

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH



Annual Report 2020-21

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Lead Pastor's Report

by Pastor Marco Ambriz



Since our founding in 1887, First Covenant Church has been through many challenging seasons, one of them being the 1918 Influenza which closed our church doors for worship for six weeks. While there are many stories of challenges that our church has survived through the decades, it can now be said that the COVID-19 pandemic has led us into one of the most challenging seasons our church has experienced in its history. This includes our decision to cease meeting in person for worship for thirteen months, financial challenges resulting from sudden loss of income, the pain of heightened racial unrest, the ever-widening gap of political stances among Christians in our country, the exhaustion, anxiety, and depression intensified by sheltering in place, the mental fatigue of making frequent decisions in the face of unknowns, the difficulty of navigating differing opinions on the “best” way to handle the pandemic, the constant need to pivot and learn to do things in new ways, and the deep sadness over losing dear loved ones. It certainly has been one of the most difficult seasons of church leadership that I have ever experienced and I can only imagine the same is true for many in our congregation and many around the world. While we are not totally out of the woods from the pandemic, we are seeing a new season on the horizon and I want to celebrate what God has given us despite these challenges we have endured.

A Church that Never Closed – “When will the church re-open?” was one of the most common questions asked this past year. I know what it means, but I can still confidently say that the church never closed. The mission of Jesus and the vision God has given FCC continues with or without large public gatherings. In the Latino church tradition, there is a song that says, “En la lucha y en la prueba, la Iglesia sigue caminando.” (In the struggle and in the trial, the Church keeps marching forward.) That’s what I love about the body of Christ. It triumphs in the midst of the hardest challenges. While we definitely felt the loss of not gathering in person and we had to do things very differently, the Holy Spirit never socially distanced from us, and our ministry of teaching the Word of God, discipleship, outreach, and care never stopped.

A Courageous and Creative Leadership – I want to praise God for the staff, church board, and volunteer leadership of FCC exercising enormous faith in carrying out the ministry of our church this year. Please join me in giving thanks for all of our staff and volunteer leaders, particularly our church board and council, who under the leadership of Andy Wen helped us face the challenges of the past year with grit, determination, prayer, creativity, collaboration, and boldness. Our online worship experience, pivot to virtual gatherings across all of our ministries, pursuit of racial righteousness, safety protocols for our church and preschool, benevolence and care, connection and support groups, local and global mission partnerships, facilities and financial stewardship, and more, would not have been possible without their adaptive, courageous, and creative leadership.

A Generous Community – Miroslav Volf in his book *Free of Charge* says, “No life is worth living without generosity.” I would add that no church is worth existing without generosity. This is only because, as Volf describes, the generosity of God is what has saved us and is now shaping us to look more like Christ. I am convinced that God wants the church to be the most generous organism on earth. Not reckless or careless, but a community of people who are so committed to

God's kingdom that we move counter-culturally to the idea of self preservation. Many of you have made the commitment to financially support your church's mission and vision, to give of your time and talents by volunteering in a variety of ministries, and to share your life and your presence with others in connection groups and community in the midst of such a difficult year. Thank you for being such a hopeful, patient, loving, and generous church.

What Now? Looking Toward the Horizon

As we look to a new season and into the 2020-2021 ministry year I want to share a few areas for vision and prayer:

In-Person and Online Community - We have resumed meeting in person and indoors for worship and will continue to go forward with hopeful caution as we prioritize the safety of our community above our own preferences and comforts. We will simultaneously continue to improve our digital resources and online worship as those tools are here to stay. We will continue to be open to new methods God would want us to use for ministry in a fast-paced digital world, without denying the power of gathering in person.

Care Ministries, Mental Health, and Stephen Ministry - We expect a continued and increasing need for financial assistance and mental health resources for our church and our community as we seek to recover from the stress, tension, and unexpected hardships caused by the pandemic. FCC will continue to allocate portions of its budget for care and counseling resources and our Deacon Benevolent Fund will continue to support our church family through crises. We will continue to offer support groups, partnerships, and resources for the mental and emotional health of our church and community. We will continue to mobilize our Deacons and Deaconesses to care for our church in areas of need. We will be launching more education and training for our Stephen Ministry program this coming year to support our Stephen Leaders and Ministers in their ministry of care and listening.

Updating our Governance and Bylaws - FCC has always believed that its methods of administration and governance can adapt according to the changing needs of our church, as long as the Gospel and the Great Commission of Jesus remain our driving force. We are hearing the collective discernment from our church family, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and other Christian Organizational leaders and specialists that it is important to consider a new governance model to accomplish our mission in the face of a changing world. In the coming months, our Church Board and Bylaws Committee will be presenting a proposal to our congregation to update our church bylaws to support a one-church-board model of governance. If adopted by our congregation, this change would enable a clear organizational structure with one visionary and fiduciary church board elected by and accountable to the congregation, and it would enable us to mobilize even more volunteers and leaders through non-elected ministry teams.

