

The COMMUNITY MESSENGER

A Message from Pastor Allen

“Tis the Season”

For weeks now people on social media have been eagerly planning decorating for Christmas. Some just can't seem to wait, starting the conversation before Halloween. I remember as a child going to town the evening after Thanksgiving to watch the Christmas parade. High school marching bands, firetrucks and floats kicked off the season as freshly hung decorations adorned the crisp air overhead. Santa came to town with elves tossing candy by the handful. It was magical for a kid like me.

Now I'm older and life is more complicated than it used to be. Sometimes the magic of Christmas gets swallowed up by the trials of life. The trials are real, but oh how we need that magic, even if only for a little while! When setbacks and losses weigh us down, we need to fix our eyes on something of glory.

The incarnation of Jesus is the most glorious concept in human history. That God would enter into our existence to offer each of us a very personal relationship with Him in all of His goodness is beyond comprehension. He condescended into our broken lives with grace, power, and brings more than enough to tenderly sustain us in our trials. It takes faith to access this, but He offers that very faith as a gift! *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* (Ephesians 2:8)

Years ago, Santa was magical enough to make my season bright and filled with wonder, but it takes Jesus, “The Reason for the Season” to deliver me and fill my heart with Christmas joy.

—Pastor Allen



*The shepherds returned,
glorifying and praising God
for all the things they has
heard and seen, which were
just as they had been told.*

- Luke 2:20

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Faith, Food, Fellowship



FELLOWSHIP
LUNCHEON
NOVEMBER 3rd





ODYSSEA: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

God's Gifts Are Wrapped in Love, Not Paper

By Art Schmidt

As for you, people of Israel, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols."

Ezekiel 20:39 NIV

I was raised in a moderate income family and my mom taught me to make do with what we had. But in the 1980's, I joined the ranks of the "Yuppie" generation who's mantra was: *"Possessions determine a person's worth and making do with what you have isn't enough."* I was making a good salary as a manager with a communications electronics firm and didn't lack anything, but I always seemed to be looking for something else—something more. Nothing I already had was enough. My insatiable thirst for *more* couldn't be quenched, so I always felt empty. Materialism's whispers soon became shouts that penetrated the hearts of many during that era—*what you have isn't enough!* But reality hit the Yuppies in 1987—the stock market crashed followed by a hard recession in the early 90's. Time to suck it up buttercup!

In his powerful message last September, Pastor Allen spoke about the time when Jesus gave a sermon to a large group of people and proclaimed His identity, which wasn't well received. *"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."*¹ So Jesus asked the Twelve, *"You do not want to leave too, do you?"*² Pastor Allen asked us, "When did you leave and walk away?" I answered silently—"I left the church and walked away in 1985 after my fiancé Jolene Wanatosky called off our engagement due to a disagreement." We worked for the same company and lived in the same town, so I got a new job, moved to Virginia, and decided to focus only on my career.

I moved to Baltimore in 1995 and felt a spiritual nudge—I'd been away from the church for 10 years and my faith had faded, so I needed to put Jesus back into my life. I was baptized and raised in the Greek Orthodox Church, but the Orthodox traditions no longer appealed to me, so I was led to an inner-city Methodist church with outreach ministries that gave me opportunities to serve. Once I put Jesus back into my life and focused on *what I could give* instead of *what I could get*, and *what I could share* instead of *what I could hold*, I was back on track going towards the light and leaving the darkness of the material world behind me. My life immediately changed for the better.

Wants come in many different forms and has many faces but speaks of only one thing—more! Today's society reeks of "want" and we see evidence of that in every TV commercial, magazine ad, and billboard—more is better! We can all easily be distracted by the incessant consumer marketing message: "Whatever you have isn't enough; there's something bigger, better, and shinier available that will make you happier and it's on sale!" This is the root of the debt epidemic in our country and contributes to the prejudice, hatred, and violence that's plaguing our society.

