



The Vine

February 2021

United Methodist Church
1031 Iowa Ave. Los Banos, CA 93635
E-MAIL Address: umclb@att.net
Phone (209) 826-4181
Address Service Requested

Worship Service Online only until COVID level changes.

Website:www.umclb.net

Church Office Hours: Secretary working remotely but phone line checked daily.

Pastor: Rev. Jim Garrison

Church Secretary: Cassie Wolf-Miyamoto

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

5 th Tyler Morris	7 th Chris Foxworthy
11 th Brooke Barton	14 th Jim Jones
18 th Larry Wiley	25 th Allen Battle

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

11 th	Dennis & Donna Morris
14 th	Bud & Susan Ramsey
16 th	David & Belinda Sabetta
21 st	Jerry & Fay Davis
25 th	Robert & Shannan Doubek

January contributions total: \$ 6,627.00

Online Attendance for January 3rd (58) 10th (55) 17th (45) 24th (42) 31st (00)

From the Pastor – February 2021

A little over two inches already, and more is still coming. After a sparse season so far, we are happy to finally be getting some steady rain. After the terrible fires in the dry forests, we are thankful for the moisture. After dwindling levels in the reservoirs, we look at snow on the mountains like money in the bank. We know it will flow down to our valley and water our crops and feed the world. Our very lives depend on the water that is now (as I write) falling freely from the sky.

And yet, rain is often inconvenient. We can't work or play outside without getting wet and cold. Our shoes track mud into the house. Roads might flood and roofs might leak. Most of us feel happier when we wake up to a bright sunny day. But if every day were sunny, we wouldn't have any water in our rivers, lakes, or even our wells.

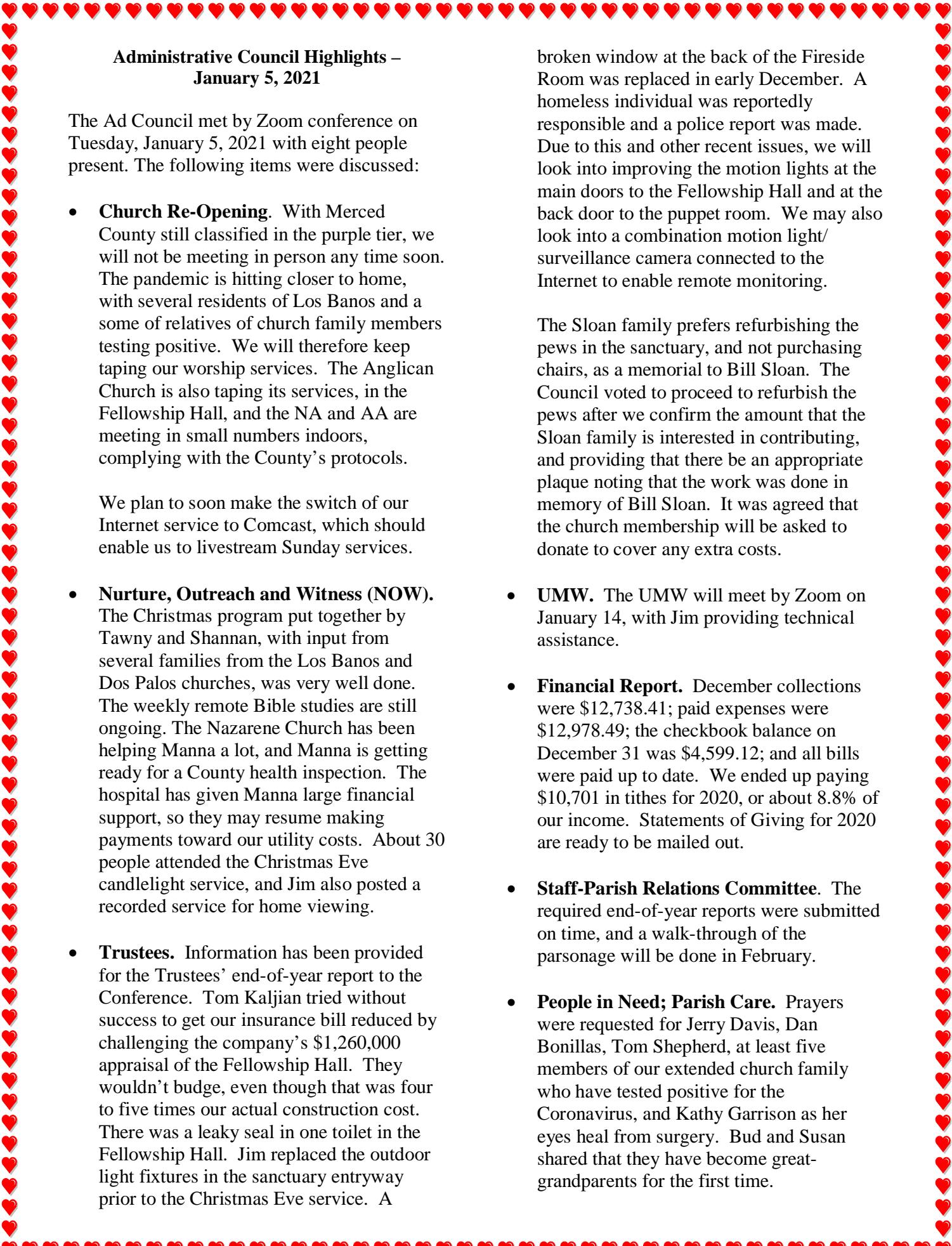
We certainly are hard to please. We worry about drought, but don't want it to rain. Today, we often want the good results but want to skip the inconvenience. But it doesn't usually work that way. If we want well behaved dogs, then we must consistently train them. If we want a beautiful garden, then we must spend time weeding and pruning. If we want to develop a skill, we need to put in the hours of practice.