Commitment to Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice - The Gospel of Jesus is good news because it leads to real transformation. When Jesus prayed for God's kingdom here on earth, he was not limiting that prayer to the private spiritual lives of individuals, but to whole communities, cities, and even nations. To follow Jesus is to pursue his purposes for the world, socially, not just individually. At FCC, we are committed to engaging in action and movements that promote Christ's love, peace, and justice in the City of Oakland and around the world. We will continue to hold events and provide resources to equip the church to pursue racial reconciliation as a diverse church body, biblically rooted social justice as the hands and feet of Jesus in our city, spiritual warfare against systems of oppression in our world, and inclusion for

marginalized people as Jesus called us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Initiative for Women in Pastoral Ministry - Our budget for this next fiscal year includes a \$45K investment (\$15K per year over the next three years) to fund an Initiative for Women In Pastoral Ministry. This initiative will support women as they pursue professional development in pastoral ministry either in the local church or in another vocational ministry setting. The fund will support women through internships and scholarships. Women who are gifted and called to pastoral ministry will have the opportunity to experience hands-on training through an internship hosted by FCC for a period of time. We will provide scholarships for seminary, ordination, or ministry education for women in our FCC community. We praise God that FCC continues to champion women as pastoral leaders for the Church.

Staff Updates - In the past year, several of our staff members have concluded their staff service at FCC. We want to thank Shelley Holst for over four years as our Office and Facilities Manager, Bunpak, Thos, and Susan Noeum for their collective fifteen years as our Custodians, and Pastor Nancy Lewis for her twenty-four years of pastoral ministry, our longest serving pastor in FCC's history. In June, we welcomed Joey Le to our team as our part-time Director of Spiritual Formation, and we look forward to his leadership of our connection groups, discipleship resources, and spiritual formation ministries. In the coming year, we hope to address our church's ongoing ministry needs through volunteer leadership and/or employed staff in the areas of congregational care, worship ministry, young adults ministry, and administrative and operations support.

1824 College & Young Adults Ministry

Our 1824 Young Adults ministry exists to equip young adults ages 18-24 to follow Jesus in their everyday lives by providing connection and equipping events, discipleship resources, and community and fellowship. This year along with everyone else, we pivoted to provide our ministry online for most of the year and were still able to hold seven events for our young adults to connect. We also provided a variety of video discipleship resources featuring leaders and young adults, and provided personal mentoring and support for our young adults as needed. We look forward to seeing more of what God has for our young adults in the coming year. Join me in praying for this ministry and thanking God for the 2020-2021 Leadership Team that served during this past year: Adrien and Zoe Abuyen, Elisa Rea, Wade Greenacre, Esther and Joey Le, Temi and Matt Lane, and Nicole and Marco Ambriz.

Church Board Chair's Report

by Andy Wen

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ at First Covenant Church of Oakland,

Though it seems so long ago, it was only last January 2020 that we started hearing about a public health crisis which would later be called the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since then, the world has suffered and over 600,000 Americans have died from illnesses associated with COVID-19. In addition, we have experienced an economic crisis, political unrest, nationwide protests, fires and smoke, frustration about racism & injustice, violence against people of color,



etc. Though we did not see any of these troubles coming, we know that none of this is a surprise to God. Though He knows the frailties and sinfulness of our species, God remains faithful and true. He continues to love us even though we don't deserve it, and He remains the Good Shepherd.

Looking back over the last eighteen months, and indeed, since the founding of First Covenant Church of Oakland (originally called the Swedish Emanuel Church) in 1887, God has blessed us much more than we could have hoped for and definitely much more than we deserve. No matter how rough things are or get, let us remember how much God loves us, how generously God has provided for us, and how God wants us to share the Light and Love that He has so graciously given to us.

Let us give thanks that our financial situation remains strong. Let us give thanks that even with the economic stress associated with Treehouse's complete closure followed by a limited reopening, we have continued the Lord's work at FCC and beyond. It is noteworthy that even in the context of a significant reduction in revenue and an uncertain economy, our congregation approved a motion at our 2020 Annual Meeting to use our financial reserves as needed to continue supporting Treehouse employees, missions, and ministry staff until a substantial portion of our reserves get depleted. With His guidance and courage, we made this commitment before vaccines were available and when the pandemic and financial situation were much more concerning.

Let us give thanks that with careful stewardship, tithing, revenue, and generous giving from previous years, the Lord has enabled us to continue His work at FCC and beyond. Let us give thanks that even with our preparation for worst case scenarios, our deficit spending has been minimal and our financial situation remains strong. Now, with some things improving, let us give thanks that the Lord is giving us new ministry opportunities to serve Him and to share His love.

Speaking of ministry opportunities, let us give thanks for how God has led our ministry staff and congregation to find new ways to serve and encourage one another during these difficult times when many have struggled and suffered. Let us give thanks for our Pastors and ministry staff, who have developed new ways to help us gather in fellowship and to worship the Lord, first via digital tools and now with in-person worship services. May God continue to bless these humble shepherds who have served us, the flock, with faithfulness and dedication, both publicly and behind the scenes.

Since most of our ministries are done in our everyday lives and without public fanfare, please join me in giving thanks for all of the Lord's servants at FCC. As Jesus encouraged, part of our mission is to love one another, and during this painful time, there have been plenty of opportunities for service, prayer, and love.

Please also join me in thanking the members of your 2020-2021 Church Board, who during this time of crisis after crisis, have prayerfully and faithfully served FCC and the Lord with dedication and sacrifice. Let us also give thanks for our many volunteers who have followed the example of generations of previous servant-leaders to serve the Lord, our congregation, and people outside of our congregation. As part of the larger body of Christ, our greatest asset is not our financial situation or our physical campus--those things are like dust. Our greatest assets are our congregation, our fellowship under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and our saving relationship with the Holy Trinity.

