

A NOTE FROM MATT

It's hard to believe how quickly 2025 is going by! Spring is here already, and so is March. As we march through March, a lot is happening at Orchard. First, let me tell you about an important change in our staff. For two reasons, the Session (our church board) has expanded Melinda's hours from 25 to 35. First, they have charged Melinda with taking leadership of our outreach efforts. Melinda has done some great outreach work through our kids' ministries, which she leads, and now they want her to expand her efforts. Second, the Session has decided to fill our youth director position with two college-age interns for the time being. Melinda will supervise these interns behind the scenes, offering oversight and guidance as they lead our youth ministries. Melinda has extensive experience in Youth Ministry and a certificate in Youth Ministry from Princeton Seminary, along with the M.Div. she also has from Princeton.

With that said, a lot is going on in March. This year Lent begins in March. **Lent is the season of preparation for Easter; it's a time to reflect deeply on Jesus—his identity, teachings, and death on the cross—so we can fully understand and celebrate His resurrection.** This year, our messages for Lent will be called "I AM" and will center on the "I am" statements found in the Gospel of John. I invite you to begin Lent with us at our **Ash Wednesday Service on March 5 at 7 PM** (childcare provided). The focus of Ash Wednesday is on repentance and renewal as a way of seeking to get our hearts and lives right with God as we begin the season of Lent.

Also in March, the **Orchard Women** will have a one-day mini-retreat at the church called "**Bursting into Bloom**" on March 8.

The **Orchard Youth** will sponsor a **Family Fun Fair** on March 16 from 4–6 PM. The **Orchard Men** will have an outing to the **Reagan Ranch Center** in Santa Barbara on March 28.

In closing, I want to mention again that I have a Sabbatical coming up this year. Following Easter, I will be on Sabbatical for 12 weeks. Pastor Josh Matthews will fill in for me as he did during my last Sabbatical eight years ago. However, Josh is unavailable this time on most Sundays, so we will have a series of guest preachers. Josh will preach a few Sundays and be in the office a few days a week to provide pastoral leadership and care for our congregation. I'm very confident that he and the Session will lead the church well in my absence.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Matt Hoyt
matt@OrchardVentura.org



SUNDAY MESSAGES



March 2 - "The Meantime: Healthy Community"

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

With these closing words, Paul instructs us on how to live together until Jesus returns. He calls us to live together well in healthy community. Communion Sunday



"I Am"

Lent is the season of preparation for Easter, a time to reflect deeply on Jesus—his identity, teachings, and death on the cross—so we can fully understand and celebrate His resurrection. This year, we will focus on the "I am" statements in the Gospel of John. While all four Gospels include instances where Jesus uses the Greek phrase "ego eimi," meaning "I am," John's Gospel records Jesus doing so over 30 times, more than twice the other Gospels combined. Among these, seven instances feature profound metaphors that Jesus used to describe Himself. Throughout Lent, we will explore these seven metaphors, gaining a deeper and richer understanding of who Jesus was and is.

March 5 - "I Am"

Exodus 3:14, Mark 6:50 & John 8:48-58

Ash Wednesday Service - 7 PM

"I Am" is God's name that He gave Moses on Mt. Sinai, but it's also a name that Jesus claimed for himself in the Gospels to help us more fully understand who He is.

March 9 - "I Am the Bread of Life"

John 6:25-59

Food is one of our basic needs; if we don't have it, we can experience discomfort, sickness, and even death. By calling himself the "bread of life," Jesus invites us to believe in and rely on Him. Like literal food that nourishes the body, Jesus is the spiritual food and the only thing that will truly satisfy our souls. Communion Sunday

March 16 - "I Am the Light of the World" John 8:12-19

Without light, we have trouble knowing where we are and what is around us. By calling himself the "light of the world," Jesus reveals that He illuminates this world like no other. His light reveals where we are and leads us to where we need to be.

March 23 - "I Am the Gate" John 10:1-10

John 10:1-10

We tend to think of gates and doors as things that keep people out, but they're also things that can let people in. When Jesus calls himself "the gate," He means not only is He the door to salvation, but also the door to being filled with new life here and now.