Hebrews 12:11 tells us that, "For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." If we want the fruit of becoming spiritually mature, then we may need to endure some things that aren't pleasant. We could never develop patience if we never had to wait. We could never develop a forgiving spirit if we were never wronged. Bible reading and prayer are often delightful, but if we want to grow spiritually, we will read and pray even when it feels like a chore. It can be easier to persevere through times of difficulty if we remember that when God brings us through a hard time, He intends to bring us out better than we went in.

So, praise God for the rain and for our troubles, and for the good results God will produce.



Pastor Jim



Administrative Council Highlights – January 5, 2021

The Ad Council met by Zoom conference on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 with eight people present. The following items were discussed:

- **Church Re-Opening.** With Merced County still classified in the purple tier, we will not be meeting in person any time soon. The pandemic is hitting closer to home, with several residents of Los Banos and a some of relatives of church family members testing positive. We will therefore keep taping our worship services. The Anglican Church is also taping its services, in the Fellowship Hall, and the NA and AA are meeting in small numbers indoors, complying with the County's protocols.

We plan to soon make the switch of our Internet service to Comcast, which should enable us to livestream Sunday services.

- **Nurture, Outreach and Witness (NOW).** The Christmas program put together by Tawny and Shannan, with input from several families from the Los Banos and Dos Palos churches, was very well done. The weekly remote Bible studies are still ongoing. The Nazarene Church has been helping Manna a lot, and Manna is getting ready for a County health inspection. The hospital has given Manna large financial support, so they may resume making payments toward our utility costs. About 30 people attended the Christmas Eve candlelight service, and Jim also posted a recorded service for home viewing.

- **Trustees.** Information has been provided for the Trustees' end-of-year report to the Conference. Tom Kaljian tried without success to get our insurance bill reduced by challenging the company's \$1,260,000 appraisal of the Fellowship Hall. They wouldn't budge, even though that was four to five times our actual construction cost. There was a leaky seal in one toilet in the Fellowship Hall. Jim replaced the outdoor light fixtures in the sanctuary entryway prior to the Christmas Eve service. A

broken window at the back of the Fireside Room was replaced in early December. A homeless individual was reportedly responsible and a police report was made. Due to this and other recent issues, we will look into improving the motion lights at the main doors to the Fellowship Hall and at the back door to the puppet room. We may also look into a combination motion light/surveillance camera connected to the Internet to enable remote monitoring.

The Sloan family prefers refurbishing the pews in the sanctuary, and not purchasing chairs, as a memorial to Bill Sloan. The Council voted to proceed to refurbish the pews after we confirm the amount that the Sloan family is interested in contributing, and providing that there be an appropriate plaque noting that the work was done in memory of Bill Sloan. It was agreed that the church membership will be asked to donate to cover any extra costs.

- **UMW.** The UMW will meet by Zoom on January 14, with Jim providing technical assistance.
- **Financial Report.** December collections were \$12,738.41; paid expenses were \$12,978.49; the checkbook balance on December 31 was \$4,599.12; and all bills were paid up to date. We ended up paying \$10,701 in tithes for 2020, or about 8.8% of our income. Statements of Giving for 2020 are ready to be mailed out.
- **Staff-Parish Relations Committee.** The required end-of-year reports were submitted on time, and a walk-through of the parsonage will be done in February.
- **People in Need; Parish Care.** Prayers were requested for Jerry Davis, Dan Bonillas, Tom Shepherd, at least five members of our extended church family who have tested positive for the Coronavirus, and Kathy Garrison as her eyes heal from surgery. Bud and Susan shared that they have become great-grandparents for the first time.

