



First Covenant Church

Annual Report
2019-20

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Pastor Marco Ambriz, Lead Pastor

A year ago, none of us had a clue what 2020 would look like for our church, let alone some of the challenges we would face together. Fall 2019 brought yet another round of wildfires to the Bay Area, in addition to wind storms that prompted widespread power outages. In early 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced shelter-in-place directives, leading to rising unemployment rates, increased economic uncertainty, and a new level of mental and emotional stress, on top of its enormous toll on local and global health. Most recently, we've also seen a rise in racial tension and social upheaval in our country resulting from the pain of ongoing violence and systemic racism against African Americans and people of color.

As of the writing of this annual report, we still do not yet have a date for when we will be able to gather in person at the FCC church building. FCC has been faced with the daunting task of continuing discipleship and fostering community, even while our church building has been closed. We have been conducting worship services, meetings, and all other programming exclusively online for seventeen weeks (and counting). This closure far surpasses our previous historic six-week closure during the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.

In its 133 year history, FCC Oakland has been no stranger to uncertainty and instability. Our church family has lived through many local, national, and even global challenges over its decades. Our brothers and sisters who have gone before us have faced earthquakes, fires, wars, economic recessions, civil unrest, national crises, and of course the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

Now more than ever, it is critical for us to remember where we gain our confidence and our sense of purpose in the midst of challenges. To do that, we will turn to the words of our Founder, Jesus of Nazareth, who gave us these words in Matthew 28:18-20.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

These words are known to us today as “The Great Commission.” They make clear God’s mission and purpose for the Church.

We are commanded by the Lord of the Church to go! This has to do with movement, it has to do with not staying stagnant, it has to do with not being comfortable with the status quo or with the “we’ve always done it that way” mentality that many of us have developed over time. It involves a destination that is new, a frontier that is unknown, a journey that we embark on together, but it's not just movement for movement's sake. The Great Commission of Jesus calls us to action. **Jesus wants us to be making disciples everywhere we go, baptizing people into the Church, teaching and obeying his words, and finally, holding on to the hope that He is with us and will never leave us.**

In light of the challenging environment we find ourselves in now, I'm amazed at how the Great Commission also gives the Church the flexibility it needs to continue doing ministry in any context. **In the Great Commission, Jesus told us WHAT to do, but he didn't tell us HOW to do it.** Jesus gave us our mission and our purpose, but he didn't give us the method or the means. Jesus commanded that we live a life that is dedicated to his mission for the world, but he didn't prescribe all the details of what that dedication would look like. The “what” and the “why” are there, but the “how” is up to us.

The reason Jesus didn't give us the methodology is because God is a relational being who enters into human contexts and operates with us in our unique situations. While God's character and purposes never change, His methods, tools, resources, and even personnel vary depending on the situation. **God is a master of innovation. God loves working with what is available in the moment. God invites the church to participate in contextual ministry that enables us to adapt and innovate to carry out the Great Commission according to our resources and circumstances.** This is how God operated in the Garden of Eden, the wilderness of the Exodus, the presence in the Temple, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. I absolutely love this about God. **God is not limited by anything. Therefore, the Church is not limited either. It has been given everything it needs to do ministry in every location, situation, time, and space.**

We have defined the Great Commission for FCC this way: “To Equip people to follow Jesus in their everyday lives”. This is our church's mission statement. I am thankful that this mission can still be carried out despite the challenges we are facing now and may continue to face this coming year. 2020 has made us increasingly aware of our need for the Lord's help with creativity, innovation, and adaptation as we strive to carry out the Great Commission.

Our church has sought to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that ensure our congregation's safety, while still carrying out our Lord's mission. We have had a lot to learn along the way, but **I am so thankful for every one of our church leaders, pastors, board members, staff members, and volunteers who have come together to quickly respond, carry**

out ministry, and offer hope in the midst of one of the greatest health and economic challenges many of us will see in our lifetimes.

Some of the innovations and tools we've added this year include:

- Sunday Morning Online Worship, Preaching, and Communion
- Online "510 Prayer" on Thursdays
- Weekly Children's Sermons in Sunday Worship
- Connection Groups meeting via video platforms
- Devotions and encouragement videos
- Webinars and events for ongoing discipleship and spiritual formation
- Youth Ministry Online worship and youth group events
- FCC Virtual Talent Show in lieu of our annual Camp Cov Retreat
- Virtual Kids Camp 2020
- Church Staff, Board, and Ministry Teams moved to Zoom and online platforms
- Treehouse Preschool connection with students and drive-thru graduation
- Pastoral care and prayer primarily through phone calls and video meetings
- The official FCC app for smartphones and tablets
- "Right Now Media" Video Discipleship Resources for everyone at FCC

In this annual report, you will hear how God has been faithful and how FCC has still been able to "be the church" even without physical gatherings for the past several months. Please join me in giving thanks to God for his faithfulness, and also praying about how God is still calling us to move forward in our mission in the coming year.

We are not out of the woods yet and there is no sugarcoating our situation. We have so much work to do: hope to spread, pain to heal, financial loss to recover, evil to confront, challenges to overcome. I am more convinced now than ever before, though, of Jesus' words when he said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell cannot overcome it." The concept of the church that Jesus spoke of is not a building, or an organization, or one geographic physical gathering, it's the actual community of the people of God wherever they may be at any given time and place on Earth. The Church of Jesus will never be limited. Jesus, the Risen Lamb of God, the Messiah, and the Savior is the founder and the builder of the Church, and nothing will ever prevail against it!

While we have not been able to meet in person for four months and counting, we ARE the body of Christ and we still "get to be the church." I have great anticipation for when we will be able to finally see each other again in person, but until then, let's keep living into our mission and vision in every way that the Lord enables us.

With so much love for every single one of you,
Pastor Marco

Welcoming Nina Johnson, our new Business Administrator



This spring, our finance board completed our search process for a part-time Business and Operations Administrator and officially welcomed Nina Johnson to the FCC staff team! This position was created to oversee the business administration of our finance, facilities, human resources, and staff support for our church and preschool. Nina, her husband Mike, and her sons, Anders and Hans, have been attending FCC since 2012, and she has served in a variety of volunteer roles including our FCC Vision Team and most recently our FCC Church Board. Nina is highly competent, effective, and very experienced in the areas of leadership, organization, solutions, management, and implementation. She loves the Lord, is excited about what God is doing at FCC, is a joy to work with, and despite our current COVID-19 pandemic, has already begun helping us towards identifying and accomplishing our operational and business administration goals. I am thankful to have Nina join our staff team and am looking forward to how her role continues to further FCC's mission and vision.



Andy Wen, Church Board Chair

Dear FCC Congregation,

A typical Chairperson's letter includes giving thanks to God for His generous provision, highlights from the past year, thanks for those who have served, celebrations of God's goodness, and some thoughts about our future direction. Because this is an Annual Report, I need to repeat some of what I covered in my June 2, 2020 letter. However, because 2020 is not a typical year, I am following the updates with a letter, which I believe that God led me to write.

CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

- We continue to pray for God's protection for our church family during this pandemic, and we pray for comfort for all who have friends and family who mourn deaths from COVID-19.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recession, the Church Board has made several emergency decisions, including the closure of our FCC campus for Sunday worship services, Treehouse Preschool, and on-campus meetings, and applying for the Payroll Protection Program, where FCC was granted \$406,800.
- We are grateful for how God has blessed us with finances and talent to smoothly shift to internet-based and/or phone-based ministries for Sunday Services, Connection Groups, pastoral care, meetings, counseling, youth and children's programs, Kids Camp, etc.
- We are grateful for how God has blessed us with so many wonderful pastors, paid staff, and volunteer staff to serve us with such love and dedication.
- Many thanks to everyone who sacrificially served our congregation and the Lord's ministries at FCC as Church Council members in 2019-2020. Similarly, we are grateful for continuing and new volunteers who are serving for our 2020-2021 term.
- As noted in the June 2, 2020 letter, the Church Board unanimously passed a motion to use the ballot from the Nominating Committee (which was elected by the congregation) to fill vacancies for the 2020-2021 Church Council (which includes the Church Board and the Officers) by the appointment. At the June Church Board meeting, the Church Board unanimously approved filling all positions with all names from the Nominating Committee ballot. (By the way, when candidates for the 2020-2021 Church Board who were already on the 2019-2020 Church Board offered to recuse themselves from this emergency action, the Church Board decided that this was unnecessary.) The congregation will have an opportunity to vote on these appointments when we have our Annual Meeting, which will be scheduled when we have clarified a way to gather safely. If the pandemic prevents us from gathering in person, it is possible that our Annual Meeting will be done over the internet.
- Since 2018, the Church Board has been prayerfully listening, reading, and exploring ways to improve our governance structure so that FCC can be even more efficient and effective for the Lord. Any proposed changes will balance seeking God's will for our congregation, the voice of the congregation, and alignment with our denomination, the Evangelical Covenant Church. Please be assured that any changes to the FCC's bylaws and governance model will be presented to the congregation for discussion and feedback, and that all changes to the bylaws must be approved by the congregation.
- Finances: With the support of our lead pastor, business administrator, budget committee, and Finance Board, the Church board will continue to address financial challenges caused by the global recession. As described in the June 2, 2020 letter, FCC has essentially gone from two main sources of revenue (congregational giving and Treehouse tuition) to only one (because Treehouse is currently closed due to the pandemic). However, because FCC is currently fully supporting employees with pay and benefits, our overhead remains the same even though our income has dropped by about half. To help address the decreased revenue, FCC can temporarily rely on God's provision of the loan from the Payroll Protection Program and large financial reserves prepared years in advance. Nevertheless, if the recession and pandemic do not sufficiently improve, the Church Board (with input from the congregation) will need to make difficult decisions about how FCC spends money during a time of reduced revenue.

CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

When we celebrated the birth of Christ last December, no one knew that the first half of 2020 would be dominated by three tidal waves of stress:

- A global pandemic which, so far, has caused about 135,000 American deaths
- A global recession with the worst American drop in employment since the Great Depression
- Following the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks, nationwide protests, anger, and frustration about racism, injustice, and violence against people of color, especially against African Americans.

Though we did not see any of these individual tidal waves coming, let alone all three at once, God knew. He also knew that humans are not as powerful and as good as we would like to think we are. And yet, even with our frailties and sin, He loves us.

Because He loves us, He wants everyone, especially those who follow Jesus, to be better and to do better. The killing of George Floyd revealed what the oppressed have always known--that even with its many good things, the United States has fallen short of its potential. Though much of our society may have been in denial, Exodus 3:7 shows that God knows the cries of the suffering and the actions of the oppressors. Exodus also shows us that God cares, that He can make miracles happen, and that He gives people the opportunity to participate in making things better.

I am so grateful for how God has prepared FCC financially for this recession, and how He has prepared our hearts to be part of a movement to make things better for everyone, especially for our African American sisters, brothers, friends, and neighbors.

Though we can celebrate FCC's long history of supporting justice, love, and grace, the Evangelical Covenant Church's 2019 Resolution on Anti-Racism is very clear: *"This resolution calls for 'white clergy to attend to the sins of our own community and make a public commitment to prioritize antiracism work within our ministerium. The church's evasion of racism has blinded us to the depth and breadth of suffering that members of our body are enduring. The devastating hardships inflicted upon people of color in the current crises of immigration and mass incarceration have convicted us that we must address our racism as it contributes to these crises.'"*

In June 2020, our FCC pastors and Church Board prayerfully created and unanimously affirmed our Statement of Solidarity (see below), which highlights who we are and who we want to be. This statement is just one step on a long journey.

FCC OAKLAND STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

First Covenant Church of Oakland laments the existence of individual and systemic racism in our country, cities and communities. In light of the recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and many other precious people made in God's image, we deplore the racism that has victimized and traumatized African Americans. As a church we affirm that Black Lives Do Matter.

Called to share the light and the love of Christ, we stand against oppression, injustice and racism. We stand in solidarity with the vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed. We will intentionally listen to one another, engage in corporate and personal prayer, and continually ask God to help us identify and repent of our own racism and implicit bias. We will do everything in our power to ensure that FCC Oakland is a safe and healing community for everyone, especially our African American brothers and sisters. With God's direction, we will actively demonstrate God's love by engaging in projects and movements that promote the peace, hope, justice and gospel of our Lord Jesus in the city of Oakland, the East Bay, and the world.

Adopted by the Pastoral Staff and Church Board of First Covenant Church of Oakland, California, June 11, 2020.



Moving forward, we need to prayerfully ask God to help us

- See and repent of our sins and mistakes
- Understand the deep hurt and evil of racism
- Act to make things better

The way God has blessed First Covenant Church of Oakland for almost 133 years is a generous gift. From Luke 12:48, we know this gift is also a great responsibility because, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Brothers and sisters, even bigger and better than how God has taken care of FCC is God's gift of salvation through Christ---clearly we have been given much and much is expected.

If this letter and these times have made you uncomfortable, then you are in good company. Just about every Bible figure who grows in their faith, trust, obedience, courage, and love goes through a time of discomfort which God uses as a blessing. Each person in the Bible has a choice about how they will respond to God's call. Likewise, we have choices about how we will respond to the challenges of 2020--and in our responses, we have opportunities to be more like Christ. By God's grace and under His direction, may we (FCC) push even further out of our comfort zones so we can hear the cries of those in pain, help wipe away the tears, comfort the suffering, and work to spread Christ's love and light.

Thank you for reading, and thank you for praying for each other, our community, and our world.

In Christ,

Andy Wen, Chair of the Church Board, 2019-2020



Paul Figueroa, Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC)

PRC Members: Andy Wen (Chair), Paul Figueroa (Vice Chair), Cheryl Bolling (Chair of Deaconesses), Richard Cherry (Chair of Deacons)

Among the many functions that the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) serves for FCC, one of the best is working directly with our pastors as they apply for and return from sabbatical.

In January 2019, the FCC Church Board approved a sabbatical policy which encourages the rest and renewal of our pastors. In serving the congregation when we are at our best and at our worst, our pastors carry a large burden and they need time to rest, to connect with their loved ones, and to spend time with the Lord away from the congregation. FCC offers our pastors a sabbatical every seven years of service to the FCC congregation.

The PRC recently met with Pastor Nancy (21st year of service) and Pastor Danny (14th year of service) to review their 2019-2020 sabbatical experiences and to learn how FCC can improve the process. Through the faithful giving of the church, FCC blessed Pastor Nancy and Pastor Danny with several weeks of paid time for the sabbatical, a gift of up to four weeks of their salary to pay for the sabbatical, and additional funding for professional or spiritual training during the sabbatical. Pastor Nancy and Pastor Danny have each shared a brief written report of their sabbatical and send their appreciation to our congregation for this generous support. On behalf of the congregation, the PRC has expressed our deep appreciation for our pastors and how God has blessed us with our wonderful shepherds.

Pastor Danny Fitelson, Sabbatical Report

From July 3 to September 3, 2019, I was granted a sabbatical from my work at First Covenant Church. There were too many highlights to list: a trip to Puerto Rico for just Bethany and me, a “Week of Fun” planned by my girls during which every day we went someplace they considered fun, and getting to play golf at Pebble Beach for the first time in my life. My sabbatical was a blast.