Thank you for praying for the Lord's ministries and for each other during these difficult times.

The challenges of 2020 and 2021 have hit us all differently and some of us have suffered grievous losses. Though the Enemy loves to stir up trouble, vulnerability, pain, and fear, sometimes these stressful things help us to see through the fog and darkness so we can grab on to God's goodness, faithfulness, and love. Isn't it wonderful that our big, big God loves us even though we are so small?

Thank you for giving me the privilege to serve as your Chair of the Church Board for the last three years. As my time as Chair comes to an end, I am grateful to have served and I'm excited by how God will continue to lead, challenge, and bless our congregation for His glory and His purposes. May He continue to bless and guide our Pastors, ministry leaders, and congregational members who serve the Lord and our congregation with such love and devotion. May God continue to help us remember our mission to equip people to follow Jesus in their everyday lives, to love the Lord with all of our hearts, to love others more than ourselves, and to help others experience God's love. Though we don't know the future, we know who holds the future, and in His wonderful hands, we can have peace.

May God continue to bless you and yours.

In Christ,

Andy Wen, 2018-2021 Chair of the FCC Church Board

Church Board Members

Andy Wen (Chair), Paul Figueroa (Vice-Chair), Joanna Trammell (Secretary), David Latham (Treasurer), Ryan Ong (Finance Chair), Ryan Miya (CE Chair), Carl Holmes (Lay Ministry Chair), Cheryl Bolling (Deaconess Chair), Richard Cherry (Deacon Chair), Nanette Mocanu (Facilities Chair), Viji Cammauf (Missions Chair), CD Davis and Marcus Amaro (At Large Members), Marco Ambriz (Lead Pastor)

Children's & Men's Ministries

by Pastor Danny Fitelson

Children's Ministry

In June 2020, FCC conducted its first ever online Kids Camp. Aside from a couple hiccups, it went remarkably well. We were blessed and, frankly, surprised to see kids standing in their living rooms singing along to camp songs. It was good to balance the large group format (skits, videos, lessons) with small group Zooms (crafts, discussion). By the end of the summer, some new Kids Camp families had begun to check out our church's other ministries.



With the start of the school year, we had to figure out how we were going to do kids ministry during a pandemic. Our pastors made the choice to include a kids message in the main church service each week. In some ways this helped to bridge the gap between our youngest and oldest attenders. Our kids feel like they know me and our other pastors better after seeing us on their screens for the last year. However, like with Kids Camp, this large group format was not enough – kids ministry needs time for smaller group interaction. We achieved this through a weekly Song & Storytime Zoom for 2-5 year olds and Kids Club Online for elementary. I cannot say

strongly enough how wonderful it was to work with Ginny Halstead and Noah Mitchell on these. They both are great with kids and model the heart of Jesus. I grew closer to many of our kids through these Zooms in a way that I don't think would have been possible through in-person ministry.

My report last year included the hope to one day hold a send-off event for our 5th graders as they move on to middle school. We were able to do that recently and invited both our current 5th graders and the 6th graders who did not get a send-off last year. Our Sunday School teachers shared about the impression each kid has left on them and Pastor Sarah gave them a preview of middle school group. The C.E. Board did a great job of hosting the event and providing ice cream. We will seek to repeat this event each year, in the same way high school group does with its Grad Banquet.

As we look ahead to starting up weekly Sunday School in-person again, I am seeing this as an opportunity to "start over" in some ways. We do not have to go back to exactly how things were done in the past. In July/August of this summer, I will be seeking to put together a new team of leaders who love kids and love Jesus and want to invest in kids ministry for the next few years. I feel like this could be the beginning of a new phase of kids ministry at First Covenant Church. WARNING: I will be contacting some of you!

Overall, it was a year of trying to make the most of things. Since we couldn't have everyone in the gym on Halloween, we held a drive-thru Pumpkin Patch. When Camp Cov 2020 was cancelled, we had an online talent show and for 2021 we had Weekend Together with a magic show and a carnival in our parking lot. We gave Advent and Easter goodie bags to kids and brought mystery guests in to do lessons. In the fall, one of our kids moved 300 miles away but continued to watch on Sundays and join on Zoom every week, which is something that could not have happened a couple years ago. Despite the challenges, God's message of love continued to go forth.

Kids Camp 2020 staff: Heather Robertson (director), Nick Hager, Noah Mitchell, Emily Wen, Anna Wong (interns), Joseph Haggerty, Hayden Holliman, Hans Johnson, Katie Wen (Lead Counselors). Thanks also to Keith Holmlund, Reto Peter, and Andy Gagliardi for making it possible to stream it online.

Men's Ministry

When shelter in place started in March 2020, we had just begun a series of Saturday morning get togethers called Bagels, Bibles, and Bro-Time. The hope was that these would serve as a "medium sized event" – not as large as our Breakfast Buffet or BBQ Cook-off but bigger than a connection group or Bible Study. After going through Genesis in person, we covered the final four books of the Pentateuch online over Zoom. I will say that while we heard some great teaching, I look back at these events with a tinge of sadness at not getting to be together in person. Same too for our BBQ Cook-off... eating my own smoked chicken while listening to John Farnham teach over Zoom wasn't the same as getting to sample other guys' grilled delights. But we made the most of it and "did not give up the habit of meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25).