March 30 - "I Am the Good Shepherd" John 10:11-18

Sheep are vulnerable to predators and their own devices, such as getting lost. For these reasons, sheep thrive under the guidance and protection of their shepherd. The shepherd knows his sheep, and they know their shepherd. When Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd," He means that He knows us and will not only care for and protect us but also lay down His life for us.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Melinda Hoyt

Children's Ministry Director
Melinda@OrchardVentura.org



Parents and Grandparents, you won't want your children to miss the Bible stories we'll be learning in March: Hannah, Samuel, David and Goliath, Abigail, and Solomon. Sunday morning Orchard Kids and Wednesday afternoon Kids Club will be packed full of games, music, and activities to help our kids build important friendships as they dig into God's Word together.



Summer Camp is full, but add yourself to the waitlist, and we'll get you in if we can! I can't believe we filled all our spots so early in the

year. Great job, parents and grandparents. Hopefully, this will help you pay little by little throughout the year instead of all at once.



Adventure Day Camp (June 16-20):

9 am to Noon

\$50 / child (non-refundable)

Preschool (3+ potty trained) - 7th grade

Kids choose their adventure from classes like baking, art, music, summer sports, building, dance, etc.



VBS (June 23-27): Deep - Adventure Under the Sea

9 am to Noon, \$40 / child (non-refundable)

Preschool (3+ potty trained) - 5th grade

A fun week of games, crafts, music, and Bible Stories!

Registration is open for participants and volunteers.

We are gathering our volunteer team NOW. Please sign up online or contact Melinda. These camps are a huge outreach to our community and preschool, so it takes a whole church effort.

OUTREACH

Hello Orchard Family! You may have heard that my ministry with you has expanded. I want to assure all my little friends that my "job" (so fun, how can I even call it a job) with Children's Ministries remains untouched and unchanged, and I will still be doing all of the hands-on ministry we've shared for over seven

years. I will now oversee Youth Ministries, enabling me to guide and support our youth leadership team of amazing volunteers and new paid interns (coming soon!!!).

I am so excited to lead our church family toward a focused "outreach mindset." In these first weeks, I'll be:

- Gathering an Outreach Team as a subcommittee of our Fellowship Committee
- Meeting with ministry leaders to look at our annual calendar of existing events and ministries
- Identifying some ways to better reach our community and preschool
- Guiding our church family into an outreach mindset
- Developing pathways toward a deeper sense of belonging

Would you like to hear more/talk more about our new outreach ministry? Don't hesitate to contact me or look for dates/times of some upcoming opportunities for more conversation.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Rich Smith

Interim Youth Director

Rich@OrchardVentura.org



February was great for youth group, playing dodgeball in the dark, watching the Super Bowl, hoonting, and "Get to da Choppa." We also met and learned from Yassine El Mounir, Young Life Area Director for North Africa, and his wife Abbey. On Sunday mornings we have continued to preview Bible passages for the sermon and in the afternoon Youth Group dig into the Sermon on the Mount and what it means for us in school, at home, or wherever we may be.

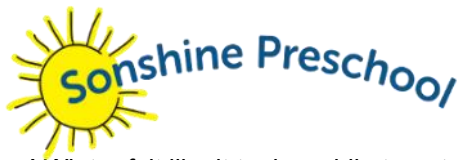


CAMP PONDO

Summer camp is now open for registration online. Both middle and high school students will be going to Camp Pondo July 28-Aug 1.

ORCHARD YOUTH MEETS

- Sundays at 9 AM for sermon sneak preview and donuts (not necessarily in that order)
- 4-6 PM Sundays for Youth Group (fun & Sermon on the Mount Study)
- 6-7:30 PM Mondays - HS Guy's Group (Fun and Romans study)
- 3-4:30 PM Tuesdays for Roast with Rich at the Starbucks near Buena. (Just hang out time)



so! Winter felt like it took a while to get here this year, and it's starting to feel like it will never leave. Let's hope Punxsutawney Phil was wrong and that it will feel like spring soon!

February was registration for Sunshine. It was a busy month with many tours and emails to and from prospective families. Our priority registration went very well. Our 2's program filled the first day of priority registration. We even have two priority families on our waiting list. This is pretty unprecedented for us. We usually have at least a couple of 2-year-old spots that are still available when new families register. Our 3's and 4's programs also filled up nicely during priority registration. Of children eligible for Transitional Kindergarten through Ventura Unified School District, about 50% chose to stay at Sunshine for an additional year. This is pretty consistent with last year, too.

