

ORCHARD LIFE

MARCH 2026



A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

With the coming of March, we find ourselves in the midst of another busy season here at Orchard! By the time you read this, the new Pergola will have been installed next to the Welcome Station on the Patio. As you may remember, the old one needed to be replaced due to termite and dry rot damage. We have also been doing some lighting and wiring upgrades in the Worship building that will give us much greater control over the house lights in the building. You will also have likely noticed that we are still working out some of the bugs in the new system, and we thank you for your patience.

Beyond these larger projects, there are also some great events taking place in March. Let me tell you about a few of the things! On Saturday, March 14th, the Orchard Children's Ministry team will host a Children's Tea Party. We'd love to have your children or grandchildren participate. The Men's Ministry is going to the Reagan Library to view the Cowboy Exhibit on Saturday, March 21st. Men of all ages are invited to come along. Finally, we will be hosting a Blood Drive in partnership with Vitalant on Sunday, February 29. Information on how to make an appointment to give blood will be available soon.

During March, we also continue to move through the season of Lent. Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. During Lent, we take

time to reflect on Jesus, on his life and teaching, and especially on the meaning of his death. We do this so that we can fully understand and celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday. As a part of our Lenten journey this year, we will once again have a Lenten Study Guide, which is available in the church lobby and office. Another important part of our Lenten journey is our mission focus, called Significant Sacrifice. Significant sacrifice is a call to give up some small treats or luxuries here and there during Lent and to donate that money in order to make significant difference in the world. Our partner in this mission is Mexico Cistern Ministry. This ministry helps indigenous people living in Mexico to build cisterns to make abundant and safe drinking water available to them while also sharing the gospel with them.



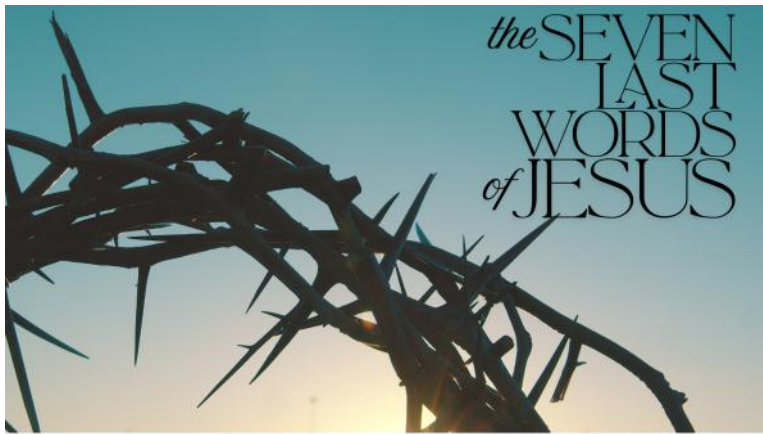
Grace & Peace,

Matt Hoyt

Matt@OrchardVentura.org

ECO NATIONAL GATHERING 2026





THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

MARCH 1 — THE THIRD WORD: BEHOLD
JOHN 19:26-27, EXODUS 20:12, MATTHEW 12:46-50

With this word, Jesus lifts up the importance of family, but also the fact that by faith, believers have a spiritual bond of family, emphasizing the importance of community and care for one another.

MARCH 8 — THE FOURTH WORD: I THIRST

JOHN 19:28-29, PSALM 22:15, PSALM 69:21, JOHN 4:10, 7:38

With this word, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of scripture as He expressed a desire for a drink to quench his physical thirst, but at the same time, He also pointed to a deeper need. In scripture, Jesus presented himself as “living water,” and here he reminds us of our own need for a savior and of the fact that we are all spiritually thirsty.

MARCH 15 — THE FIFTH WORD: FORSAKEN

MARK 15:33-34, PSALM 22:1-2, 22-24, HEBREWS 4:15, ROMANS 8:38-39

On the cross, Jesus died the death of an unrepentant sinner and thus experienced the separation from God that sin brings. With this word, He expresses the despair of abandonment, and yet these carefully chosen words also point to the hope we have in God, even in the worst moments of life.

MARCH 22 — THE SIXTH WORD: IT IS FINISHED

JOHN 19:28-30, JOHN 4:34, COLOSSIANS 1:13-14, ROMANS 3:25

With this word, knowing death is imminent, Jesus indicates that upon His death, His work on the cross will be accomplished, atonement will have been made for our sin and our redemption secured.