In Spring 2021, as Covid was lessening and Zoom fatigue was increasing, we decided to focus on a different way of connecting with God and others. We began to hold Walk & Talks, in which guys went on a 1-hour, 1-on-1, masked walk together while each reflected on the question: "what is something that God is calling me to do in my life right now?" Over fifty men took part in a Walk & Talk and I am hoping we can make this a regular part of our men's ministry.

Youth Ministries

by Pastor Sarah Henry

What an incredibly remarkable year it has been!

When the pandemic hit in March of 2019, our ministries immediately shifted into safe and yet effective ministry models. We moved our weekly meetings online and focused heavily on being present with our students in a difficult season.



Over the summer, we came up with creative solutions for regularly scheduled summer fun. We hosted “Escape Camp” for our MS students. This was a one-week online camp that hosted a plethora of tangible activities for them at home. They painted, crafted, solved escape rooms, and learned about the story of Moses from their own homes. Each evening they had a snack challenge, in which we equipped them with recipes and materials to create yummy treats. Thank you to Wina & Calista Burnama, Erin Geng, Alex Figueroa, Tay Lew, and Rhonda Ramos for making this an amazing experience.

In the fall, we decided to try something “crazy.” We created ‘Treks’. Treks were envisioned to give our students some choice in their discipleship journeys. Every 4-6 weeks, we would invite students to register for one of four different Treks. Each one was unique and special. We held “Back to the Future,” “Look & See,” “Squad Up,” “Stretch,” “True Story,” “Canceled,” “Merry Christmas to Me,” “Goals,” “Lost & Found,” “Forever,” “Waitlisted,” and “Anthem.” Each of these treks were led by 2-3 amazing Adult Leaders. They sacrificed so much time discipling these students, creating “swag bags” (filled with fun things, snacks, and items specific for their treks), praying together, and visiting students in an incredibly lonely and isolating season. Thank you to this year’s adult leaders: Alex Figueroa, Wina Burnama, Toni Burnama, Calista Burnama, Elias Tadesse, Tay Lew, Erin Geng, Dave Geng, Brad Henry, Heather Robertson, Lisa Eliot, Haley Tang, Bethany Fitelson, Jim Hampton, Steven Wilson, and Marcus Leung. And of course a big thank you to our staff, Intern Donovan Zedd and my right hand partner, Rhonda Ramos!

We also adjusted our Sunday Sems to fit the current season. We held weekly meetings online for Middle AND High School. High School continued in their series, “Studying Scripture Like a Boss,” in which they learned about language, cultural context, and spiritual listening! Middle School read through chapter after chapter of the Word. In total, they read six books of the Bible before we turned to a new series: “Weird Bible Stories.” In this series we explored some of the more colorful narratives. I was AMAZED at how intelligent, curious, and spiritually in-tune these Middle School students were. Sunday Sem became a highlight of every week because our students were soaking in the Word and consistently hungry for more! Praise God!

We didn’t stay completely online, however. With about a month left in our ministry season, we hosted our first in-person outdoor youth group! Wearing masks and practicing social distancing was not difficult when they weighed the joy of being together in person! We were able to see over fifty students during our final in-person gatherings! We also were able to host our annual grad banquet outside. We said good by to eighteen students this year. It was a blessing to celebrate the eleven who were able to attend the event.

And now, here we are. We are planning another ministry year in an ever-changing season. As

always, we focus on Christ at the center of who we are, what we do, and what we hope for for our students in the future. Pray that God continues to bring us Christ-loving adult leaders who are focused on tearing down every wall that gets in the way of our students' abilities to see Jesus. That is why we exist. May our students always remember who and whose they are!

Cambodian Ministry

by Pastor Chamron Phal

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere." - 2 Corinthians 2:14



Praise and thanks be to our great GOD for His victory and for allowing us to be part of His kingdom work on earth in continuing to spread the aroma of the knowledge of our precious and powerful LORD and SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. What an honor and privilege for us to be His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Because of this great and guaranteed victory, we can move forward with the Lord Jesus in spite of the COVID-19 that caused a lot of changes, difficulties, death, trauma, fear, loss, and uncertainty. Jesus is alive! Jesus is still on His throne in heaven and in our lives. Everything changes, but the Word of our LORD never changes. His true and trustworthy Word endures forever and ever. Thank you JESUS!

Everything around us changes. The way we do ministry changes, people change, situations around us change, the way we live our lives has changed, and the ways we communicate with people have changed. Due to the pandemic, we cannot visit people as we normally do. Seems like all these oppositions have really challenged us to take a step back, pause, and spend more time in prayer seeking JESUS' new direction. When JESUS shows up, things will never be the same again. That's what JESUS does, just as He promised us. JESUS turned all of our oppositions into new opportunities for us to move forward in ministering to people in need in new and fresh ways.