The word *sabbatical* comes from the Hebrew word “sabat” which means “to cease.” It felt foreign to cease working for eight weeks. Don’t get me wrong, I liked it. But I also like work. I like being productive and accomplishing tasks, and when I’m not doing that I feel sort of useless. The problem is that this work can sometimes become my M.O. It was good for me this summer to remember that I have a life outside of being a pastor at FCC, that God cares about me outside of my ministry and the things that I produce. It is also healthy for me to see that the church, and specifically Kids Camp, Sunday School, and Men’s Ministry, can go on without me.



When my sabbatical began in July, I was pretty wiped out and just wanted to be alone (it might surprise some of you to hear that I am an introvert). But about 2/3 of the way into my sabbatical, I ran into some folks from FCC and was so excited to see them and hear about what was going on in their lives. By the time September came around, I was ready to roll.

One thing I learned during my sabbatical was that getting regular exercise makes me better. I’ve been able to keep up regular jogs around my neighborhood and “7-minute workouts” in my living room. I also learned the value of taking vacation and deliberately not traveling during it. Often when we take time away from work, we travel and come back wiped out. I was able to rest AND take care of some life-giving projects by just staying home for a few weeks.

We are flesh and blood beings, and we do wear down. We also have a spirit inside us that can get neglected. I am grateful for being given this sabbatical to tend to my body, mind, and soul, as well as to enjoy time with my family. I thank God that I get to be part of a church that prioritizes taking care of its pastors.

Pastor Nancy Lewis, Sabbatical Report

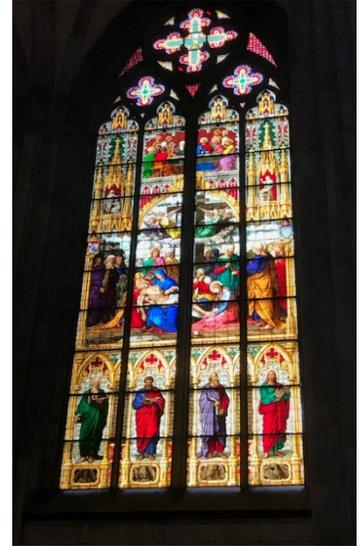
Where did you come from and where are you going?

When I reflect on my Sabbatical the first thing that comes up for me is gratefulness. I received a wonderful gift of rest, insight and direction from this sabbatical. I think stepping away for an extended period of time allowed me to hear from God as He gave me a renewed perspective.

My sabbatical began with time away with my husband, Andy, in northern Wisconsin, and included time with several sets of dear Christian friends. I did not realize how very tired and depleted that I was, and how much I needed to separate from what was my usual. I was able to spend long periods in creation via nature, and people, His greatest creation, and regain much joy in doing so. Interestingly to me, this time also allowed for times of much physical work. I realized anew how much I like to work and how I measure satisfaction in tasks completed. The reverse was also apparent in not being able to complete some tasks and leaving them with trust that all would be well. This became a metaphor for the faith journey for me.

Another gift of this sabbatical was spending three days at El Retiro Retreat Center in Solitude. This is a place where I have met God many times but never in solitude. It was refreshing and insightful in how God met me there as His child. The ability to trust that God truly loves you regardless of what you accomplish for Him is a concept that I can teach to others but have difficulty applying to myself. It so easily occurs to me that there is so much more that I could do for Him. I am never fully satisfied with my contributions, but is He? While I intellectually understand this, I believe He wants me to embody it to be free to hear from Him all that He desires me to know. This is a lifelong journey. This life is preparing each one of us for eternity and I am more aware of some of His desires for me than I was before.

The last part of my sabbatical involved time in Europe. Here, I connected with some of the historical “Fathers of our Faith” and places where Protestantism was born and shaped. Because so much of Europe is so old, it was easy for me to be transported back in time and place to imagine the cost that was executed to allow for what we build on today - God’s Word for God’s people. I have always believed that God’s Word is for all people but one area of concern for me has always involved how God allowed for so many of His Jewish children to perish under the Nazi Regime. Being partially of German heritage, I have always wondered about where my ancestors were in this struggle. In Cologne, Germany I was moved by two “golden” things: the reliquary containing the bones of the Magi in the Cologne Cathedral, and the brass cobblestone markers of Jews who were taken from Cologne to Concentration camps or who fled to the United States. These cobblestones are there to allow for these citizens of Cologne to never be forgotten. The Magi may have been the first missionaries to tell of Jesus. Were my ancestors Jewish or protestant believers and how did they live their lives? How does God want me to live my life for Him? What legacy will I leave behind that points to Him? Why have I been so blessed? I end up at gratefulness. There is so much I don’t know but I do trust His abiding love for me and I am grateful. Thank you for this incredible gift and so many memories to cherish.



Pastor Danny Fitelson, Kids Ministry

September 2019 began my 8th year as Pastor to Children and Families. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in this ministry – for the people I get to interact with and the fun I get to have. We hope to provide safe, encouraging, and exciting environments in which the gospel can be presented and lived out.

Sunday School

We had a kickoff for “move-up” Sunday School with balloons and donuts. We also made the decision that starting in 2020, we would change the date for our fall kick-off to mid-August to reflect the OUSD calendar. Summer schedule would begin in early June. We also implemented an electronic check-in system in nursery and toddlers with plans to expand to the older kids. Thank you to all the lead teachers, teachers, helpers, and other volunteers who enable us to reach these kids with the message and love of God. There are around 100 people who give at least one Sunday morning each month to serving in Kids Ministry. Thanks especially to Nursery Coordinator Tiffany Ho, Toddlers Coordinator Mary Burson, Summer Pre-K & K Coordinator Victoria Boateng, and Kids Church interns Noah Mitchell and Kyle Lew. Noah and Kyle planned and led “Spy Night” in January which was loved by the thirty kids who attended.

Kids Choir

Kids Choir had a great year led by Natalie Figueroa and Kala Hale, with Lenette Brand as the accompanist. Some of our practices drew upwards of twenty-five kids. The Kids Choir incorporated some singers and instrumentalists from the wider congregation on certain pieces which helped take it to a new level.

Kids Camp

Kids Camp 2019 was amazing. The theme was Deep Sea Dive and was enjoyed by our near 400 campers and 125 counselors. Director Heather Robertson, Assistant Director Alex Figueroa, and interns Kevin Garrett and Charlotte Low ran Weeks 2 and 3 without me as I was away on sabbatical. In May 2020, we made the decision to hold Kids Camp 2020 online. As of this writing, we have a total of 120 campers registered for a week in June and a week in July.

Future plans

We were planning a celebratory 5th grade grad event for the first time in recent years, but had to scrap it due to COVID-19. I look forward to doing something special for our 5th graders in future years.



Pastor Sarah Henry, Youth Ministries

Youth Ministry Teams

High School: Rhonda Ramos, Donovan Zedd, Alex Figueroa, Jim Hampton, Dave Geng, Vincent Tolliver, Nadine Tolliver, Wina Burnama, Lisa Elliot, Emily DiGiovanni, Bryan DiGiovanni, Brad Henry, Steven Wilson, Dakota O'Connor, Bethany Fitelson, and Svetlana Robinson

Middle School: Rhonda Ramos, Donovan Zedd, Alex Figueroa, Ryan Miya, Karen Miya, Ashley Miya, Victoria Boateng, Tay Lew, Jonny Rea, Erin Geng, and Darnell Hardeman, Toni Burnama

This ministry year has been unlike any other. However, our ministry continued to function in a way that furthers the mission and vision of the church.

Youth ministry at FCC has always functioned as a light to our city, but this year more than ever before. We averaged an attendance of about 50% non-religious kids. These are students who simply came to the program because they saw the love of God active and wanted to be part of it. When I drove one of these students home, they said, "I didn't know church was like this." "Like what?" I asked. "It was really nice. I'm going to come again," was their reply.

We built up our students by equipping them through challenging and Scripturally based teaching. In Middle School we discussed how the Bible interacts with their life at school and their friendships, we talked about what makes Christmas so amazing, we explored their identities in accordance with the Bible, and finally, we broke down the G.O.S.P.E.L. leading up to Easter.