MARCH 29 — THE SEVENTH WORD: INTO YOUR HANDS—PALM SUNDAY

MARK 11:1-11, LUKE 23:46

Palm Sunday was the one day the crowds embraced Jesus as the Messiah. Within a week, they’d call for His crucifixion, exposing our sinful and inconsistent human nature. With this word, Jesus experienced the peace of fully entrusting Himself to God. This was at the heart of His ministry: teaching us how to place our lives in God’s hands. Yet, despite our best intentions,

we struggle to do so, hindered by the same sinful and inconsistent nature as the crowd.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Mark your calendar for **GRAD NIGHT** Sunday, May 31st when we will celebrate our 5th, 8th and 12th graders! The whole church is invited, so stay tuned for details.

ORCHARD YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL
9-10 AM in the Youth Building

At Sunday School we study the Bible, eat donuts and hang out with our friends. What a great way to start the week!

ORCHARD YOUTH GROUP
SUNDAYS 4-6 PM

Middle and High School Students

Come ready to have fun, find a community of friends and grow in faith! Bring your friends! Our leaders are looking forward to getting to know you better this year.

ORCHARD YOUTH HANGOUT
WEDNESDAYS 4:30-5:30 PM

The youth building will be open Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 PM (right after Kids Club) for those middle and high schoolers who volunteer, to hang out, have coffee, snacks and smoothies, play foosball, etc.

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

An opportunity for the whole church family: Hey Orchard, if you are new to Orchard this year, you may not know about two BIG ways Orchard reaches out to the children of our church, preschool and neighborhood.



Adventure Day Camp

June 15-19 9am-noon

At this fun day camp, elementary and middle school children “choose their own adventure” by selecting classes for

the week. We are offering Art, Ukulele, Dance, Cooking, Cheer, Sewing, Sports and Building. Younger children experience a taste of several of these activities. We need a few more teachers and group leaders/helpers.

Vacation Bible School
(VBS) June 22-26 9am

-noon Preschool and elementary children learn about Jesus through a morning program of worship and



skits, crafts, snacks, games, Bible stories, etc. We need lots of

volunteers to lead groups of children from activity to activity, and we need a few more activity station leaders and helpers too.

Plus, VBS Sunday, June 28th 10am-1pm!

Putting on these two huge outreaches to our community takes a group effort from the whole church. Please look at your calendar and be praying about how you can help.

Registration to volunteer is open online or on the clipboard on the patio. Registration for kids opens March 1st.



Children's Ministry Leader Spotlight: This month we give thanks for Jerry Horstmeyer! The word that pops into my mind when I think of Jerry is FAITHFUL. It is easy to see that he serves from a place of deep faithfulness to God. Not only is Jerry our elder, Jerry has been serving in the classroom with our little ones for over two decades! What??!! It's true. Jerry enjoys creating a warm and fun environment where kids can learn about Jesus while parents are in the worship service. All the kids love Jerry, and we love watching the impact he makes as little ones become aware of God's love for them. Thank you Jerry for making our little ones feel so welcomed and loved!

Melinda Hoyt

Director of Family Ministries & Outreach

Melinda@OrchardVentura.org

SONSHINE PRESCHOOL

Annette Walters

Sonshine Preschool Director

Annette@OrchardVentura.org

Three months into this year, and it feels like it's been six months. Can anyone else relate to that? Maybe it has been unusually busy, or hard, or maybe it just felt long. Whatever the reason, I am ready to welcome the spring!

In February, we opened registration for the 2026-2027 school year. We had 75 priority registrations turned in, and we had 20 new families register. We still have some Tuesday/Thursday spots available in our 3-5-year-old classrooms. We will continue to register families as they come to us, so if you know of anyone with a preschool-aged child, feel free to let them know that we still have some spots open.

These last few months of the school year will be busy! We will celebrate Easter, have a schoolwide beach field trip, enjoy Dad's Night, a Silent Auction, have our Spring Sing and Art Show, and have our end-of-school-year parties. And that's only a small portion of what we have going on.

We are always so grateful for your support and prayers!

ORCHARD YOUNG ADULTS

Spread the word and invite your friends! Orchard Young Adults gather **Tuesday evenings** for Bible Study, fellowship and fun. **6-8 PM** in the Youth Building.

SENIOR SINGLES

March 19 in the from 11am-12:30pm in the Worship Center. Invite your friends and join us for a fun Spring gathering!