As we journey through the season of Advent, we are reminded how Christmas is manipulated and distorted by the clever and persistent marketing strategies that draw us away from the *"real reason for the season"*. So, let's keep our faith in perspective as we make this Advent journey together and remember to keep the light of God in our hearts as we put up the holiday lights in our homes. We all like to give and receive gifts at Christmastime, but we must be careful how much value we put on them. God's greatest gift to the world was Jesus, and the gifts He gives us now aren't the ones wrapped in colorful paper with bows stacked under the Christmas tree, they're the family and friends gathered around the tree *wrapped in love*. ❤️

EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US ✝

Lord, as we begin a New Year, help us to see the trappings of the "more is better" ideology and give us wisdom to avoid them. Keep us mindful of the blessings we have and help us accept them as being enough. Inspire us to remember and help those around us with less. Amen



¹John 6:66 NIV; ²John 6:67 NIV

THE FAMILY OF GOD

By Jim Putman

If you are a disciple of Jesus, you have two families. The first one, the family of origin, is the one you were born into. You had no control or choice in this matter. Your family of origin may have been very nurturing, or it may have had disfunction. Either way – your family of origin is fixed and cannot be changed. However, when you are born again through Jesus Christ you inherit a new family – the family of God.

God's church is supposed to be a group of people in relationship who do life together. Relationships are fundamental because the gospel gets lived out within those relationships. Real life can be lived out when we are abiding in relationships with each other. This is where we learn to use and put into practice the Fruit of the Spirit that God has placed within us.

God calls His Church the family of God. The early church met together in the temple courts, but also met together in homes where they were devoted to deep abiding relationships. They became spiritual family. In Acts 2:42 and following we see them exhibiting many of the characteristics of a family. They ate together, shared their possessions, and even sold their possessions if needed to take care of each other. They focused on the Word of God and the teachings of the apostles.

These actions not only depict the attitudes and actions of a family, but this is also the kind of bond and relationships that develop in a small group. A small group is a place where people can be relationally discipled as part of a spiritual family.

Satan has taken the word family and distorted its meaning. No one has grown up with a perfect family. We are all broken in ways that affect the family of origin negatively. Some fathers abuse or abandon their wives and children. Some wives leave their homes or are emotionally abusive. Some siblings are cruel to one another. Some children are disobedient to parents. That is all sin at work.

But God is in the business of redemption. Whatever your experience with family has been, I encourage you to press on towards the family that God describes in the Bible. Let your experiences and definitions be rooted in the Bible, and allow God to start a new thing in your generation, both in and through you. Jesus redefines for you what "family" truly means – the family that God helps you create.¹

¹ This was originally posted on Jim Putman's blog [<http://jimputman.com/2019/11/14/>]. Jim Putman has written with Chad Harrington a primer called *The Death of Discipleship* about the danger of pride and importance of humility in disciple making. www.discipleship.org



Community Church of Oak Orchard

Where friends become family.



No matter how difficult life becomes, we belong in families. There may be times when we let down those we love and fail people who care the most, but through it all we discover a group of people who make us feel that we belong, who say, "*What happens to you matters to me.*" Thus, we stand together and face all of life with a confidence born of a sure identity in the family.

- John F. Westfall

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (1 Cor. 12:26).

CONTAGIOUS FAITH

This month's Contagious Faith person is Debbie Hammond.

Quite a character is our Miss Debbie!

Miss Debbie can be demure, but not often! Usually, when Debbie enters the church and I'm there, I will know she is present! And what a gift she is! (pun intended!) Miss Debbie actually has a heart of gold! She doesn't advertise it but loves to be of service to the church. If there is a need in the church and she has the wherewithal, she will quietly attempt to meet that need. There is also those times when Pastor Allen and I have also received the wrath of Miss Debbie while in the pulpit! In jest of course.

In actuality, Debbie is a sweet person and cares more for others than she does herself. As I shared from the pulpit the other week when we were doing some repairs at her home, even if we couldn't do something perfectly, or we were struggling with an issue while making the repairs, she stayed calm and was fine with whatever we could do. That really impressed me while we were getting frustrated. She on the other hand was very content with the help that she was receiving. What a fine young lady you are Miss Debbie, and we want you to know that we love you very much.

On a lighter note, Miss Debbie is our cleaning lady here at the church and she does cleaning for many people in our community as well. While cleaning here at the church, Debbie wears earbuds. She plays them quite loudly. And if you wanna follow her without her knowing it, you will get a concert by her. She loves to blare out the music and does a little bit of dancing as she does it. She was cleaning the men's bathroom and singing away and didn't know that I was standing right behind her as she glanced into the bathroom mirror and saw me standing right there she nearly needed to use the bathroom herself. Debbie, whether you realize it or not, you are truly are an inspiration to us. Thank you for being who you are and thank you for loving the Lord.