Here's what the Cambodian Ministry has been up to during the pandemic: We have a regular weekly Thursday Bible study and Sunday worship on Zoom, and we are often joined by folks from Vietnam, Cambodia, and other U.S. states. We were invited by folks from Canada to share the Good News over Zoom on the last Sunday of the month. The most exciting opportunity has been preaching the Good News through a daily radio program to the Cambodian people in Cambodia and around the globe. What an amazing JESUS we have. JESUS is working in very quiet ways that have kind of caught us by surprise. Even when we don't see it, JESUS is always working. That's what it meant when JESUS said in John 5:17, "But JESUS replied, 'My Father is always working, and so am I.'" Because JESUS is always working, we must do the work of JESUS who sent us. We are so thankful that we were able to reopen for our first time of indoor worship on July 4th, and we are so thankful to have a beautiful place to worship in the Fireside room. We will continue to study the Word, worship indoors and on Zoom, and host our daily radio ministry. Through the radio program, many people have given their lives to JESUS.

We are so grateful to GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the Holy Spirit who always empowers us, enables us, and encourages us to do the things He wants us to do in these last days, that we may fulfill His plan and purpose on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you, First Covenant, for the faithful partnership, financial participation, and the fervent prayer.

Worship & Hospitality

by Rhonda Ramos

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

- Hebrews 10:23-25



We can all agree that it has been a season. A season of both hardships and blessings. We are grateful that we were able to continue to give God glory from our homes. It was also wonderful to see people from different cities, states and across the globe who were able to join us on Sundays. And we are grateful for brilliant minds to help us continue and improve our online streaming ministry.

God has never stopped moving in our midst and although at times it was difficult to seek Him at times. I know that we were encouraged through thoughtful prayers, songs that resonated with our hearts and insightful messages for kids, the kid in us and adults. We continued to seek Jesus in our everyday lives on how to live for him and into the unknowns as a community.

It was such a joy to be able to worship outdoors in our parking lot. Everyone rolled up their sleeves to help bring out chairs, direct car traffic and so much more. Our streaming and sound team partnership to bring creative solutions to the outdoors. We are also grateful for our congregation's patience as we were still figuring things out.

All in all, we continued to point to God and give thanks for the ways he has blessed us and gifted us. Abraham had set up altars in different spaces where he had experienced God and when he would pass them, it would remind him of hope. I know that as we move forward and are coming back into our sanctuary and as we continue to move forward, I pray that we wouldn't forget the spaces and places that we have experienced God in this past year. Maybe it was in your living room, backyard, bedroom or in the church parking lot, may we continue to look to Jesus and put our trust in Him!

Women's Ministry

by Becky Nielsen

Women's Ministry Team: Chelsea Boniak, Natalie Figueroa, Lena Leong, Christie Loux, and Becky Nielsen

The wonderful ladies who make up the Women's Ministry team have been working together now for five years to serve First Covenant Church families. We work to organize opportunities to help women of all ages come together for fellowship, build friendships, and grow in their relationships with Christ.



It has been another year of “Not Normal” in Women’s Ministry, but we have seen God working for His good. This past year, we have been reaching out from our homes through many Zoom activities. It is awesome to see how God has brought us together through our computer screens. We are so blessed and thankful for everyone who has helped us this year.

We began this year with asking women in our church to send video messages sharing scripture and some encouraging words that have helped them through this challenging time. It was a joy to hear from so many!

Starting in the fall, we hosted monthly events on Zoom. We thought it was important to provide a consistent way to gather as a community and it is always encouraging to see the familiar faces of our FCC sisters. Our events ranged from watching an interview with Tammy and Kirk Franklin, to Cooking with Lena, Crafting with Natalie, and even BINGO. In March, we hosted a two-day virtual women’s conference called IF:GATHERING. It was such an awesome experience to gather with over sixty ladies for two days in worship and hearing from many amazing speakers. From this conference, we have also been watching workshops and having discussions around such topics as Christianity and Politics, The Church’s role in Racial Reconciliation, Holy Parenting, Navigating Today’s Culture, Having a Healthy Relationship with our Bodies, and Anxiety. We are always so thankful for the many women who come to these discussions being vulnerable and willing to listen, learn and love! There is also FCC Mom’s group, Thursday morning Bible Study, and many connection groups that meet regularly through the year.

We are looking forward to gathering in person in the upcoming year. Thank you to all who have encouraged us this past year. Let’s continue to keep on being the church and praying for one another.

Treehouse Preschool & TK

by Jan Nienu

We are thankful to the Lord for His protection throughout this year. As we started the school session with all the uncertainties of COVID hanging over our heads, we prayed, cleaned the classrooms like crazy, and prayed some more. How thankful we are to report that we did not experience a single case at Treehouse. We hope for a better year ahead of us. We truly appreciate the parents who supported us by respecting our strict protocols to keep everyone safe and protected. We appreciate so many things we took for granted like gathering together with friends and family. What a year it has been.



A special note of recognition to the Treehouse Teachers. They stepped up to the plate when our children returned, wore face masks and shields at all times, cleaned constantly, and supported each other in every way possible to keep spirits high and attitudes positive. What a wonderful group of ladies serve us here at Treehouse. We are blessed beyond measure!

Teacher Diana will be leaving us to be with her family who needs her support at home. Her two boys graduated from Treehouse. She faithfully served at Treehouse for many years. Treehouse is blessed to have godly committed Christian educators faithfully teaching and loving our children. We pray for God’s many blessings on Diana in this season of her life.

We thank our Preschool Board for guiding us and supporting us throughout the year under the leadership of Helen Tang. We will miss Helen as she finishes her term. We greatly appreciated her leadership, especially this year as we navigated the pandemic with lots of stress and uncertainty. We welcome Terry Chinn as the Treehouse Chair.

