	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 
<b>28</b> 10:30 am Zoom Worship						