OUTREACH

Hello Orchard Family! This is the day to start thinking about who YOU will invite to our Easter morning celebration on Sunday, April 5th at 10:30. We want our friends and families and neighbors to know the incredible Good News. Maybe you will be the reason someone in your life will be able to say they believe! It can be really awkward to share our faith and beliefs with others, but an invitation is easy! We will also have an egg hunt and bunny pictures for the kids following the worship service and Kids' program.



MEN'S MINISTRY

MEN'S SUNDAY MORNING FELLOWSHIP SUNDAYS AT 9 AM CONFERENCE ROOM

Spend time in the Bible walking together through our faith.



**TUESDAY
MORNING
MEN'S
BREAKFAST**
TUESDAYS—8
AM—MAIN ST
RESTAURANT &
STEAKHOUSE
3159 East Main
Street, Ventura

Tuesday morning Men's Breakfast is a time where the men of Orchard and invited guests meet to hang out, discuss their interests from football to family, and have a delicious breakfast. Christian based with prayer for those in need, in a low key atmosphere where all individuals are valued and accepted. First time attendees are highly encouraged.

Contact the Men's Ministry Leadership Team mensministry@orchardventura.org if you have questions or want to get plugged in!

SMALL & COMMON INTEREST GROUPS



CARD GAMES
1st & 3rd Tuesdays
12:30-2:30 PM in the Library
Join the [Card Game Common Interest Group](#) and RSVP to this event!

WALKING GROUP

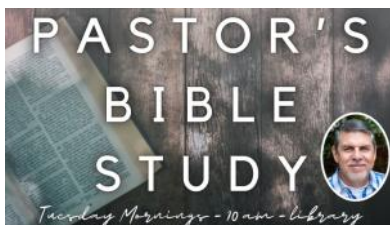


Come when you can! [Join the group](#) for more info & to stay up to date!
Wednesday Morning from 7-8 AM Kimball Park
Thursday Evening from 6:15-7:15 PM Riverview Linear Park

PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY

Tuesdays at 10am in the Library

A Bible Study and discussion about a book of the Bible in the Library at Orchard. No homework or study ahead is required. The class is open to everyone and it is a fantastic time to learn from and discuss the Bible, theology, and life application with our Pastor.



LOCAL MISSIONS

Greetings from Local Missions. Once again, your generosity as a congregation is humbling. The winter warm clothing collection was wonderful! As a result, our unhoused neighbors have sleeping bags, blankets, and some warm clothes.

Our time at **Tender Life** in January was a blessing. There were 5 women plus the house manager there: three of us from Orchard, and then another gal who likes to join us. There were two babies and one little girl who's probably about 5. One resident was pregnant and was due in a week. One girl had just been at Tender Life for a very short time. She had her baby girl about a week before. She didn't have her at Tender Life yet, but was hoping to get her soon. I asked her about the necklace she was wearing. It had two medallions on it, one of them was from AA and the other from NA, each telling how long she'd been clean.

One of the babies who joined the meal had to be fed with a feeding tube. We didn't get into the whys of that. The mommy of that little boy didn't have custody of him yet, but he was going to be spending his first overnight with her the following Friday. She was very excited about that. She's been at Tender Life nine months and was pregnant when she came. It's really rewarding to get to spend time with the girls and see and hear how they're maturing and how much they love their little ones. If you're interested in being a part of this ministry, contact Priscilla at prillu1950@gmail.com.

On February 21st, the Men's Ministry teamed up with Local Missions to help organize donations and interact with residents of **Mercy House** in Ventura, as they wait for permanent housing opportunities. About 12 residents joined in BINGO, puzzles, and conversation. The gift cards to Target and bundt cakes were much appreciated! It was a joy to see how each volunteer from Orchard used their individual gifts to encourage those who work there by organizing donations and showing the love of Jesus through conversation and prayer with residents!

The Believe Center continues to meet many needs. They were very grateful for our Christmas donation and with the prayer time we had when we delivered the check. In 2025, they provided 86,000 pounds of food; served 6520 meals; gave out almost 13,000 pieces of clothing; distributed 6500 hygiene kits; had 636 case management sessions; housed 5 people; and placed 4 people in a shelter, as well as, 2 people in sober living programs. They provided 326 biblical counseling sessions and 14 people accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior!!!

The Ventura Homeless Prevention Fund has already assisted double the number of people as they did at this time last year... providing one time funding to keep individuals, couples or families from being evicted and able to maintain stable housing.