We appreciate Steve Olsen who takes care of so many repairs at Treehouse. When he is not around, we have Stan Hultgren and Alan Heikkinen showing up to take care of what needs to be done to keep the ministry going. We appreciate this crew of ministers.

We look forward to many years of God's blessings at Treehouse as we serve our children, provide a solid spiritual foundation and prepare them for the Kindergarten experience. Thank you for praying for us.

Christian Education Board

by Ryan Miya

CE Board Members:

Ryan Miya (Chairperson), Victoria Hartsock, Doris Lew, Paul Ashby, Temi Lane; Sarah Henry (Pastoral Liaison)



The Christian Education Board (CE Board) supports FCC's mission to equip people to follow Jesus in their everyday lives by assisting, supporting, and encouraging all Christian educational endeavors in order to equip as many folks as possible with knowledge regarding Christ's grace, mercy, and unconditional love for us all. While the pandemic definitely slowed down the in-person educational opportunities onsite, the real building blocks of FCC are the people, and the foundation is Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and will be tomorrow forevermore (praise God for that indeed).

We were able to come alongside and collaborate with our beloved Treehouse Preschool partners this year to develop and successfully implement a limited re-opening plan. This allowed preschool operations to continue on a limited basis during the pandemic consistent with county, state and federal recommendations. We give all praise and glory to God for His amazing provisions and protection of the Treehouse staff, students, and community during this extremely challenging time. Praise God that Kids Camp, middle school, and high school groups were able to be held virtually with success! We also had the amazing opportunity to support and assist with an elementary school ice cream celebration and promotion outside this summer for both last year and this year's 5th grade classes (since we missed out last year).

As FCC continues to reopen, we look forward to getting involved once again to support, collaborate with, and encourage as many educational ministries as possible (and even possibly meet in person sometime soon ourselves as a CE Board! Imagine that!).

Deacon Board

by Richard Cherry

Deacon Board Members:

Gerson Avalos, Larry Bieber, Richard Cherry (Chair), Dan Gilbrech, Mark Haggerty, Charles Hardy, Tom Henneker, Dave Howland, Dan Johnson, David Jung, Anthony Liu, Mike Mather, Paul Tiao, Vincent Tolliver, Steven Wilson; Pastor Nancy Lewis & Pastor Chamron Phal (Pastoral Liaisons)



The closure of the FCC campus due to the pandemic focused Deacon efforts on ministries of Caring and Connection -- breaking down the barriers of disconnection. With our Deaconess partners in the seven Little Churches, we reached out to the members of the FCC community in order to determine individual needs and support those needs. As always, this manifested itself in a network of prayer for our fellow sisters and brothers. This care also moved into specific, physical support for individual needs.

An exceptional program this year was an initiative to supply some of our more isolated members with iPads and connectivity help. This has allowed them to reconnect in worship with us and be part of Connection groups.

In addition, the Benevolent Fund efforts were much expanded this year. Needs have been great, and the generous gifts of the FCC Community increased to meet those needs. Our Benevolent Fund provided \$65,719.97 in 95 disbursements through individual gifts from July 2020 through June 2021. The types of requests expanded into help for housing and food, even more than in the past. We praise God for His provision and the generosity of our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

The Deacon Board met each month by Zoom for prayer, discussion, and planning. We were privileged to interview and recommend three individuals for new membership in FCC. A panel for young marrieds, "Real Talk – After the Honeymoon Ends", sponsored by the Deacons in October was well-received.

With the FCC Campus closed, many of the typical worship support roles of the Diaconate were discontinued (serving communion, memorial services, etc.). We celebrate the return to indoor worship in our Sanctuary and the opportunity to fellowship with one another in person.

Deaconess Board

by Cheryl Bolling

Deaconess Board Members:

Cheryl Bolling (Chair), Catherine Luce (Vice Chair), Nikki Filby (Secretary), Pam Smith, Sarah Andrick, Ginny Lorencz, Kaye Tiao, Nadine Tolliver, Taiko Roskothen, Ayumi Hardy, Lyn Goldflam, Joyce Chin, Lorna Heikkinen, Judy Johansing, Joanna Gilbrech



As Deaconesses of First Covenant Church, we are the caregivers and prayer warriors for our congregation. We serve by bestowing our blessings, kindness and compassion to those in need. Our congregants are divided into seven Little Churches that are assigned and overseen by two Deaconesses. When those in need are identified, FCC Deaconesses reach out by phone calling, visiting and providing requested needed resources.

The following are Ministry highlights that were provided this past fiscal year:

- Provided iPads for our shut-in seniors
- Virtual Meet and Greet for our Little Churches
- Phone calls and home visits to our sick and shut in
- Thanksgiving Gift Cards and Poinsettias for those in need
- Christmas Baskets and Plants for the needy
- Provided Prayer Chains when needed and/or requested

Because of the pandemic, Memorial Service Receptions and Communion were not provided this fiscal year.

Fortunately, we have had the opportunity to continue to meet monthly using Zoom.

As we enter the upcoming Church year, our vision will continue to be an extended arm of our FCC Pastors. This will include, but not limited to, the Ministry highlights provided above.