P.S. Debbie never loved doing homework in school and probably did everything she could do to get out of it, but she has been faithfully attending our Sunday school electives and we have finally gotten to the point where she is actually doing her homework. Good job Miss Debbie!

- Pastor Ed



Every day of our lives, we need to be *intentional* and *prepared* for the opportunity to share about the love of Jesus. With practice and time it will become second nature to be able to do this. You will grow in *intimacy with Jesus* and with those around us!

In Christ, Ed Vidzicki

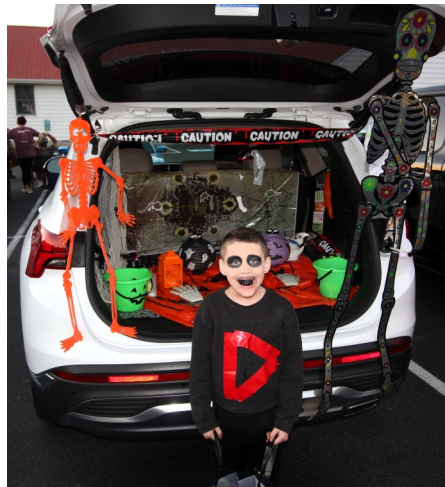


"Our church is Number One!"



Trunk or Treat





MEOW!



October 31

THE REAL MAN IN RED

We're all familiar with the legend of "Santa Claus" who is said to live at the North Pole with a crew of elves, a team of flying reindeer, and a wife who keeps him plump and jolly. A visit to any mall or store during the fall season shows how successfully the retail industry has marketed this legend into a billion-dollar business on which the entire year's profitability is based. It was a popular belief that the modern day image of "Santa Claus" had been created by Coca-Cola, which isn't true, but their ad campaign that began in the 1920's was responsible for promoting that image around the world with the catch-phrase: "The pause that refreshes." Then, the music industry followed Coca-Cola's success: Elvis Presley released "Santa Bring My Baby Back (To Me)" in 1957 that started a flurry of modern Christmas music with "Santa Claus" in the lyrics for almost every genre.



However, the real man in red who inspired the legend was different altogether from the modern day figure and is known in the Christian community as St. Nicholas. Though St. Nicholas is one of the most popular saints in the Greek and Latin churches, there is little historical certainty about him. We do know that St. Nicholas was born around 245 AD in Asia Minor (now known as Turkey) and was the only child of a wealthy family. His parents died of the plague leaving him an orphan at a young age, so he spent his youth in a monastery with his uncle, the Bishop of Parra. The young Nicholas was extremely devout and felt he had no need for the money he inherited. Instead, he gave his wealth away to the poor and impoverished. Nicholas came to see that helping the less fortunate makes one's life richer than anything else.

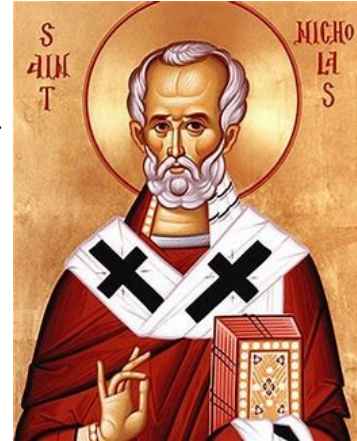


When the Archbishop of Myra died, the church selected Nicholas (then 30 years old) as his successor. Bishop Nicholas wore the traditional red velvet robe trimmed in white ermine with a matching miter (hat) that resembles the hats worn by the three wise men who visited the newborn Jesus in the stable—sound familiar? The most widely accepted story of how Nicholas became so famous as being generous tells us he heard about a rich man who lost all his money when his business failed. The man had three daughters, all wishing to be married, but he had no money for a dowry. In desperation, the man decided to sell his oldest daughter into slavery so the rest of the family could survive. The night before the daughter was to be sold, Nicholas gave the family several gold pieces. It was the custom in that culture to leave shoes outside the home by the front door, so according to the legend, Nicholas left the gold in the girl's shoes.