We opened registration for new families on February 18. We tried something new for the first time ever and had an online registration. Alisa helped me utilize Planning Center to create an online registration for all new families. When I say she helped me, she literally held my hand for the last several months to figure out how to best do it! Because it was a new process, I was petrified, if I am being honest. Change can be really hard, but it was completely successful, and we had no major hiccups! No parents had to wait in line at a ridiculous time in the cold, they simply logged on from the comfort of their own homes. We had 18 families register and six families get on our waitlist for our 2's program. **We are at 94% capacity for the 2025-2026 school year**, with just a handful of spots left in our Tuesday/Thursday preschool programs. We are so grateful! Registration always feels like a big party, and you're never sure who, if anyone, is going to show up. When people show up, it feels very satisfying!

Now that registration is behind us, we will continue to work on filling the remaining

spots, enjoy the year we are in now, and plan for the 2025-2026 school year. We are so grateful for your support!

DISCIPLESHIP CORNER

Rich Smith & Jerry Horstmeyer
Discipleship Elders

Is growing closer to God and becoming more like Christ important to you?

Good starting points to make that happen are attending the 9 AM Adult Enrichment and/or joining a small group. Yes, 9am can be early, but it's worth the effort.



Six Important Words for The Lenten Season, a new Adult Enrichment class

begins March 9, marking the beginning of Lent and lasting through April 13th (Easter is April 20th). The class will be led by LuAnn Smith and Randy Metz. Lent is a period of spiritual preparation for Easter, and this class will explore six key concepts: Sacrifice, Fasting, Repentance, Almsgiving (charity), Meditation, and Prayer.

Other ways to grow and make connections:

- Men's Fellowship Group (9 AM in the Conference Room)
- Intercessory Prayer Group (9:15 AM in the Farmhouse), Childcare is available with advanced notice.
- Pastor's Bible Study (Tuesdays at 10 AM in the library)

Hello Orchard Small Group has started to welcome people to church and orient them to what's available and where. It meets biweekly after worship in the Library and is led by Jerry Horstmeyer.

Other small groups are available for Bible study or common interests during the



FABULOUS FAMILY FUN FAIR!

Please mark your calendars for **March 16 from 4 to 6 PM** as we host the Orchard family fun night. We want whole families to join us, along with their neighbors and friends, for a great time in the sanctuary with traditional and nontraditional games and outside with lawn games.

Please [register now!](#) Scan the QR code, visit our events page, use the Church Center app, or sign up on the Patio.



Bring your favorite games! We want something fun for every age and everyone.

We're also looking for **volunteers willing to host** and help everything to run smoothly. If you like to help people, contact [Rich](#).

There will be something fun for every age and ability.

SONSHINE PRESCHOOL

Annette Walters

Sunshine Preschool Director
Annette@OrchardVentura.org



Spring is about to arrive, at least I hope

week. During the Auto Fire, member's of the Monday Night Zoom group stayed on the call with each other into the night, praying for, encouraging and helping each other. That support is what small groups are about and what it means to be a family.

HELLO!
ORCHARD
SMALL GROUP



“HELLO ORCHARD!” SMALL GROUP

A new Small Group, “Hello Orchard!” is planned to launch in January, focused on walking with those newer to our Orchard community. The initial plan is to meet alternating weeks following Sunday worship to orient, assist, and share opportunities through fellowship. We want to meet those seeking new spiritual life at Orchard, and welcome and assist them in finding a path for growth and community at Orchard. We will be introducing group members to the different programs, events, leaders, and opportunities that exist at Orchard, and walk with them through a transition in finding each individual's further path and plans. We welcome all those seeking information on Orchard's programs. If you would like to assist in this Small Group ministry, please contact Jerry Horstmeyer at jerzorchard@gmail.com.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY



Orchard moms have a great time together on Sundays! Join us! All moms welcome. Sundays 4-6 PM in Room 5.

Scan the QR code or find the group in the Church Center App & request to join!



WOMEN'S EVENT

Saturday March 8
9 AM - 3:30 PM
\$25

LAST DAY TO REGISTER IS 3/3/25



Register Now!

This spring, Women's Ministries is doing something new! We usually have an offsite retreat every two years, and then a spring tea or other fellowship event in the alternate years. But this year, after a winter of busy-ness and a new year that may not have started off quite as smoothly as we'd hoped, it's time to pause, reflect, and reconnect with God and with your Orchard friends. Join us for "**Bursting Into Bloom: A Time for Fellowship and Renewal**" — a one-day retreat designed to nurture your spirit and help you flourish.