Facilities Board

by Nanette Mocanu

Facilities Board Members:

Nanette Mocanu (Chair), Stephen Loux, Guy Martin, Jim Taddei

Volunteers: Alan Heikkinen, Joe Knoll, Keith Holmlund, Stan Hultgren

Special Thanks: Nina Johnson, Steve Olsen



One wouldn't ordinarily connect facility oversight and maintenance with equipping people to follow Jesus, but that mission is very much on the forefront of the activities of the Board. We are charged with making the facility inviting, available and useful for varying types of ministries, from Bible studies, Worship Concerts, Kids Camp, to the Pumpkin Patch carnival.

In 2020, the Board had to quickly respond to the pandemic and make Sunday services accessible via the internet. There were many hiccups, but over time we are improving our sound team, lighting, camera quality, and acquiring fiber cable to make online services a ministry priority.

While our church facilities were closed for the majority of 2020, the Facilities Board assisted keeping our finances on track by reducing contracts for janitorial, gardening, elevator services, and office equipment service providers. In addition, the Board took advantage of the vacant facility and accomplished many tasks like:

- Paving repair and slurry sealing the church parking lot;
- Installing of bollards which allow us to chain and secure the parking lots at night;
- Hiring security services to patrol the grounds at night;

- Installing more anti-perching devices and cleaning up perching areas;
- Conducting full fire safety review including alarms, emergency exit signage, and smoke detectors;
- Researching/Purchasing portable air filters for Treehouse Preschool and Administration building; and
- Establishing relationship with an external handyman, two on-call plumbers, and an arborist.

As our world begins to return to normal, the Facilities Board is challenged to keep our facility safe for all users. Some of the future projects we are considering include:

- Addressing ventilation and air circulation in our facilities
- Converting Parking Lot lighting to LED
- Developing a Comprehensive Security Camera Plan with supporting policies
- Addressing garbage enclosure/plan
- Greenhouse improvements

Finance Board

by Ryan Ong

Finance Board Members:

Ryan Ong (Chair), Dave Latham (Treasurer), Maridehl Mather (Financial Secretary), Jessica Avalos, and Zoe Abuyen



During the past year, each of the Finance Board members faithfully stepped up to serve the church body and navigate the changing conditions and challenges brought on by the pandemic.

The Finance Board's charge is to oversee and conduct the financial affairs of the church which include providing guidance and facilitating the annual budget, providing oversight of the budget implementation, and managing the church's financial resources.

Needless to say, this past year has been quite eventful. Despite the onset of the pandemic, suspended and partial closure of Treehouse, and suspension of on campus Church ministry, the 2019/2020 budget year remarkably ended with Net Income of \$16,533. The current fiscal year through May is running at a large Net Income gain of over \$200,000 that has been supplemented by our 1st PPP loan of \$406,200 for which we received forgiveness in the current fiscal year. The church did apply and successfully secure a 2nd PPP loan. These funds have been set aside and the new Church Board will bring to the congregation a decision to either seek forgiveness or return and payback these funds accordingly. It is really a praise and thanksgiving that the church continues to be in a healthy financial position. God's blessings continue to flow through each of you.

The Finance Board worked together with the other ministry teams to manage the church's resources and facilitate many key projects that included: reviewing staff realignment, reviewing insurance providers, conducting simplified Balance Sheet presentations to Church Board, researching financial accounting auditors for next budget year, reviewing vendor that facilitates stock donations, facilitating a virtual budget process, clarifying use cases for Temporary restricted funds and managing budget oversight and expense management.

Even through this unprecedented period of time, God has been faithful in providing all the resources the church needs through each of you. We are thankful for your continued generosity and faithful stewardship and the Finance Board will continue to humbly manage this responsibility.

Lay Ministry Board

by Carl Holmes

Lay Ministry Board Members:

Carl Holmes (Chair), David Gill, Lynda Hampton, Matthew Miles, Brenda Smith



The Lay Ministry Board (LMB) is responsible for:

- Educating the congregation about leadership opportunities
- Driving the Nominating Committee for future Church Council candidates
- Leadership training and development
- Helping FCC members understand and develop their personal gifts.

The LMB leads the Nominating Committee to select future leaders as candidates for the congregation to vote.

Due to the pandemic, it was much more challenging to solicit future leaders as we lost communication with our fellow members for over a year. Despite the challenges, we were able to secure potential candidates for the Executive Board although many vacancies still exist for some of the Ministry Boards (e.g. Deacons, Deaconess, Facilities, and Christian Education).

Unfortunately, we were not able to actually vote (at least not yet) due to the pandemic but we are working on ways to conduct safe elections either in-person or by other means. Another area that the LMB normally covers is the Global Leadership Summit conference which focuses on leadership principles, research, and the Grander Vision with its testimonies. This Grander Vision displays how God provided a vision to individuals which translated into an opportunity for ministry and illuminated the role of individual leaders in His Kingdom.

The members of the Nominating Committee during the 2020-21 fiscal year include the LMB (above) as well as the Members-at-Large, and advisors as follows: Katy Collins, Christie Loux, Jillian Greenacre, Kristina Faul-Cortes, Mark Lindquist, Jim Taddei (advisor for Facilities), Susan White (advisor for Missions), Tom Hennekker (advisor for Deacons), Ryan Ong (advisor for Finance), Ryan Miya (advisor for Christian Education), Ginny Lorencz (advisor for Deaconess), Kaye Tiao (advisor for Deaconess), Pastor Marco Ambriz

Thanks to the Lay Ministry Board members and the Nominating Committee for spending dedicated time to solicit potential leaders and to meet on a regular basis for about ten occurrences within a three-month period. Thanks, again, to Katy Collins who updated the roster of current and potential future leaders in order to facilitate the deliberations.