Another popular account claims he threw the gold pieces down the chimney where, by chance, they landed inside the freshly washing stockings hung by the fireplace to dry overnight—sound familiar?

The legend of St. Nicholas spread throughout Europe and his followers increased. He became well known for his generosity but also for his unwavering support of Christianity—a difficult campaign during a period when Muslims were invading and the lure of Paganism threatened religion's foundation. Nicholas was said to have performed many miracles which, after his death on December 6, 345 or 352 AD, led to his elevation to sainthood. His remains are still preserved in the church of San Nicola in Bari. It is said that an oily substance flows from the resting place and to this day people claim it has medicinal powers.

During the Middle Ages, thousands of churches were built in his honor and December 6th was designated as the Feast of St. Nicholas—a day to “give gifts” to children and the needy. However, St. Nicholas was banished by most European countries during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century when Martin Luther sought to eradicate the worship of saints. Additionally, the new Protestants would not tolerate St. Nicholas as their “gift giver” since he was too closely tied to the Catholic Church. The Dutch were able to keep the Feast of St. Nicholas alive and brought their traditions with them when they founded New Amsterdam in the early 1600’s which later became New York. The Dutch custom of commemorating the Feast of St. Nicholas spread through the US and became known as “Santa Klass” due to the mispronunciation of the Dutch “Sinterklaas” and then later evolved into “Santa Claus”.



Decades later, the Christian society found it more appropriate to bring the “Children’s Festival” closer to that of Christmas—the celebration for the infant Jesus. From that time on, St. Nicholas started making his rounds delivering presents to the homes of Christian families around the world during the night of Christmas Eve. Clement C. Moore wrote the poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” in 1822 that later became the ever famous and popular “The Night Before Christmas”. This poem gave us the modern image of Santa Claus—a portly man with a white beard dressed in a red suit trimmed in white fur with a matching pointed hat. But, you’ll discover that Santa Claus wears many different costumes in various colors and styles depending upon the country and local culture where his legend is celebrated. And now you know about *the real man in red!*

The Feast of St. Nicholas marks the beginning of the Advent Season for some denominations. Years ago, my family would gather on December 6th to celebrate St. Nicholas Day with dinner and the exchange of personalized stockings filled with small gifts. That tradition reminded us to be thankful for the little joys God brings us that make our life so rich. It also provided us with a time of reflection of the year past and inspired humble preparation for celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the real Christmas story and the true reason for the season.

We don’t celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas here at the Community Church of Oak Orchard, but as a family of faith we are reminded by his example that we are called to share our wealth with those less fortunate and in need of our help and love. We are blessed to be a blessing.

May your Christmas holiday be rich in experience and filled with love!

May God bless you at Christmastime and throughout the New Year!

Peace and blessings, Art Schmidt



The Bible doesn’t tell us when Jesus was born so we don’t know his actual date of birth. Christmas was first celebrated on December 25 in 336 AD, while Emperor Constantine (the first Christian Roman Emperor) reigned and the date was later officially declared by Pope Julius I. We don’t know why that date was selected and religious historians theorize—because it’s nine months after The Annunciation (March 25) and it supersedes the ancient Roman pagan midwinter festivals that took place in late December. But we do know that Bethlehem’s climate 2,000 years ago was semi-arid and similar to Phoenix, so the songs, stories, and legends about Jesus “shivering in the cold” aren’t accurate. Jesus was likely born during the dry season when it’s quite warm.

IT DEFIES LOGIC

BY MAX LUCADO

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen. I love him, and I am pleased with him.” Matthew 12:18

Those who saw Jesus—really saw him—knew there was something different. At his touch blind beggars saw. At his command crippled legs walked. At his embrace empty lives filled with vision.

He fed thousands with one basket. He stilled a storm with one command. He raised the dead with one proclamation. He changed lives with one request. He rerouted the history of the world with one life, lived in one country, was born in one manger, and dies on one hill.