Come to Orchard on March 8 at 9 AM and enjoy a day filled with fellowship, renewal, and joy! We'll have a light breakfast available, start with worship and a thought question for the day, and then head into a time of activities including worship, crafts, a guided prayer walk to connect with God in nature, yoga and light stretching led by our own Liz Ranalli, a small-group discussion time, and sweet moments of fellowship with friends! Lunch will be provided and we'll plan on sending you home, refreshed and renewed by 3:30 PM (make sure you stay for the door prize!).

Together, we'll find rest, be refreshed by God's Word and prayer, and leave rejuvenated for the season ahead. As Isaiah 35:1-2 reminds us:

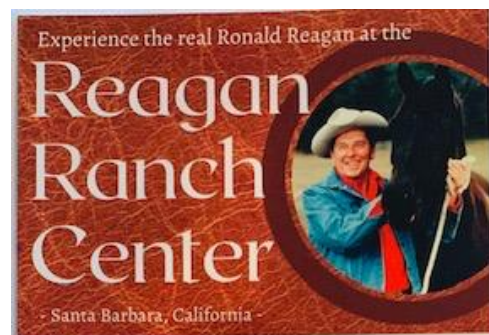
"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy."

Cost to attend is \$25 and you will need to register in advance on the Church App or in the church office. You will just need to bring yourself in comfortable clothes (nothing formal about this event) and a yoga mat or towel if you'd like to participate in that activity. Everything else is provided.

This is an excellent event to bring your friends and daughters or grand-daughters (middle-school aged and up) to as it's a fun, low-key, getaway kind of day. If you have any questions, please contact Deya at deya@orchardventura.org.

We hope to see you there as we burst into bloom together!

MEN'S MINISTRY



Friday, March 28

Meet at 9:30 am in Orchard Parking Lot
Tour the Reagan Ranch Center in Santa Barbara. The Center contains galleries and exhibits describing the history of Rancho del Cielo (Western White House) and Ronald Reagan's legacy and accomplishments. There is no entrance fee. We will meet at the church at 9:30 a.m. for carpooling. After touring the Center, we will have lunch at a nearby restaurant. Scan the QR code to register, go to our website events page, find it on the Church Center app or contact [Russ Gruhlke](mailto:Russ.Gruhlke).



PRAYER CORNER

In our Winter discipleship and prayer class,

Encounters 2.0: Prayer Upgrades, we discussed the elements of prayer which begin with our assessing how trustworthy we believe God to be. We learned about 4

beginning our conversation with God with reverence and remembering the times in our lives where God has intervened directly.

We have been using prayers from the Bible as a template or “script” to pattern our prayers so that we can grow in confidence in praying with others out loud.

Here are some tips for developing our understanding of how to pray more effectively, keeping God’s will before us, as others have prayed.

- Read Scripture and write down Scriptures that are meaningful to you.
- Paraphrase those verses.
- Put yourself in those verses.
- Pull out key phrases and write them down.
- Write a prayer following this pattern using one or both of the tips above.
- Pray your written prayer out loud.
- Pray your written prayer out loud with a trusted person.

Here are some examples of prayer you can re-frame for your own prayers for yourself and others:

Overflowing with Holy Love

Philippians 1:3-4, 9 -11

The Established Heart in God

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; 5:23 – 25

Wholehearted Devotion

1 Chronicles 17:16-27, 29; 10 -20, 22

Intimate Praise of God

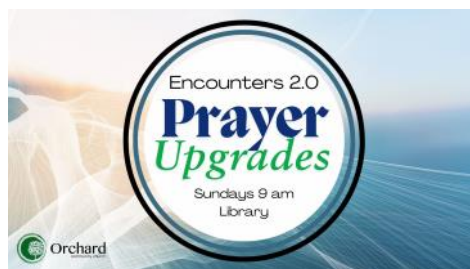
Psalms 84

Hannah’s Prayer

1 Samuel 2:1

For more examples, you can use this resource, *Praying the Bible: The Book of Prayers* by Wesley and Stacey Campbell, Regal Books, 2002.

For questions, contact Joy Downing Riley at jdredit@yahoo.com.