Missions Board

by Viji Cammauf

Missions Board Members:

Viji Cammauf (Chair), Joey Chapdelaine, Mark Edwards, Kacie Stratton, Susan White



God's heart's desire is that the Kingdom of God will reach every corner of the earth. He has called each of us to participate in this Mission both locally and globally through prayer, and financial support.

Covid prevented us from sending teams globally. It raised awareness of both the local and global needs and provided the mission board opportunities to stand in solidarity, and prayer. We have been able to provide financial assistance to the suffering communities in various countries, directly and through the work of Covenant World Relief.

Missionaries and ministries funded by FCC that were adversely affected by COVID included Ed and Valerie Johnson in Irian Jaya, Indonesia; Vision for Cambodia; Mission Springs Conference Center in Scotts Valley, CA; Covenant World Relief's global outreach; Harbor House; Centro legal de la Raza serving bay area migrant families for COVID relief; and Little Sprouts Preschool, a ministry of New Hope Covenant Church in Oakland, serving the poor, refugee, and marginalized children in Oakland.

This year the mission board has been very intentional in meeting with our mission partners to learn about their work and to come alongside them with prayer and help. Local ministries featured during the Sunday worship services were City Team, Harbor House, Real Options, Children Rising, Inner Change (Matt and Martha Miles), and Project Peace-Digital Days of Service.

FCC came alongside City Team in their food distribution program at our church. Additionally during renovation of their building in Oakland, FCC will house the daily men's bible studies.

We promoted and encouraged our church to participate and support fundraising campaigns for Harbor House, CityTeam, and Children Rising.

We funded Workplace Discipleship (David Gill), Jeff and Chrissy Katezel (Community Covenant Church, Rocklin), and Foster the Bay (A Church for every child)

The Mission Board approved the addition of two new ministries to the budget: Covenant World Relief and Voice of the Martyrs.

Jeff and Carolyn Stoker serving in Africa for twenty-two years and in Cameroon at the Rain Forest International School will replace the Smiths on our Serve Globally roster.

The Mission Board has explored working with Covenant Enterprises to set up work for youth in Oakland. This would extend our outreach and support to our broader community, but this is still in an exploratory mode along with other possibilities.

Missionary retirement: Tim Smith is a 'son' of FCC, ever since his parents moved to Oakland and joined FCC when he was nine years old. FCC sent Tim to Zaire in 1978 as a short term builder. Tim and Helen were married at FCC in August of 1979 and in 1984 we sent them as a short term missionary family to Zaire. They were commissioned as "Career Missionaries" in 1987 and have been part of our global staff for 43 years. In a recent letter to the Mission board and staff, Tim wrote: *"We treasure our relationship with you and we are eternally grateful for your loving support all these years."*

As I conclude my two term service and one year as chair on the mission board, I am grateful for the example of long and exemplary service of people like the Smiths who were some of the first missionaries I met at FCC during my college years and then had the privilege of visiting in Zaire while I was on staff.

First Covenant has a rich legacy of being a light to the nations both locally and globally and the mission board is committed to fostering this vision for generations to come.



2020-21 Celebrations, Staff, & Board

Confirmation Class of 2021:

Ansel Jacob Burnama
Noelle Chen
Karenn Henneker
Julianna Loux
Emma Nielsen

Church Board:

Pastor Marco Ambriz
Andy Wen
Paul Figueroa
Joanna Trammell
Marcus Amaro
CD Davis
David Latham
Ryan Miya
Richard Cherry
Cheryl Bolling
Nanette Mocanu
Ryan Ong
Carl Holmes
Viji Cammauf

Baptism:

Chloe Iida
Benjamin Latham
Timothy Latham
Abby Olsen
Shauna Olsen
LeeAnn Ong
Riley Ong
Luke Rea

In Loving Memory:

John Moore
Carolyn Smith
Roy Woo
Julius Kukorelli
Sandra Holst
Caleb Terefe
Nancy Agerter
Beth Criss
Elbert Taylor
Zayla Boes

New Members:

Brent & Noni Atkinson
Adrien Abuyen
Bob Jackson
Heather Robertson

2020-21 Staff:

Marco Ambriz, *Lead Pastor*
Danny Fitelson, *Pastor to Children & Families*
Sarah Henry, *Pastor of Youth Ministries*
***Nancy Lewis**, *Associate Pastor*
Chamron Phal, *Associate Pastor*
Rhonda Ramos, *Director of Hospitality & Worship*
***Shelley Holst**, *Office & Facilities Manager*
Nina Johnson, *Business Administrator*
Clare Loux, *Admin Assistant to the Lead Pastor*
Arlyn Ranillo, *Bookkeeper*
Pam Grove, *Choir Director*
Dr. Jan Nienu, *Director of Treehouse Preschool*
Revy Samia, *Web & Graphic Designer*
***Bunpak, *Thos, & *Susan Noeum**, *Custodians*
Donovan Zedd, *Youth Intern*
Noah Mitchell, *Kids Church Intern*
Tay Lew, *Sunday Worship Tech Coordinator*
**Staff who have concluded their service at FCC.*