The Whitney Tutoring Center is open. For more information, contact Nicole at nicolejwmw@gmail.com.

Royal Family Kids Camp

Royal Family Kids is already planning for another camp this year to serve young children in the foster care system. Starting June 28th through July 3rd, RFKC will be bringing children 6 to 11 years old, to the Ojai Valley for 5 days of fun and positive memories. This will be Royal Family Kids Camp (RFKC) Ventura's 23rd year of seeing how God works to change lives and make a positive impact not only on the kids but also the staff. This is a God centered camp that seeks to show kids the love and hope of Christ.

Camp cannot happen without a lot of help from the community. This is an all-volunteer camp and funded fully through private donations. We want to thank all those who have helped in the past and people who this year will be helping to make this a special year for the kids. There are so many ways that the church can participate, such as writing encouraging notes to the campers and staff to be delivered at camp, making blankets/pillowcases, prepping back packs, praying for campers and staff and so much more. People can donate not only their money, but their time. We so appreciate all the church is doing to support this special camp.

If you would like to know more about what Royal Family Kids camp is and how you can make a difference, please contact me or you can send an email to venturarfkf@gmail.com.
Greg Pels (805) 455-1106—Director RFKC Ventura



bring clean water to the people in Xpuljil, Mexico. Our goal for this year is \$6000.

The Mexico Cistern Ministry is one of over 60 ministries working with The Outreach Foundation, a Presbyterian organization that lives out its missional calling to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth through transformational mission involvement. The Mexico Cistern Ministry also partners with Impact. That partnership makes it possible for us to go to the Yucatan Peninsula with Impact on a short-term mission trip, to be a part of the work of providing water to an area where there is no water (other than rainwater) and to see God using our Significant Sacrifice offering bringing clean water to people in need.



Todd and Maria Luke's gospel-driven outreach to build cisterns gives families, many of whom are indigenous Ch'ols with poor health related to lack of clean water, access to an abundant supply of rainwater. Ch'ol Presbyterian laymen organize families to work together to build family-owned cisterns that collect rainfall. During the process, Mexican partners teach useful construction skills, demonstrate the value of partnership, pray together, and share the Good News. American partners (often teams from churches) work with Mexican partners to lighten the physical load.

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 began this year February 18 and ends on Palm Sunday, March 29 is an invitation for each us to prayerfully consider what we might give up during Lent in order to bring a special offering to



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. Heb. 13:16 NIV

Impact is preparing to send 4 -5 teams out to serve this summer in Romania, Turkey, Honduras, Uganda and Mexico. Orchard's Rich Smith will be going to serve with the Bates in Romania. If you are sensing the Holy Spirit's nudging, there are still opportunities to apply for a trip. Talk with Rich or check out the Impact website. Impact-theglobe.org

Please pray for all of our mission partners.

Antalya, Turkey--Ramazan Arkan

Bila Tserkva, Ukraine—Nita Hanson

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

Siquatepeque—Honduras (Union Biblica) Orlando and Sylvia

Kristy LaBarge, Impact Director

Arabian Peninsula, Nat (who grew up at Orchard), and Wes, with their 2 sons Tobias and Jet—The Arabian Peninsula

J and N, Serving in Southeast Asia

*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 Sandy Dinkler at sbdinkler@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.

SESSION MEETING

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FEBRUARY SESSION MEETING

The Session of Orchard Community Church met on February 12, 2026 in the Library. Moderator Matt Hoyt called the meeting to order with prayer and shared a devotional on Romans 5:5.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Matt shared several prayer concerns and needs in the congregation and how Session could pray for them and/or reach out to them. He shared several upcoming events in February, and upcoming Lent services and events. There will be weekly Lenten Fellowship dinners on Wednesday nights that are for the entire congregation. The focus of the Lent season will be prayer and repentance. Matt also shared that the lighting project in the worship building would be completed in February as well as the new Pergola installation over the Welcome Center.

Joint Meeting with Deacons

Session and the Deacons will have their annual joint meeting in March, where they will share common concerns and needs (and a meal, of course... we're Presbyterian!), and how they can support each other.

ECO National Gathering

Pastor Matt and Elder June Verloop shared about the denomination's National Gathering, which they had attended in Atlanta. It was a very positive and uplifting experience, with the focus on equipping the church for ministry and outreach, rather than on administrative "Business". The Worship at the conference was also outstanding, and reports/participants were from other countries as well as the US. There was a call to reconciliation and prayer for our country in these divisive times, as Matt has shared from the pulpit.