Encounters 2.0 Prayer Upgrades for 2025 9 - 10 AM in the Library

Do you hunger for new ways to approach God and receive grace? Do still feel like a novice when it comes to praying for your daily concerns and for others?

Do you feel you know how to pray with authority and power for yourself and others?

Sunday, March 2 - Praying for others - how to stand in the gap before God for the hurting. We will be looking at the example of Moses and the major prophets in Scripture to discern our role as intercessors.

For questions about prayer or our prayer ministry, contact Joy Downing Riley at jdredit@yahoo.com.

LOCAL MISSIONS

Local Missions answers the call of Deuteronomy 15:11B, “*Therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy, and to the poor in your land.*”

Your Local Missions Committee has been very active. Our activity depends on you. You have continued to be so very generous and giving, working together to meet the needs in our local community. Thank you!



The **Winter Warm Clothing Collection** has been wonderful. Each week the green cart was filled with needed items that have been taken to The River Community Church for the winter shelter and to One Stop. Although we can always take clothing, our next clothing collection will be this summer.

We are signed up to provide meals every Saturday in March for thirty people who will be using the **Winter Shelter** if it rains ½ inch and or the weather is below 40°. Let Priscilla Anderson know if you want to assist in the meal preparation.

The **Blood Drive** with Vitalant was received well. **We had 14 people register to donate blood.** Thank you for being a willing donor.



In April we will be having a **work day at the Mercy House ARCH Shelter** in Ventura. We will be organizing donations and will need about six people. We also have the opportunity to lead activities with the residents (crafts, singing, games, planting a garden, etc.) and will need volunteers. All volunteers must be over 18. If you are interested, contact Judy Alexandre at judyalexandre@gmail.com

In just January and February of this year, the **Homeless Prevention Fund** has already assisted 20 households, 54 people (25 of them were children). Nine of these households were paying over 60% of their income for rent.



Because Step up Ventura closed, we have begun supporting **Ventura County Believe**

Center. They offer healing through diverse programs such as outpatient and re-entry services, referrals to emergency shelters, recovery programs, transitional living programs, residency programs, as well as aftercare services. The services they offer are case management, Biblical counseling, mentorship, discipleship, life skills education, Bible study, recovery group, assistance with housing applications, and referrals to other agencies that assist with housing placement. The Believe Center brings hope through sharing the gospel, street outreach, and a jail ministry. They are a supportive community and provide a strong support system.



We will again be collecting kitchen items to make kitchen kits for

those transitioning from homelessness into a "home of their own." The collection will begin May 4th and end June 22nd. This year our goal is to put together 30 kits. Watch for information on items needed.

Again, thank you for helping to meet needs in your community!

The Local Missions Committee is looking forward to our community outreach, working together with the congregation in 2025. If you are interested in being on the committee, we welcome you!. Please contact Judy Alexandre (judyalexandre@gmail.com).



GLOBAL MISSIONS

Since the early 2000's during Lent, the Global Mission Team has invited members and friends of our church to participate in a time of personal sacrifice and commitment, to contribute money they would usually spend for coffee, treats, etc., to a ministry that brings clean water to people in need. We call this special opportunity "Significant Sacrifice" which is in keeping with Lenten traditions that began following the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Lent initially focused on strict fasting and through the years, practices evolved and even within our congregation people have different practices. Significant Sacrifice which begins this year March 9 and ends on Palm Sunday, April 13 is an invitation for each us to prayerfully consider what we might give up during Lent in order to bring a special offering to bring clean water to the people in Xpuljil, Mexico. Our goal for this year is \$6000.

The Mexico Cistern Ministry is one of Impact's mission partners. This relationship provides an opportunity for

individuals or groups in our congregation to go with Impact on a short-term mission trip, to be a part of the work of bringing water to an area where there is no water other than rainwater, and to see God using our Significant Sacrifice offering as a blessing in a place it will make a difference.



Todd and Maria Luke run a Gospel-driven outreach building cisterns in Mexico that give families, many of whom are indigenous Ch'ols suffering from poor health due in part to lack of clean water, access to an abundant supply of rainwater that makes a family healthier. Ch'ol Presbyterian laymen organize families to work together to build family-owned cisterns that collect rainfall. During the process, our Mexican partners teach useful construction skills, demonstrate the value of partnership, pray together, and share the Good News in a casual and natural manner. American partners (often teams from churches) work with our Mexican partners to lighten the physical load.