High School explored a new Sunday Sem designed to teach our teenagers how to engage with scripture. For one month, they would dive into our sermon text, exploring language, cultural context, and their own hearts. In the end, their thoughts and words were used to craft our Sunday morning sermon.

But as we know, the year didn't end as planned. We moved into a total virtual youth ministry which required skills we were unprepared to use. However, we managed to stay connected with our youth through individual phone calls and texts. We provided daily devotions led by multiple leaders that took us through seven books of the Bible. We held weekly virtual youth groups via YouTube LIVE and we engaged the gifts of our leaders for daily encouragements, funny stories, and challenges.



And then the protests began following the murder of George Floyd. We felt it our duty to explore with our students how our faith and Bible interacts with injustice in our current world. We held multiple separate meetings to lament and to read scripture together, we held panel discussions, and we prayed as a youth ministry.

When we look to the future there is both excitement and uncertainty. We have learned how to lean in to the unknown and trust that God is doing a new thing. The future of youth ministry will most likely be semi-virtual and lean into our small group strengths. We are excited to see what new pathways open up for God's word to be made known in and through the lives of our amazing students here at FCC!

Pastor Marco Ambriz, College & Young Adults Ministry

Our College/Young Adults Ministry exists to foster community and discipleship for our young adults ages 18-24 through Sunday evening gatherings, personal mentoring, group retreats, and events. This year over forty of our young adults were able to be a part of our ministry



events here in Oakland, while we know that many of them are away during the school year. Like all other ministries this year, in March we moved to an online form of gathering to stay connected as much as possible, and we look forward to seeing how God will lead us to continue this important ministry in the fall. The 2019-2020 Leadership team included Zoe Abuyen, Elisa Rea, Deborah Samia, Nicole Ambriz, and Wade Greenacre.





Pastor Nancy Lewis, Connection and Care

Following Jesus **with** our everyday lives is what I think Deaconesses, Deacons, Stephen Ministers, and Connection Group Leaders try to do. These are not “super people” but they are great people who serve from the places that they are in. They bring what they can, and with the tools God has given them, they bravely reach out specifically to our FCC world in need.

Our Deaconesses and Deacons for 2019-20 have been: Dan Gilbrech, Paul Tiao, Paul Stephens, Vincent Tolliver, Butch Walker, Tom Henneker, Gerson Avalos, Walt Crockett, David Jung, Dan Johnson, Larry Bieber, Dave Howland, Steven Wilson, Richard Cherry (Deacons Chair), Pam Smith, Sarah Andrick, Ginny Lorencz, Kaye Tiao, Nadine Tolliver, Taiko Roskothen, Carolyn Bateman, Lyn Goldflam, Joyce Chin, Judy Johansing, Nikki Filby, Joanna Gibrech, Catherine Luce, Cheryl Bolling (Deaconess Chair)

Our Deaconesses and Deacons are responsible for the care of FCC and so are organized with oversight to assess and meet the needs in our Little Church categories or interest group categories. The attempt is made to reach out and know folks in a given geographic (LC) area, and to connect them to each other so as to break down barriers and to build each other up. One of the tangible ways that this has been demonstrated is through reaching out during COVID-19. Deaconesses have been periodically calling members of their LC to ask about needs and to connect others who have volunteered to meet those needs. We have seen the “body of Christ” in action in new and often powerful ways during this season. The Benevolent Fund, administered by a team of Deacons, has provided assistance to folks in need throughout this year. Prior to COVID-19, the Deacons and Deaconesses faithfully served in providing for families in bereavement through Memorial Services for loved ones and their families and friends, being a light to our city in a time of darkness and grief. The deaconesses and deacons are endeavoring to find new and effective ways to serve as we move forward in this pandemic.

Our currently serving Stephen Ministers are: Joyce Chin (Coordinator), Linda Flores, Joanna Gilbrech, Lynda Hampton, Diane Penn, Taiko Roskothen, Paul Tiao, Stephanie Timmerman, John Woo, and Rose Woo. Stephen Ministers are highly trained lay ministers who serve in distinctive Christian caregiving with someone in need of care. This is a highly confidential ministry, and so most at FCC will never even recognize its existence, but the ethos and tools of this training permeate our culture. This year, eight other FCCers have taken the six-month training program through First Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, and we are so grateful for their partnership. Lives are changed, the kingdom is built, and light is shone through the lives of these touched by Stephen Ministry. John Woo is assuming the Interim Coordinator responsibility going forward in 2020.

Finally, Connection Groups Leaders assist in helping people at FCC find a place of connection where they can break down some of the barriers of being in a large worshipping or unconnected body. This is probably our biggest area of challenge and opportunity at FCC. Connection Groups have the potential to be places of knowing and being known, of growing in your relationship with God and with others; this builds people up, strengthens them, and creates “family” in Christ. Currently we have some great leaders but most groups are at, or near, capacity and many more are needed if we desire to provide for more people. There are many at FCC who have never experienced being in a Connection Group. We need to always be starting new groups with new leaders who are willing to share the light of Christ with others.

Jesus told us to love God and to love others. These ministries are clear ways of doing His will.



Pastor Chamron Phal, Cambodian Ministry

³ Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on (1 Peter 1:3). God is always good to us at all times, even when we are facing unprecedented moments in our lives. We have been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic since January 2020, and even now the virus is still hanging here. What’s next? No matter what happens, our lives will go on with help from God our Maker. There is always the Good News that Christ loves us and lives inside of us. He is bringing delightful and daily hope to face the unknown future. We are so grateful for the provision and the protection

of God upon our lives. During this difficult season, we sadly experienced the loss of our dear Cambodian sister, Mrs. Boy Hun, after her long and severe battle following her second stroke. She will be greatly missed by all of us, her dear friends and family members.

Local Mission

We are so thankful our Heavenly Father cares for us through our FCC family who loves us and remembers us in such a time as this. We noticed that even in the middle of this pandemic, God has still been on His throne ruling and reigning over His universe as King of kings and Lord of lords. We are under His leadership and care always. What a blessing that gives us peace! Situations and circumstances around have changed rapidly but our activities for the kingdom have not changed. Our Cambodian brothers and sisters are still thriving and trusting the Lord our God for the best. We have a weekly Bible study on Thursdays and worship on Sundays. We are so blessed to have others friends and churches joining us to study the Word and

worship together as one family of God. Some from Alabama, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and different parts of California. What a joy to see God at work.

Another good thing is that God has opened up more doors for me to encourage his people who live in Canada and Cambodia through virtual preaching of the Word. During this dark and difficult time, a friend of mine whom I have known since the refugee camp in Thailand in 1980, wanted to hear more about Christ and wanted to know Him. I took time to call her and witness to her, and the Lord opened her heart to hear the Word. After that moment she gave her heart to Jesus. What a marvelous work of the Holy Spirit of God. We are so grateful for one more soul.

Global Mission

Through financial participation, fervent prayers, and faithful partnership from First Covenant Church and other churches and individuals, God blessed us with 265 souls through evangelism outreach during Cambodia mission work in summer 2019. I came down with Dengue Fever on June 26, 2019, after finishing our work in the field. My platelets dropped nearly to the bottom, which caused me to not be able to move my hands, legs, and body. I'd never experienced that before, but the Spirit of God gave me peace knowing that, even though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, He was still with me. God demonstrated His faithfulness to me by keeping me alive and well. I am so incredibly and eternally grateful to God for not only saving my soul, but also saving my body from near death. Thank You Jesus! What amazing and abundant grace He poured onto my soul.