Vine Monthly Events February

All meetings and events are suspended or are being done on Zoom conferencing until we are out of the Purple tier in COVID-19 restriction levels. Thank you for your patience and communication during this time.

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Note: Boy Scouts - Still working together online and meeting when safe at the scout hut. We are currently selling popcorn to raise money for scouts who need help with annual dues. If you are interested in the yummy popcorn (it makes great New Year's gifts!) Please contact Mackenzie Ferreira @ bigreddogfan@yahoo.com and she will give you the link to make an order. This is a great way to support our local boy scouts.

Important dates:

February 2nd - Admin. Council meeting- on Zoom @ 7PM

February 9th - UMW Meeting on Zoom @ 10AM

February 10th - SPRC meeting – on Zoom @ 7PM

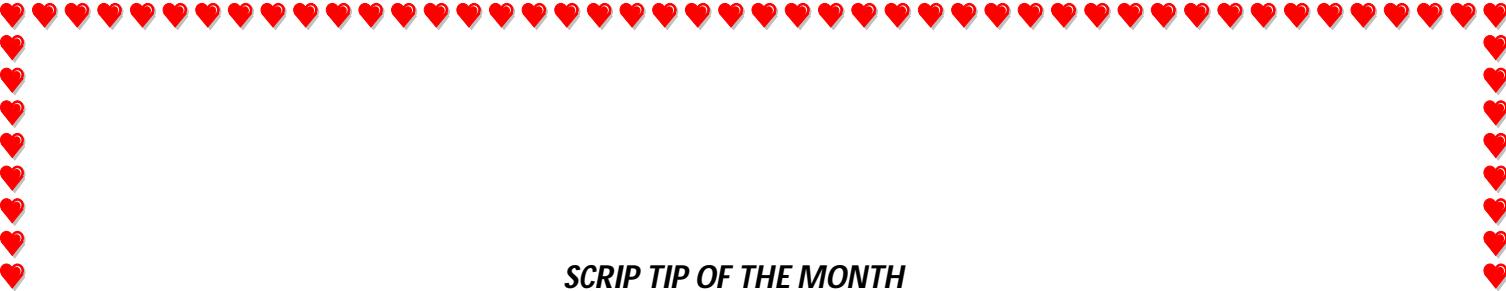
February 15th - N.O.W. meeting – on Zoom @ 7PM

February 15th - President's Day – Office Closed

E-Giving - Did you know? There are now 8 families in our church using Vanco Give Plus to donate to the church securely and conveniently online! Accounts and payments can easily be set up and initiated on a laptop or desktop computer, or by using a mobile phone, using the free Give Plus app. The other easy way is to go to our website: www.umclb.net , there is a link for this purpose there.

If you have questions, please see Gregg Rice or Bud Ramsey. Thank you!





SCRIP TIP OF THE MONTH

Even though our weekly in-person scrip "store" has been closed down since March, the scrip program is still alive and doing fairly well. The scrip proceeds are used to help us meet our share of the work and missions that are supported by the United Methodist Church around the world.

You may not be able to see the gift cards that we normally display each Sunday morning, but we do have on hand a wide variety of cards for immediate purchase, good for food, gas or merchandise at most local stores and eateries. We can also print paper certificates and electronic gift "cards" almost immediately for items that we do not have on hand.

The full list of the hundreds of participating retailers can be viewed by visiting www.ShopWithScrip.com. Please contact Gregg or Juli Rice by phone at (209) 826-1027 or (209) 761-2737, or by e-mail at grice@inreach.com to check out what gift cards we have on hand, or to order something that we don't currently have.

Pledge Cards – It is a new year! These cards help us to budget for the year. If you could please think about what you plan to give this next year each month and let us know on the pledge card it would be a really big help. Please take your time and pray about what works for you and your family and then fill it out. This is a vital component of running the church. During these trying times having God to guide us and keep our hope alive and thriving is key to getting through this. Thank you again for your continued faithfulness to the United Methodist Church of Los Banos. Please, if you have not sent yours in, do so. Thank you!

If you need help or wish to have prayers, please contact the church office at 209-826-4181, phone line is checked daily, or call the secretary or Pastor using the numbers provided in your church directory. **You may need to use the directory number to reach Pastor or the Secretary for now since we are currently changing phone companies and the church number is currently in flux.** Thank you.