From Todd, "During the typical six-month dry season, a family can draw about 35 gallons of water per day from its cistern. All our cisterns, added together, can store and supply over eight million gallons of water annually. A reliable water source improves family health, but we understand that access to the ever-replenishing source of living water is infinitely more valuable.

"We thank God for giving us a ministry where our Christian Ch'ol Cistern Building Partners can casually share the Good News as they matter-of-factly explain to prospective cistern owners how this project differs from government projects.

We are a partnership of Christ-following Americans and Mexicans, moved by gratitude and delight in our salvation to share our Father's love with neighbors. The participation of our American work teams adds sweat, sore muscles, and smiles to embody and emphasize that message."

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKvXisOXqQg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnGroPAxRQM>



From Dana Bates: We are filled with excitement to share we have had a successful IMPACT-ing EAST AFRICA youth leadership training at Makarios III Patriarchal Seminary.

We thank God for the interactive discussions, group reflections, and practical workshops, that gave the participants a chance to engage deeply, exchanging ideas on how to spread the Gospel and live out their faith in today's world.

From the Orthodox Christian Mission Center: Missionary Dana Bates recently led a pivotal training session for 44 youth leaders from Uganda and Kenya. This training, held in the first two weeks of February, was designed to implement the IMPACT youth service-learning model, supported by the patronage of His

Eminence Elder Archbishop Makarios of Nairobi and His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos of Kampala. Thanks to the efforts of the Orthodox Christian Youth Association of Kenya (OCYAK), 12 youth clubs in Uganda and 25 in Kenya are poised to launch this spring.

IMPACT empowers youth to identify community challenges - to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) - and equips them with essential life skills like project management and communication to become "change agents" within their communities. Originating in a challenging coal-mining region of Romania, IMPACT combines fun, learning, and a pedagogy known as "service-learning." Since its inception in 2003, the model has expanded globally to nearly 50 countries and is a core component of youth programming for organizations like World Vision.

This training in East Africa marks the first phase of a three-year initiative, aimed at enabling church leaders to eventually train new leaders and replicate the program independently. His Eminence Makarios, who debriefed participants daily, expressed his admiration after the training concluded, noting, "I can tell this is a very special program." This endorsement signifies a bright future for the IMPACT Model in East Africa not only to grow, but to truly live up to its name.

Prayer requests and contact information for our mission partners.



AnAntalya, Turkey--Ramazan Arcan, [ANTALYA EVANGELICAL CHURCH](#)

Please pray for those who attended our Christmas event that they will seek to learn more about Jesus and come to salvation and growth in faith. Please pray for Muslims who have become Christian believers, for spiritual growth, a supportive Christian community and courage in situations where they experience rejection. Pray also for the church's continuing work with earthquake victims.



Bila Tserkva, Ukraine—Nita Hanson, [Home | GHT MAIN](#)

Nita is currently at home in FL. Missile and drone attacks continue in Ukraine daily and have increased, continuing to target infrastructure and civilian sites. Please pray for the Lord's peace in the hearts and minds of the people in Ukraine as well as for peace from the Russian invasion. Pray for continued protection for GHT staff and families. Pray for Nita for wisdom. Pray for mild winter weather as many do not have heat due to the damaged infrastructure.



Lupeni, Romania—Brandi and Dana Bates (New Horizons)

Brandi.brianna@gmail.com or d.bates@ocmc.org or [OCMC Missionary Dana Bates - Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) Pray for Dana and Brandi for the Lord's leading in their ministry. Pray for provision and insurance coverage for the jaw surgery their daughter Brianna needs to have to correct a severe overbite that impacts her overall health. Brianna is currently living in CA for a gap year and hopes to be able to have this procedure before beginning college in the Fall.

Praise the Lord for provision and blessing on the February trip to Africa.

***Note: Their Impact program is a different ministry than Impact with Kristy LaBarge.*



Siquatepeque—Honduras (Union Biblica) Orlando and Sylvia Japas

[Unión Bíblica de Honduras | Facebook](#)

Praise for new opportunities to share Jesus teaching on character. Please pray the government will continue to allow them to present their program in the public schools and for Orlando and Sylvia for health and protection.



Kristy LaBarge, Impact Director, [IMPACT - International Short Term Missions \(impact-theglobe.org\)](#)

Pray God will move people's hearts to apply for 2025 trips.