This summer, 2020, we had planned for another missions trip to Cambodia. Due to this pandemic, we have had to postpone our trip. But the work overseas is still happening. A team in Cambodia will continue to carry out the tasks of helping the poor and needy, evangelizing in the community, and strengthening local indigenous churches. We, Cambodian First Covenant Church, thank God for each day and each moment He gives us to live with Him and for Him. We are especially thankful for God's incredible gifts to us of good health, glorious hope, and great happiness in the Lord Jesus Christ. As long as God gives us breath and provides us His grace, we will move forward with Him to minister to people in need with love, joy, peace, hope, and healing in the powerful and precious name of Jesus. May the good Lord bless you all with His peace.

But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely. Psalm 59:16-17

God is so good! May we continue to praise God in all circumstances and remember how He has continually walked with us through all seasons. As a church, we have been blessed with such talented people. May we continue to give God all the glory, honor, and praise! May our church family continue to be encouraged through God's Word by singing, praying, and listening. May our hearts continue to be moved by the Holy Spirit so that we can be God's hands and feet.



Rhonda Ramos, Worship and Hospitality

We are so grateful for our worship teams which include but are not limited to our Pastoral team, choir, praise teams, sound teams, ushers, greeters, communion servers, prayer teams, media teams, and streaming teams.

Let us all give thanks to:

Our Worship Leaders - Pam Grove (Choir Director), Marty Lew, Ginny Halstead, Brad Henry, Margena Wade-Green, Richard Riley, and David Anderson, and all the

teams that they lead!

Our Sound Team - Paul Figueroa, Keith Holmlund, Jonathan Ranillo, Christopher Chu, Steve Berchtold, Jim Taddei, Stephen Loux, and Robert Erdiakoff.

Our Streaming Team - Walt Crockett, Steve Olsen, Clayton Pedersen, Andy Gagliardi, and Jono Tiao.

Our Media Team - Joshua Nielsen, Emma Nielsen, Timothy Latham, David Latham, Colleen Mercer, Nicole Ambriz, Jilli Tiao, and Dan Veale.

Our Worship Intern - Tay Lew! Tay has been an integral part of the team by learning and encouraging others to be involved.



Due to COVID-19, we have had to move our services to online only, and this wouldn't be possible without Keith Holmlund! We are so appreciative of his time and effort. We are also grateful for our small team that has been helping behind the scenes to make services run smoothly: Robert Erdiakoff, Tay Lew, Reto Peter, and Andy Gagliardi.

Hospitality

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:8-10 says, “*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*”

May we continue to create a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for all who walk through our doors or log onto our website. If it is your first time or thousandth time, we want you to know that you are loved by Jesus! This wouldn't be possible without our stellar team of volunteers, who would greet you with a smile, handshake, high five, or hug as you entered the building, and our coffee hour team, who would arrive early to prepare coffee, espressos, hot water for tea, orange juice, and yummy pastries, as well as stay late to clean and put away chairs and tables.

Let us give thanks to our *Greeting Team*: Paul Tiao, Gay Kukorelli, Susan and Denny Burke, Nadine and Vincent Tolliver, Catherine Luce, Diane Eatherly, Austin Lee, Victoria Hartsock, Susie Kelso, Roxana Labrador, Rieko Haggetry, Diane Penn, Glenda Hultgren, Margaret Horwitz, and many others!

Let us also give thanks for our *Coffee Hour Team*: Arlyn Ranillo, Gerry Scheberies, Nikki Filby, Brian Stickney, Lowell and Judith Dawson, Mark and Katy Collins, Kimberly and Grace Smith, Tom Kaetzel, Wilson and Lena Leong, Dan and Joanna Gilbrech, and Chris Andrick.

Although we haven't been able to meet with one another in person, it brings so much joy to my heart to hear countless stories from people meeting across different platforms to still be community and family. I would love to give an extra shout of thanksgiving for those who have made over 550 masks to be distributed to our church community, CityTeam, and Harbor House. Thank you to Anita Leimone, Emma, Julia, Zoey and Becky Nielsen, Leslie Gilbertson, Taiko Roskothen, Joanna Gritz, Stephanie Timmerman, Rita Shiau, Ginger Atkinson for making the masks and Pam Grove, Pastor Sarah Henry, Tay Lew, and Clare Loux for distributing them.

Pastor Danny Fitelson, Men's Ministry

January 2020 marked three years that I have overseen Men's Ministry at FCC. I am thankful for the team of volunteer leaders whom I have served alongside for all three of those years: Ed Chen, Brad Henry, David Jung, Vincent Tolliver, and Dan Vaale. Each of them has demonstrated their commitment to shepherding men at FCC.

Softball (August): While I was away on sabbatical in summer 2019, Brad Henry stepped in and organized and led our softball league. This was our second year of playing games on Friday nights in Pinto Park just up Redwood Road from FCC. We had close to fifty guys play for three different teams. We had hoped to play again in summer 2020, but COVID-19 may throw a wrench in those plans.



Men's BBQ & Cook-off (October): We had a good turnout and ate some amazing food while I shared some thoughts from my sabbatical. This was during the power outages, but fortunately we were able to have electricity during the event. Our 2020 Men's BBQ and Cook-off is scheduled for September 26 with John Fanous as our speaker, but we may not be able to hold the event in-person.

Breakfast Buffet (January): Our 3rd annual Breakfast Buffet was a time for us to focus on issues that men deal with but have trouble talking about: depression, stress, anxiety, and suicide. We had a panel consisting of professional therapists and social workers who attend FCC. It was well-received and some men said things afterwards like, “I have been going to church all my life but this is the first time I have ever heard this discussed.”

Men's Retreat (March): Every year, we take a group to Mission Springs for their Men's Retreat. Every year it rains... except this year! The highlight for me was connecting with 5-10 men who were new to FCC but felt comfortable enough here to go on the retreat! The second highlight was seeing a team from FCC take 4th place in their 3-on-3 hoop tournament (and yes, there were more than four teams in the tournament). The retreat took place the week before shelter-in-place began and I have missed not getting to follow-up more with the guys I met that weekend.

Ongoing Bible Studies: There continue to be Bible Studies on Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings for men. I am proud of these groups for continuing to meet over Zoom for the last few months.

Bagels, Bible, Bro Time (February, April, June, August and October): Our men's ministry team had been longing to have an event that bridged the gap between our larger events and smaller Bible Studies. This new program seems to have done

it. Every few months on a Saturday morning, a group of 20-30 has gathered to study the Bible (we have done Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus so far), eat bagels, and then share some Bro Time (which is basically checking in with one another). The format has transferred easily to Zoom for the last two sessions.

Becky Nielsen, Women's Ministry

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

What a different and challenging, but good year we have had in Women's Ministry. When we began the year being in fellowship with one another, no one could have guessed that we would need to shift our current model into one of reaching out from our homes. We are so thankful for everyone who has helped us.

The wonderful ladies who are on the Women's Ministry team have been working together now for four 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.

This year began with a Summer Evening Potluck Picnic. So much delicious food, Yum! In the Fall we had a panel of women who came to talk about "Being a Light to our City," and what that means to them. We were blessed to hear from LeNette Brand, Leslie Littleton, Lissa Ong, and Donna Sommerville. Taja Lester came and shared with us at one of our Evenings of Stories about a wonderful resource for women who are fighting cancer. In December, we enjoyed a Saturday morning of quiet reflection during the busy advent season. There is also FCC Mom's group, Thursday morning Bible Study, and many connection groups that meet regularly through the year.



Before the Shelter-In-Place, we had planned on hosting IF:Gathering, a mini day retreat for women. That event is now on hold and we hope to bring that back for the upcoming year. During this time, we have asked many women in the church to send video messages sharing scripture and encouraging words that have helped them through this challenging time. It has been a joy to hear from so many! Many of the connection groups and Bible studies have been able to continue meeting on Zoom. We are so thankful to be able to keep up these connections.

As we look at the upcoming year, we do not know what it will look like. We will continue to send out Videos of Encouragement throughout our time apart to help us feel more connected. We look forward to the day we can all gather together again. Until then, we will keep on being the church and praying for one another.