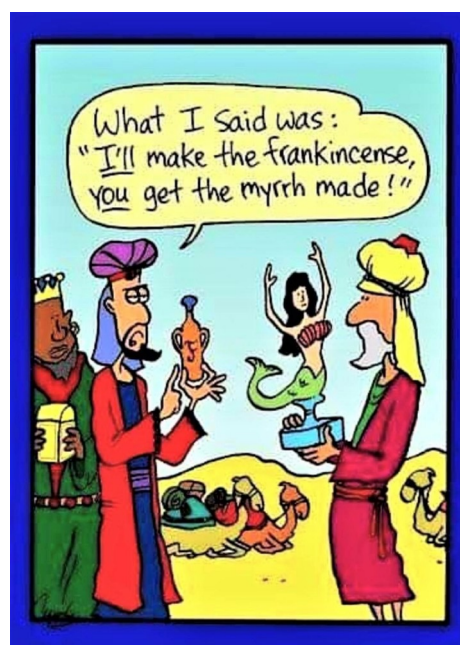
God did what we wouldn't dare dream. He did what we couldn't imagine. He became a man so we could trust him. He became a sacrifice so we could know him. And, he defeated death so we could follow him.

It defies logic. It is a divine insanity. A holy incredibility. Only a Creator beyond the fence of logic could offer such a gift of love.

“Grace For The Moment” Vol II, 2006 [August 10]

**The election is over,
these are the guaranteed results:**

- ◆ God will still be on His throne.
- ◆ Jesus will still be King of kings and the Lord of lords.
- ◆ The Bible will still have all the answers to every problem.
- ◆ The tomb will still be empty.
- ◆ Belief in Jesus will still be the only way to heaven.
- ◆ Prayer will still work—it will still make a difference and God will still answer prayers.
- ◆ The cross, not the government, will still be our salvation.
- ◆ There will still be room at the cross.
- ◆ Jesus will still save anyone who places their faith and trust in Him.
- ◆ God will still be with us always—He will never leave or forsake us.



FOR GOD IS WITH US

Dare to imagine; Dare to believe in
 A true love that gave us; A brand new beginning
 No room for a king
 No celebration and no ceremony
 In that little town, no, nobody would think
 This is the story of the coming glory
 Can you hear the prayers that people prayed?
 Can you see the skies begin to break?
 When Heaven and Earth were face-to-face
 Oh, how the world forever changed
 For God is with us

All in the moment; All in an instant
 The body was broken; And it was finished
 So let us begin
 The celebration and the ceremony
 There's silence on Earth but the Heavens are roarin'
 Tellin' the story of the coming glory
 Can you feel your heart begin to race?
 Can you see the tide begin to change?
 With all of our futures rearranged
 The world will never be the same
 For God is with us

Oh, can we see, oh, can we see?
 God is with us
 Oh, can we hear, oh, can we hear?
 For God is with us

Dare to imagine; Dare to believe in
 A true love that gave us; A reason for living

Can you feel the hope that's rushin' in?
 Can you hear the song that's echoin'?
 Join with the choir as we sing
 This is where love truly begins
 For God is with us; Oh, can we see, oh, can we see?
 God is with us; Oh, can we hear, oh, can we hear?
 God is with us

Ministry in Motion!

Ministry NECESSITIES & Updates

Our Church is growing. PRAISE THE LORD! As this is happening, we need help! I could sugarcoat this request, but I won't! The Lord says there is a COST of discipleship and ministry work, but the rewards are out of this world!!!

Maintenance- we need volunteers to help with church building and grounds maintenance. No experience necessary. Contact Elder Kurt Hepler. kurthepler@yahoo.com 484-857-7130

Home Care Ministry- We need more volunteers who are willing to bring a little cheer to those who are temporarily or permanently homebound. We love each other too much to let anyone be lonely!

Contact Linda Mansker for details lpmansker1120@gmail.com 302-448-1004

Teaching a Bible Study or Sunday Elective Class

Contact Pastor Ed ezicki@gmx.com 717-940-7433

Women's Ministry- those interested in participating as well as leading the ministry at church.

Contact Kayla McDonald kayla@oakorchardchurch.com 302-945-0633

Men's Ministry- those interested in participating as well as leading the ministry at church.

Contact Pastor Ed ezicki@gmx.com 717-940-7433

Community Evangelism- We need ideas that will draw our community to church.

Contact Elder Steve Miller are_all_the_good_ids_taken@yahoo.com 302-258-7499

Kids Sunday Ministry- We are in desperate need of class teachers and helpers for different age groups from infants- 14 yrs old on Sundays from 11am-12:15pm

Contact Mike Koly dmkoly@verizon.net 610-350-8025

Or contact Pastor Ed ezicki@gmx.com 717-940-7433

Youth Group Ministry- we are looking to create a team who is willing to participate in youth activities on a regular basis. The first activity we are planning will be held on is Dec. 30th and we will need many helpers.