Natalie M. (who grew up at Orchard, and Wesley, with their two sons Tobi and Jet.)

Please pray for Nat as she continues to recover from recent surgery. Pray for Wes for protection. Pray for their boys, Tobias and Jethro, for health, a breakthrough with treatment for Tobias' speech/stutter and that they will grow in faith. Pray for the local "brothers and sisters" who are often rejected and even tortured because of their faith for restoration and healing in their bodies. Some are in prison and many are persecuted.

J and N, Serving in Southeast Asia-- J&N have moved home to the US and continue their ministry abroad virtually, with teaching, counseling and prayer several days a week. Please pray for the people they have been serving for over 20 years for growing faith and courage in the face of persecution. For their prayer letters or further information please reach out to Rich Smith at r_smith122@hotmail.com

If you are concerned about the condition of the world, want to see how God is working around the globe, and want to learn from churches in other cultures, **join the Global Missions Team.** Contact Michael McQuillan at: irishidr@gmail.com.



DEACONS

Are you or a Church friend feeling beaten down by life's necessities? Could you use a temporary hand-up?

The Orchard Deacons want to help with compassionate and practical aid, such as emergency meals, groceries, transportation, or a little boost up if you have an unexpected bill. The Deacons would like to help, so please contact the Church Office or speak with one of our compassionate Deacons. All is kept confidential.



the meeting via Zoom, to introduce himself to Session for those who don't know him, and to talk about plans for the time he'll be with us.

Children and Youth

Session approved a motion from Children's' Ministries to hold restaurant fundraisers once per month in 2025, to benefit children's camp scholarships. It was noted that these have become fun fellowship events. Rich Smith commented on the Family Fun Fair coming up on March 16th and encouraged everyone to attend. It will be organized by Youth Ministries, with indoor and outdoor games and activities for all ages and ability levels.

Personnel

Session approved a plan to hire two Interns (college students) for youth ministry as a medium-term solution, with Melinda Hoyt supervising and coaching them. Melinda's hours will be increased

five hours per week. Session also approved an additional five hours per week for Melinda to lead Outreach efforts, and she will be recruiting a committee to work with her, based on the ideas she shared above.

Session approved adding Bryce Newman to the payroll on a limited basis for maintenance projects as needed. The projects and Bryce's hours will be approved and managed by the Facilities Committee.

Submitted by Sue Hockenmaier, Clerk of Session

Members of Orchard Community Church may request copies of minutes from Session. Please contact Sue Hockenmaier with your request.



SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FEBRUARY SESSION MEETING

The Session of Orchard Community Church met on February 13, 2024 in the Library. Before the meeting was called to order, Session had shared prayer and a devotional on Mark 10:46-52, led by Matt.

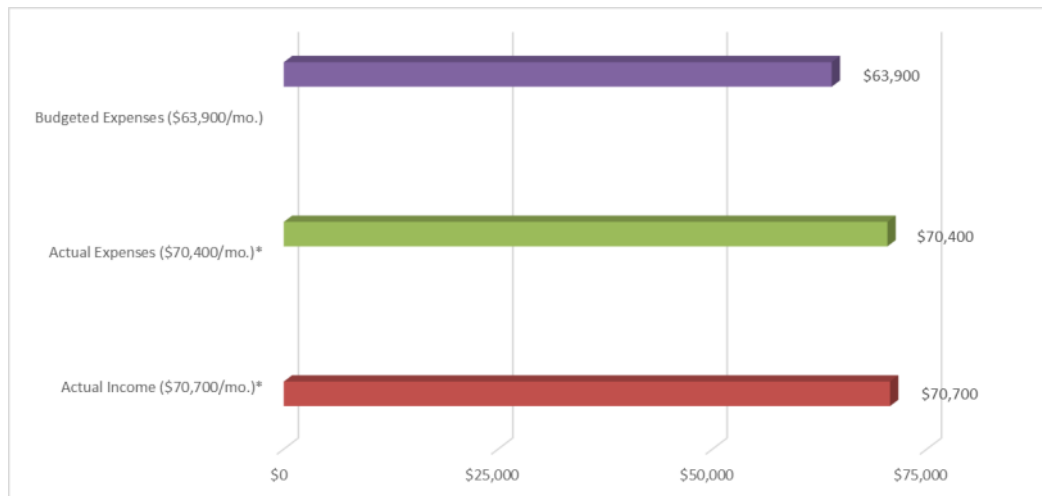
Strategic Planning

Before the regular agenda, Session continued the work begun at the January Retreat, reviewing strengths and weaknesses, looking at goals and strategic planning, discussing creative staffing solutions to fill the current vacancies, etc. Melinda Hoyt came to share thoughts on how our Outreach could be expanded, especially in areas where we already have contact with people not currently connected to a church, like Kids Club, the Tree Lighting and Lemon Festival, VBS and the Arts camp, the Preschool, etc.