Dr. Jan Nienu, Treehouse Preschool and TK

The year started as usual with the joyful noise of the children and staff ready to start another school year of blessings and challenges. We had full enrollment with many eager children wanting to learn and make new friends in a wonderful place called Treehouse Preschool & TK. Everything was going well as expected. Unfortunately, we had to shut down the school due to the unthinkable COVID-19 that started affecting the entire world. We told the children that because there's a bad germ going around, we want them to stay home with their families to be safe.

During the closure, our staff encouraged one another via WhatsApp, Zoom, texting, and phone calls, and continued to pray together trusting God and leaving our worries to Him.

Our wonderful teachers kept in touch with the children providing online teaching, singing, and praying. Children are resilient and we saw the pure joy and laid back attitude in them as they all participated during their Zoom sessions. Care calls and face time were also made available. Technology came in handy for us big time.

Tom Ayer, our beloved chair who served many years at Treehouse went to be with the Lord. Tom was the architect for the success of Treehouse Ministry, and we thank the Lord for this great and godly man who served Him in quietness and wisdom. We greatly appreciate his faithful service to the Lord. It was a real privilege and a blessing for me to know Tom and to lead Treehouse under his wise directions. He taught me so much and I am forever grateful.

We also lost one of our beloved students, Jack Rivas to a rare brain cancer known as ATRT (Atypical Teratoid Rhabdoid Tumor). Our sweet Jack was with us at Treehouse for three years. We will always remember his charming smile, his gentleness, his sweet spirit, and the love he shared with all his friends and teachers. Heaven's school bell rang as God wanted him there and to not have him struggle anymore.

After sixteen years of faithful service to Treehouse ministry, teacher Carmen Bethke retired this year in June. Treehouse is blessed to have godly committed Christian educators like Carmen faithfully teaching and loving our children. We will miss Teacher Carmen very much and appreciate her faithfulness in serving Christ at Treehouse. We pray for God's many blessings in her retirement years. We are happy that she will continue to substitute for us.

We thank our Preschool Board for guiding us and supporting us throughout the year under the leadership of Helen Tang. We look forward to many years of God's blessings at Treehouse as we serve our children providing a solid spiritual foundation.



Ryan Miya, Christian Education (CE) Board Chair

Members: Doris Lew, Victoria Hartsock, Ryan Miya (chair), Temi Lane, Joseph Lorenz (terming out June 2020), Sarah Henry (pastoral partner).

The CE Board is at the heart of equipping people to follow Jesus in their everyday lives. Christian education is an integral part of our daily walks with Christ, as we should never stop learning more about who He is, and how we can serve as the best examples for Him in whatever seasons, locations, or capacities He has placed us. Each CE Board member partners and meets monthly with individual pastoral staff members to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate resources for all of the Christian Educational opportunities at FCC. From participating on interview panels and coordinating resources at the start, placing an immediate call to assist and support current activities, to arranging and conducting closeout meetings at the end of various ministry chapters, the CE Board is proud to partner with all of the pastoral staff to provide as many successful educational opportunities as possible for our congregation.

Ministry Highlights - We were very pleased and proud to meet with Dr. Jan Nienu, Treehouse Director, to collaborate with her to provide treat bags for all Treehouse Preschool staff and teachers that included a Bible verse of encouragement and a note from all of us on the CE Board to let them know that we appreciate all they are doing for the little ones at Treehouse, and that we are continually praying for them. It was a challenging year for them even before the pandemic, and we wanted to let them know how much we appreciate their work and ministry. Despite the pandemic, educational ministries continue (now primarily virtually) from high school and middle school Sunday Seminars and weekly YouTube live meetings with the youth. We are also very excited about and have been praying for Virtual Kids Camp.

Vision - We are looking to try to discern in partnership with Treehouse Preschool and our church board, when and how to re-open in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also hope to produce a Christian Education Calendar of annual FCC events that will allow us as a board to be proactive in our communication with the pastoral staff partners and how we can assist, support, and encourage with regards to program and staffing resources every year as early as possible. We also hope to re-engage with Joni & Friends regarding follow-up with more detailed discussions and workshops as resources for any teachers, staff, parents, and volunteers that will be or are currently working with special needs children and their families.



Richard Cherry, Deacon Board Chair

The First Covenant deacons served the church members and community in many way throughout the 2019-20 church year. We were blessed to work with a wonderful team of deaconesses and to have the guidance and support of Pastors Nancy Lewis and Chamron Phal.

Prayer and congregational care are key ministries of the Diaconate. We were privileged to lift up brothers and sisters in prayer during difficult times, and rejoice as the Lord worked in the lives of those around us. We were also blessed to come alongside individuals with emotional and spiritual support

Introductory gatherings were held in the fall for each of FCC's seven Little Churches. Held in homes and at the church, these events provided the opportunity for church members and attendees to become acquainted with one another and meet the Deaconesses and Deacons serving their Little Church.

With the deaconesses' assistance, we interviewed and recommended nine applicants for membership, and all were approved by the Church Board as new FCC members. Under deacon coordination, the Diaconate assisted Pastors in serving Communion on each Communion Sunday. Specific deacons served as liaisons and supports to various ministry areas through the year, including Connection Groups, Middle School, High School, College, Young Married, Men's Ministry, Sunday Seminar (formerly Bereans), and Celebrate Life.

Several of our church community went home to be with their Lord during the fall of 2019. Memorial services held at First Covenant for these faithful servants were wonderful celebrations of life and outreach events. The deacons assisted with ushering, setup, and cleanup for seven Memorial services and receptions.

Our Deacon Benevolent Committee administers the Deacon Benevolent Fund. Generous contributions to the Fund by our congregation enabled us to help many who found themselves in financial need. During the year, forty-four individuals and families were assisted with a total of \$20,402.75. In addition, the Benevolent fund provided \$4,650 for baskets and gift cards given to twenty-five shut-in and needy individuals and families by the Deaconesses around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

The need to Shelter-in-Place due to the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-March and greatly affected the functions of the Deacons as it did many other First Covenant activities. Beginning in April, we have held our monthly Deacon Board meeting via video conference, and phone calls have become a more important method for supporting one another. We look forward to worshipping and fellowshiping in person, serving Communion, and being part of special services at our physical church again in the future.



Cheryl Bolling, Deaconess Board Chair

Cheryl Bolling	Chair
Little Church 1	Pam Smith and Sarah Andrick
Little Church 2	Ginny Lorencz and Kaye Tiao
Little Church 3	Nadine Tolliver and Taiko Roskothen
Little Church 4	Carolyn Bateman and Lyn Goldflam
Little Church 5	Joyce Chin and Judy Johansing
Little Church 6	Nikki Filby (Secretary)
Little Church 7	Joanna Gilbrech and Catherine Luce (Vice Chair)

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 to 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:

- Memorial Service Receptions
- Little Church Meet-and-Greets
- Serving Communion
- Phone calls and home visits to our sick and shut in
- Thanksgiving Gift Cards and Poinsettias
- Christmas Baskets and Plants
- Prayer Chains when needed and/or requested



The pandemic, unfortunately, has limited us from March until now to making weekly phone check-ins with those in need, emails, and Zoom meetings to keep Deaconesses apprised of Board actions and Church related activities. We have continued 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.



Nanette Mocanu, Facilities Board Chair

Members: Keith Holmlund, Gloria Kim, Stephen Loux, Guy Martin, Nanette Mocanu

Staff Representatives: Shelley Holst, Steve Olson, Nina Johnson

Volunteers: Joe Knoll, Alan Heikkinen

People might not consider the Facilities Board when thinking about church ministries. You might simply consider the Board as a mechanism for keeping the church campus clean, functioning, and maintained. We do all those things but we do them with a specific mission in mind. In considering the church's mission.