Youth Confirmation Class

Elders were deployed to meet with Youth who have completed confirmation classes and are ready to become members of the church. This is exciting to have a Youth Membership class, as it has been quite a while since we've done that.

Vision and Goals

Session spent some time looking at goals, with an emphasis on Outreach, and came up with several ideas for outreach opportunities, especially focused on young families and the Preschool.

Submitted by Sue Hockenmaier, Clerk of Session
(Notes taken by Betsy Harry)

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

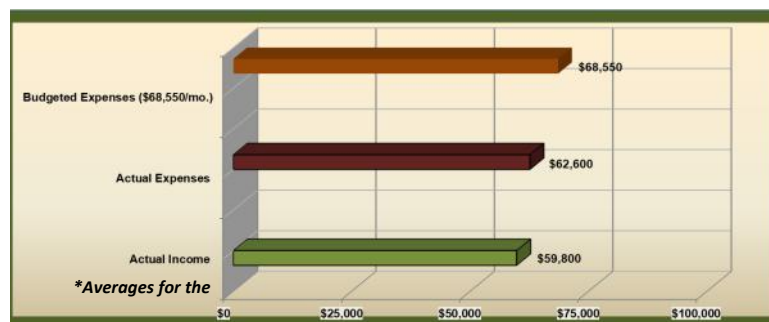
FINANCE

We have a slight deficit after our first month of the year. Not untypical as the winter months are often challenging for churches. We're now fully staffed (with a great staff!) and 2026 looks quite promising for our ministries.

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

Scoop Hockenmaier

For the Finance Committee



PRAYER CORNER

President's Day 12 Hour Prayer Vigil

Praying for our nation and other nations from the book of Amos
Thank you to everyone who participated in our 12 Hour Prayer Vigil on Monday, February 16, 2026. Seven prayers launched the prayer time at 9:00 a.m. from the Worship Building during our heavy rain storm while about 60 other people prayed for ten minute shifts during the day until 9 p.m.

We are grateful for your time and prayerfulness in committing before God our many concerns about our nation.

The After Service Prayer Team needs two more people willing to pray after service for our congregation one on one.

Please contact Joy Downing Riley at jdredit@yahoo.com if you are an experienced prayer or would like to learn more about how to pray effectively for someone one on one.

post-resurrection prayer walk



APRIL 8
6:30-7:40PM
WORSHIP CENTER

SAVE the DATE:

The 12 Post Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

Prayer and Meditation Walk

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

6:30PM - 7:40PM in the Worship Center

We will be re-experiencing as Jesus disciples did his appearances to them in his post resurrected body through Scripture reading, interactive exercises and live music.

If you need childcare, please RSVP to Melinda by April 5.

LENTEN STUDY

SUNDAYS IN THE LIBRARY FROM 9-10AM
FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 29
ADULT EDUCATION SUNDAY SCHOOL

Fireside
Chats

THIRD SUNDAYS AFTER CHURCH
STARTING MARCH 15!

COMMON INTEREST GROUP

Music & Concerts



Journey Through the American Song
March 29 at CLU - Sign up now!

MEN'S MINISTRY

COWBOYS EXHIBIT

AT THE REAGAN LIBRARY

MARCH 21 | 9AM - 1:30PM



BLOOD DRIVE

MARCH 29
8AM-1PM

vitalant
Blood Donation

SUMMER CAMP!

High School @ Forest Home - June 6-11
Elementary @ Forest Home - July 26-31
Middle School @ Camp Pondo - July 27-31

SIGN UP NOW!



Orchard Community Church

8180 Telephone Rd

Ventura CA 93004



celebrate
EASTER

**April 5
10:30am**

FOLLOWING THE SERVICE
Easter Egg Hunt
Photos with the Easter Bunny
and more!

LENTEN SEASON

LENTEN DINNERS

Wednesdays
March 4, 11, 18, 25
5:30-6:45 pm in the Worship Center
Everyone is invited for dinner &
fellowship!

**MAUNDY THURSDAY
SERVICE**

April 2 at 7 pm in
the Worship Center

**COMMUNITY GOOD
FRIDAY SERVICE**

April 3 at 12pm at
River Community Church

**POST RESURRECTION
PRAYER WALK**

April 8 at 6:30pm in
the Worship Center