Pastor's Report

Matt shared several prayer concerns and needs in the congregation and how elders could be praying for them or reaching out to them. Matt shared a thank-you letter from Center City Church in Santa Maria, an ECO church plant that is thriving, that we help support. He also shared thank-you notes from several participants (parents and children) who were very grateful for the Christmas Shoppe.

Matt discussed his Sabbatical plan in more detail for this year, April 21 (the day after Easter) until July 20 (first Sunday in the Tent). Josh Matthews will be here Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the week to help with administrative functions and pastoral care, Pastor's bible study, etc., and will preach a couple of Sundays, along with Wes Haystead, Melinda Hoyt and other guest preachers. Josh joined



FINANCE

ORCHARD JANUARY 2025 FINANCIAL RESULTS

We are blessed with faithful givers, including this month, we have received several lump sums over the years as you tithe on the lump sums with which you're blessed. Thus, despite extra expenses in January (several expenses have changed to quarterly payments this year), and despite the first two - three months of the year almost always being challenging for churches. We've begun 2025 with \$70,700 of giving.

Thank you for all you do for Orchard ministries and missions!

Scoop Hockenmaier,
For the Finance Committee

2025 Serve In

6/24-7/8

Honduras

Union Biblica de Honduras

Be a part of the powerful ministries bringing hope to Honduras! The team will serve alongside Union Biblica de Honduras and Iglesia Sala Evangelica: building relationships by engaging in a variety of ministries through the church and supporting the crucial work of Union Biblica in public schools.



6/24-7/12

Turkey

Ramazan Arkan in Antalya, Turkey

The team will meet and build relationships with local Turkish Christians. They will do ministry according to team makeup and gifts but possibilities include teaching in mens/womens Bible studies, ministry with local youth, English conversation classes, small group home ministries, physical projects for the church and more!



6/24-7/3

Mexico

The Outreach Foundation

Join The Outreach Foundation in more than just a clean water/poverty alleviation project: a relationship-based work movement is happening within communities of subsistence-level farmers. The gospel is being shared through building cisterns and relationships!



6/24-7/12

Uganda

Care Corps International

Founded and led by Dr. Jim Witty. Many of the victims of war and violence are children, so Care Corps prepares teams to lead Children's Trauma Care Programs. Teams of young adults and professionals are trained to serve this program under the leadership of their program director. The children's program utilizes a curriculum that includes play therapy, art, music, and group and individual counseling for these traumatized children.

Care Corps International is committed to helping heal trauma-affected children by following Jesus Christ's example of practical, compassionate care. Children are particularly vulnerable to great emotional and psychological damage in crisis situations such as disaster, conflict, and violence. By facilitating healing and reconciliation, Care Corps strives to provide a substantial witness of the incarnational love of Christ

It is Care Corps' hope that through addressing the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of children affected by trauma, Christ's redemptive love will be witnessed and received.

NEW!

6/24-7/12

Romania

Brandi and Dana Bates Lupeni, Romania

Serve alongside the Bates in a variety of ministries bringing the love of Jesus to the Jiu Valley. Ministry options include: Helping run outdoor adventure camp for youth, summer reading camp for children, and physical work on their mountain bike trail and other projects in the community.



IMPACT

For more information visit
impact-theglobe.org



Orchard Community Church

8180 Telephone Rd

Ventura CA 93004

Connected & Growing.

Connected to God, each other, & our community. Growing in Christ & love for each other.



New to Orchard?
Join us for Lunch

Join a few Orchard Staff members and leaders for lunch and learn more about Orchard. Ask your questions and find ways to get plugged into this wonderful community.

Please RSVP online or call the church office

April 6 - following the service



Orchard
community church

Meet & Greet