Equipping People to Follow Jesus: Did you know there are two apartments on the church campus? Facilities Board created guidelines and assists the Facilities Manager in making decisions about securing the church. We teach these young people to be good stewards of the beautiful campus God has provided for our community. In addition, we provide opportunities for all

church members to come together and do major and minor projects on “Love Your Church” days, which provide opportunities for discipleship and fellowship, while keeping our church maintained and functioning.

Breaking Down Barriers: Our Board undertook several projects that are mostly invisible to the congregation, but are very important for our mission. Each of these projects make our church more accessible to our members and the community. Some of these projects include:

- Complete upgrade to Network Communication Systems (Internet/Phone) and connection to fiber cable coming soon
- Installation of Electronic key system to all exterior doors on the campus (complete)
- Improvements to the Sound Delivery system in the sanctuary (complete)
- Improvement of cameras in the Sanctuary to improve video delivery, especially as distance worship becomes a very important part of our ministry

Building Up People: Our Board plays a supportive role in much of the ministry that happens on our campus. We ensure the facility is clean, equipment is provided and repaired, kitchen facilities are available for hospitality functions, carpets are cleaned and floors are waxed on schedule, the elevator is annually certified, and the grounds are landscaped for fire prevention.

Being a Light: The Facilities Board is literally improving the light to the community for our church. We are doing and/or completed several projects:

- Completion of Phase I of the Monument Sign Installation
- Installation of new LED lighting in the Sanctuary, Adult Center, Treehouse Preschool and the exterior of the church, especially during daylight saving time.
- Providing playground improvement to the Treehouse play area

The Facilities Board, like all Boards and Committees, is beginning to look at all of our work through the lens of the First Covenant Church Mission. Rather than being a board simply concerned with brick and mortar projects, our Board hopes to ensure that all we do will support the goals of the church’s mission statement. One of the primary ways that we accomplish this is by equipping our pastors and lay leaders with the equipment and resources they need to do ministry.



Ryan Ong, Finance Board Chair

The 2019/2020 Finance Board had five members that included the following people: Jim Holst (Finance Chair), Pat Bleckley (Treasurer), Zoe Abuyen (Financial Secretary), Jessica Avalos and Ryan Ong. During the 2020 year, Ryan Ong succeeded Jim Holst as Finance Chair, and Dave Latham succeeded Pat Bleckley as Treasurer. We extend a special thank you and appreciation to both Jim Holst and Pat Bleckley who faithfully served on the Finance Board for several years.

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. The 2018/2019 budget year was a fairly routine year. The Finance Board worked together with the other ministry teams to manage the church’s resources and facilitate many key projects that included: implementing Planning Center (that facilitates attendance, giving, and church memberships), reviewing our insurance coverages, updating our Child Protection Policies, improving communication channels with other ministry boards, and managing budget oversight and expense management.

As we entered 2020, the Finance Board held several impromptu meetings to review what needed to be done to analyze the church’s financial resources to maintain compensation and benefits for all church staff including Treehouse through the shelter-in-place period. In April, the Finance Board conducted an interview process and hired a Business Administrator, Nina Johnson. We think she will be a valued internal resource for the Finance and Facilities boards in particular. We also applied and secured a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan to help us through this period of time until we can meet in person again. As we embark into the summer months and a new fiscal year beginning in September, the Finance Board will aim to facilitate a new fiscal budget for 2020-21, recommend a new Capital Projects policy to the congregation, review Balance Sheet resources and reserves, foster stewardship, and seek to streamline budget procedures and improve communications with all ministry boards and the congregation.

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.

Jim Holst, Finance Board Supplemental Report

Finance Board responsibilities are described in the Bylaws as authority to “direct the financial affairs of the church” (Article VI, section 4) followed by enumeration of several specific responsibilities including employment and fixing the terms of employment of non-ministerial staff; procurement of insurance; designation of depositories for cash and other liquid assets of the church; and encouragement of the practice and spirit of stewardship throughout the church. On a month-by-month basis, regular attention is given to providing data and support for the annual budget process; approving expenditures in relation to the budget approved by the congregation; recommending salaries and benefits for pastoral staff; and providing the Church Board and congregation with analysis of and recommendations concerning financial issues generally. Through fulfillment of these functions, the Finance Board contributes meaningfully on an ongoing basis to the mission and vision of First Covenant Church.

Membership of the Finance Board for 2019-2020: Zoe Abuyen (Financial Secretary), Jessica Avalos (Treehouse liaison), Pat Bleckley (Treasurer - resigned as Finance Board member and Treasurer April 14, 2020), Jim Holst (Chairman - resigned as Chairman April 14, 2020); Ryan Ong (Vice Chairman); Andy Wen (*ex-officio*) and Marco Ambriz (*ex-officio*). In addition, Paul Figueroa has been a member during his period of service as Acting Church Chairman.

Particular recognition and thanks are extended to Pat Bleckley for her dedicated service as Treasurer for the past five years. In that period, she has devoted countless hours of exemplary service carrying out the challenging duties of the position and her related membership on the Church Board. And appreciation to Ryan Ong for his willingness to assume the chairmanship of the Finance Board and the related Church Board position effective April 14.

Highlights of Finance Board actions — 2019-2020 through April 14, 2020 Budget and Budget Implementation

- Facilitated implementation of 2019-2020 budget for (a) congregational ministry (\$2,006,060) (81% from congregational giving and 19% from invested funds and investment and miscellaneous income) and (b) Treehouse (\$1,423,250).
- Established fiscal year salaries of non-ministerial personnel and approved recommendations to Church Board for salaries of pastoral staff, including housing allowances (approved by Church Board)
- Developed and submitted to Church Board proposed Policy on Approval of Expenditures for Major and Minor Capital Projects (effective with 2020-2021 budget) for recommendation to congregation (recommendation approved by Church Board for 2020 congregational meeting action) setting forth approval authority within the major and minor capital project allocations approved by the congregation
- Reviewed and acted on in/out budgets for 2020 Kids Camp and Camp Cov
- Adopted plan for weekly, rather than monthly, bulletin reports of congregational giving in relation to budget need
- Advised Budget Committee and Church Board with respect to various aspects of the proposed 2020-2021 budget, including extent of use of invested funds (accumulated net income and bequests received in prior years) to supplement anticipated congregational giving
- Recommended to Church Board that expenditures from contingent funds in 2019-2020 budget (general, facilities, missions, Treehouse) may be approved
- pursuant to the Policy on Authority to Approve Use of Contingent Funds only for purposes unanticipated at time of budget adoption, including emergency circumstances arising after budget adoption (not approved by Church Board)
- Recommended to Church Board that four current contingent funds in annual budget be consolidated into a single contingent fund beginning with the 2020-2021 budget (approved by Church Board)
- Approved transfer to the entry sign project of up to \$50,000 originally designated for parking lot paving
- Agreed to postponement to September (or earlier if possible) of 2020-2021 budget adoption by congregation to allow time for assessment of COVID-19 impact and refinement by Budget Committee of recommended budget modifications
- Monitored expenditures from \$200,000 capital projects fund (2017) and \$40,000 vision fund

Non-ministerial staff

- Approved non-ministerial staff appointments
 - David Anderson, organist Pam Grove, choir director (renewal)
 - Scott Lew, Sunday worship tech coordinator
 - Heather Robertson, Kids Camp director
 - Alex Figueroa, Kids Camp assistant director
 - Arlyn Ranillo, Sunday Brunch and Event Coordinator

- Approved clarification of previously adopted policy providing for 5% pre-tax retirement contributions for full-time non-pastoral staff, including Treehouse, employees
- Approved proposed job description and hourly rates for Sunday Brunch Manager/ Events Coordinator position
- Received proposed revision of job description for Bookkeeper
- Received report of review of 2019 timesheets for hourly employees and requested clarification of procedures for submission and approval
- Approved business administrator job description and authorized advertising