Contact Pastor Ed ezicki@gmx.com 717-940-7433

Parking Attendant- we need help to assist with parking at the 11am service on Sundays.

Contact Elder Kurt Hepler kurthepler@yahoo.com
484-857-7130

Thank you in advance, because I have FAITH that you are more than a pew sitter! If you are not physically able to volunteer then it is your duty to now assume the higher calling of prayer warrior. Love in Christ, Pastor Ed



Kids Korner



Amelia enjoys Christmas for the songs and surprises from Santa on Christmas morning. She enjoys the Elf stories and somehow works baby Jesus into the stories. She celebrates His birthday, and this year wants to bake Him a cake. She was thinking about colors and asked, "How many candles grandma?" I said one pretty candle would do just fine, and she agreed.

She is looking forward to celebrating with her church family and wearing her new Christmas outfit. She enjoys singing loudly to the songs she knows and will gladly bellow them out! "Away in a Manger", "We Three Kings", "Angels We Have Heard on High", and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" are her favorites.

She has a nativity set she loves to put up each year and hopefully this year she will not hide the Baby Jesus with the Elf. It took us a few days last year to figure out where she hid them.

She will count down the days to the blessed holiday with the traditional Advent calendar that has a different crystal rock each day instead of candy.

"For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."

Romans 11:29 NIV

"A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22 NIV

—Pat Conley



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 Art Schmidt

3 Harvey Smith

6 Kenny Short

8 Linda Miller

12 Kurt Hepler

14 George Shaw

17 Charles Williams

21 Dottie Bowden

21 Linda Goshert

29 Gail Spitler



Amelia Conley





Community Church of Oak Orchard

Where Friends Become Family!

32615 Oak Orchard Road, Millsboro, DE 19966



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Pastor Ed, Ted Brown
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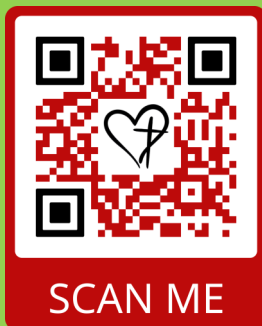
ONLINE DONATIONS

Use the portal on
our website:
oakorchardchurch.com

Scroll down to the
bottom and click on
the "GIVE" button.

Thank you
for supporting our
mission and for your
faithfulness in giving!

Scan the QR Code below
to visit our website.



UPCOMING EVENTS

12/1 *Advent Begins*

Advent Sundays- 12/1, 12/8,
12/15, and 12/22.

12/1 *Fellowship Luncheon*

Following the 11am Service

12/1 *Discipleship Elective*

Wrap-up 9:30-10:30am

12/7 *Remembrance Service*

2pm Angel sign-up sheets due
no later than Dec 3.

12/8 *Communion*

12/13 *Fundraiser Dinner*

For the Little Starfish Children's
Home 3-7pm \$16.

12/16 *Board Meeting* 5:30 pm

12/24 *Christmas Eve Service*

12/30 *Youth Day*

12-3pm Sports, Games, Pizza,
Video Games and Devotion.
Free! Ages 9-14



CHURCH BOARD of ELDERS

Pastor Allen Miller
Chair: Ted Brown
V/Chair: Steve Miller
Assoc. Pastor: Ed Vidzicki
Dave Hammer
Kurt Hepler
Mike Koly



SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:00 or 11:00 AM
in person or online.

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Prayer 6:00 PM

Watch our services on:
Facebook—
[@oakorchardchurch](https://www.facebook.com/oakorchardchurch)

YouTube—
[@CCOakOrchard/streams](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOAKOrchardStreams)

BIBLE STUDY

Tuesdays 6:30 PM
Zoom Bible Study

Wednesdays 9:30-11 AM
AGAPE Bible Study

ACTIVITIES

Tuesdays @ 10:00 AM
T.O.P.S. Meeting
(Take off Pounds Sensibly)

Wednesdays 8 PM C.D.A.

Fellowship Luncheon
1st Sunday of the Month
at 12:30