Policy Development

- Adopted the following policies:
(1) Designated gifts and (2) Cash counting procedures
- Reviewed investment policy with investment consultant, HC Financial, followed by revision of investment policy to emphasize funds maintaining environmental, social, and/or governmental emphases and prohibiting investments in companies supporting the tobacco, alcohol, gambling, firearms, abortion, and pornography industries
- Policies under development and/or review: Deputized fund raising; spending plan (accumulated net income and undesignated bequests); staff-developed intellectual property; fingerprint-based and other background checks; records retention and disposal; bidding procedures and contract award; disposition of surplus equipment and furniture; volunteer drivers
- Adopted recommendation to Church Board for child protection policy and child abuse reporting policy applicable to all activities, including Treehouse, involving children and students (approved by Church Board)..Submitted application to insurance carrier for supplemental sexual misconduct coverage

Treehouse

- Adopted recommendations to Church Board for Treehouse 5% tuition increase effective September 1, 2020 (approved by Church Board)
- Authorized development of and approved formula for determining First Covenant overhead to be recognized in calculation of annual Treehouse revenue requirements

Legal issues

- Authorized retention of legal counsel to provide advice and assistance with respect to
(1) termination of 2012 Safeway easement agreement (based on Safeway abandonment of proposed project); (2) clarification of terms of 1974 Chappaz/ Safeway grant of easement to the Church; (3) reconveyance of deed of trust for fully paid note to architectural firm; (4) development of and clarification of equity sharing arrangements with members of pastoral staff receiving home purchase assistance

Insurance

- Reviewed sufficiency of insurance coverages
- Reviewed limits of coverage required to be provided by non-First Covenant users of facilities, including sufficiency of one day event coverage

Special offerings

- Authorized allocation among staff of special offering proceeds (\$13,000) for staff Christmas gifts and approved Missions Board recommendation for \$100 Christmas gift to each missionary
- Approved special Thanksgiving offering for City Team women's center; Advent season giving opportunities for local missions organizations; and North Park University choir concert

Pastoral Staff Sabbatical Leave Funding

- Recommended Church Board approval pursuant to Sabbatical Leave Policy of additional sabbatical funding equal to four weeks salary for Marco Ambriz and Chamron Phal 2020 sabbaticals (approved by Church Board)

COVID-19

- Authorized analysis and development of materials necessary for federal Payroll Protection Program loan application (subject to forgiveness on satisfaction of certain conditions) applicable to qualifying personnel and utilities expenses
- Approved continuation of c compensation where work is interrupted due to response to COVID-19 circumstances (and subject to extension by further action), for non- seasonal hourly employees, including Treehouse staff, at least at the minimum number of agreed-upon hours

Other

- Continued consideration, subject to later decision, of alternative approaches to satisfying requirement for outside audit

- Adopted recommendation to Church Board, subject to congregational vote, for Bylaws amendment to provide for Financial Secretary who would not be an elected member of Finance Board (not approved by Church Board)
- Approved contract arrangements related to First Covenant App; Camp Cov (Mission Springs); Lifetouch (photo directory); and RightNow Media (online video library)
- Authorized acceptance of major gift designated for non-operating expenses (to which there may be future additions) with ultimate use to be approved by the congregation on recommendation of Finance Board and Church Board
- Authorized submission of applications for clarification and revision of County of Alameda property tax exemption status and exemption from and possible refund of City of Oakland violence prevention tax



Carl Holmes, Lay Ministry Board Chair

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
- Assisting FCC members on understanding and developing their personal gifts

The “main event” for the LMB is driving the Nominating Committee to select future leaders as candidates for the congregation to vote. 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 function that the LMB performed was attending the Global Leadership Summit conference which concentrates 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 LMB during the 2019-20 fiscal year were as follows: Katy Collins, Gay Kukorelli, Kacie Stratton, Matthew Miles, Carl Holmes.

The members of the Nominating Committee during the 2019-20 fiscal year include the LMB (above) as well as the Members-at-Large, and advisors as follows: Christie Loux, Lynda Hampton, Jim Taddei, Jillian Greenacre, Betty Huppert, Nanette Mocanu (Facilities), Susan White (Missions), Paul Tiao (Deacons), Ryan Ong (Finance), Ryan Miya (Christian Ed.), Kaye Tiao (Deaconesses), and Pastor Marco Ambriz

Thanks to Gay Kukorelli and Kacie Stratton for serving on the LMB with me. And a very special thanks goes to Katy Collins who completed her sixth year with the Lay Ministry Board and leading the Nominating Committee. Katy was instrumental in creating a tracking grid that identifies who is serving in each position on the entire Church Council so that the Nominating Committee can sort through the actual vacancies and term limits. What an amazing job, Katy!

Thanks to all of you who have decided to serve in leadership at FCC!



Mandie Kaminski, Missions Board Chair

Missions Board Members: Mandie Kaminski, Mark Edwards, Viji Cammauf, Susan White, Marie Broek, Joey Chapdelaine

The FCC Mission Board adopted a mission priority this year on which we focused our education, deeper investments in global and local partnerships, and prayers: Migration.

Multiple teams from FCC attended Global Immersion

Project’s pilgrimage to the Tijuana/San Diego border. This learning experience has also been adopted by the Covenant Church as an addition to its curriculum for denominational trips of theological, racial, and justice formation. The picture to the right highlights FCC’s ongoing collaboration with local service



facilitators, Project Peace East Bay. FCC hosted an event and agency fair called, “The Border is Here,” focusing on mission and migration. The panel and engagement opportunities were curated for Project Peace’s annual Speaker Series. Finally, we grieved the departure of our teammate Marie Broek, who moved with her family to Austin. But, we welcomed Joey Chapdelaine in her stead! We continue to look for lay ministry leaders who would volunteer to take up Marie’s excellent coordination of the World Vision 6k Walk for Water next year. This amazing local-global event keeps FCC rooted in her love for Congo and her many members’ sponsorships with World Vision, while also promising church fun, water education, missional engagement, and strategic fundraising.

2019-2020 Celebrations, Staff, & Board

Baptism:

Sara Alaniz (Affirmation)

New Members:

Edna Hom
Steven Wilson
CD & Phyllis Davis
Wade & Jillian Greenacre
Anthony & Joy Liu
Eric Suliga
Charles & Ayumi Hardy

In Memory of:

Yan Kong
Matthew Bresso
Patrick Flores
Millie Olson
Joan Morrow
Thelma Swearingen
Marjorie Yuen
Suellen Olsen
Ann Tennis
Mark Gagliardi
Debora Johnson
Christina Walker
Tom Ayer
Norman Brooks
Aileen Burbidge
Boy Hun
Ruth Peterson

Confirmation

Class of 2020:

Victoria Boateng
Gabriella Griffiths
CJ Olsen
Christian Park
Jonah Stratton

2019-20 Church Board:

Pastor Marco Ambriz
Andy Wen
Paul Figueroa
Tracy Machle
Nina Johnson
Marcus Amaro
Ryan Miya
Richard Cherry
Cheryl Bolling
Nanette Mocanu
Jim Holst & Ryan Ong
Pat Bleckley & David Latham
Carl Holmes
Mandie Kaminski

Infant Dedications & Baptisms:

Caleb Ellis Galle (Kyle & Lindi)
Zayden Leon Atkinson (Brett & Noni)

2019-20 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 & Sunday Worship Experience
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
Bunpak, Thos, & Susan Noeum, Custodians
Steve Olsen, Maintenance
Alex Figueroa, Youth Intern
Donovan Zedd, Youth Intern
Noah Mitchell, Kids Church Intern
Kyle Lew, Kids Church Intern
Tay Lew, Sunday Worship Tech Coordinator
Revy Samia, Web & Graphic Design Artist