

The COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Church of Oak Orchard
Millsboro, Delaware 19966

January 2026
Volume 4—Issue 1

Message from Pastor Ed

A Fresh Start in Christ

January feels like an open door—clean, quiet, and full of possibility. As we step into 2026, many people make resolutions, set goals, or dream about changes they hope to see. But as believers, we are offered something far greater than a new calendar page. We are offered renewal from the inside out.

Scripture reminds us, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). January is a beautiful time to remember that God specializes in new beginnings. He does not simply help us try harder; He transforms us through His Spirit.

This month, instead of focusing on our own strength, let us lean into His. Let’s begin the year by seeking God daily—through prayer, Scripture, and worship. Let’s recommit ourselves to loving others well, forgiving quickly, and serving faithfully.

Most of all, let’s enter 2026 with confidence that God walks with us every step. Whatever this year brings—joys, challenges, or unexpected detours—He goes before us, He stands beside us, and He lives within us.

As we launch into this new year, let’s also renew our commitment to our church’s “TEAM” philosophy—**Together Everyone Advances Ministry**. We believe the church is strongest when every member plays a part, using their God-given gifts for the good of the body. January is the perfect time to step in, step up, and serve alongside one another. When we labor together, encourage each other, and stay united in Christ, we become a powerful TEAM for His kingdom.



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- 2Corinthians 5:17

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Ministry in Motion!

MINISTRIES & COMMITTEES

Our Church is growing. **PRAISE THE LORD!** As this is happening, we need help! Ministries are an important part of our church. They help our church family to grow in faith, minister to the needs of the community, and provide outreach to those in need.

COMMUNITY EVANGELISM MINISTRY



COMMUNITY CHURCH OF OAK ORCHARD

Community Evangelism Ministry—Engaging our community and drawing people to our church. If you are interested in helping to expand our church's reach, we encourage you to join us. We also support the Visitor Ministry.

Contact: **Elder Art Schmidt**, artisea@msn.com, 443-676-3588
or **Kristi Williams**, emschic17@hotmail.com, 240-841-5959

Visitation 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: **Bonnie Shaw** 724-689-3894 or **Diane Long** 302-945-7627.

Kids Ministry—We would love for you to be part of our Children's Ministry team! We're looking for caring teachers and helpers to serve with kids of all ages (infants through 14 years) on Sundays from 11:00–12:15. Whether you enjoy rocking babies, helping little ones learn Bible stories, or encouraging our older kids, there's a place for you. Your time and heart can make a lasting impact! Our hope is to build 4 teaching teams so that each group only serves once a month. This way, no one carries the load alone, and everyone still has plenty of Sundays to worship and recharge while making a lasting difference in the lives of our kids. "If you feel God nudging you to be part of this ministry, we'd love to have you join us! Just add your name to the sign-up sheet on the bulleting board in the hallway or contact Elder Mike Koly or Pastor Ed Vidzicki directly.

Contact: **Elder Mike Koly**, dmkoly@verizon.net, 610-350-8025
or **Pastor Ed**, Pastoredvidzicki@gmail.com, 717-940-7433



Men's Ministry—Our Men's Ministry exists to disciple men into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, equipping them to live as godly leaders in their homes, church, and community. We seek to create a brotherhood where men encourage one another, grow together in God's Word, and sharpen each other through accountability, prayer, and service. By modeling Christ's humility, strength, and love, we strive to raise up men who courageously stand firm in their faith, lead their families with integrity, and impact the world with the gospel.

Contact: **Pastor Ed**, Pastoredvidzicki@gmail.com, 717-940-7433



Women's Ministry—The rooted women's group meets on Thursdays at 6pm. The ministry provides a platform where women share experiences, challenges, and insights from a faith-based perspective through Bible and book studies.

Contact: **Kristi Williams**, emschic17@hotmail.com, 240-841-5959

Youth Group Ministry—We want to create a team willing to participate in youth activities.

Contact: **Pastor Ed**, Pastoredvidzicki@gmail.com, 717-940-7433

Maintenance—We need volunteers to help with church building and grounds maintenance. No experience necessary.

Contact: **Elder Ted Brown** 302-549-1450 or **Elder Steve Miller**— 302-258-7499
and_you_thought_my_last_e-mail_was_long@protonmail.com

Education—We're excited to offer many Bible Studies and Sunday Elective Classes, and we'd love for you to be part of leading them! If you enjoy sharing God's Word and helping others grow in their faith, consider volunteering to teach a class. Your gifts could inspire and encourage others in a powerful way.

Contact: **Pastor Ed**, Pastoredvidzicki@gmail.com, 717-940-7433

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



THE SECULARIZATION OF CHRISTMAS

The word *holiday* comes from the Old English word *hāligdæg* (*hālig* "holy" + *dæg* "day"). The word originally referred only to special religious days, but in the United States, the word *holiday* is used to refer to the nationally, religiously, or culturally observed days of celebration. Christmas in particular, a religious celebration that became a federal holiday in 1870, has become secularized and also highly commercialized in the United States due to the growth of marketing profitability.

The secularization of Christmas began with Coca-Cola's 1920's ad campaign that made the modern-day image of "Santa Clause" widespread and popular. Then the



movie, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was released in 2000, and suddenly the "Grinch" (the green mean one) became the dominant Christmastime figure and the phrase "Merry Grinchmas" became popular. In the movie, Cindy Lou Who helps the Grinch learn the *true meaning* of Christmas, but the meaning she conveys is secular and not Christian. The Christmas song, "Silent Night" was the most popular in the 1800's and Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" took the top spot in the early 1900's. But then in 1994, Mariah Carey released "All I Want For Christmas Is You" that remains the highest selling and most popular modern Christmas song of all time. It's considered

a classic, nets \$4M annually in royalties, and earned Mariah the title: "*Queen of Christmas*."



Beginning in the 1990's, institutions across the country began reevaluating the public expression of the Christmas holiday. School districts revised holiday programming, municipal governments scaled back displays, and corporations replaced traditional greetings with neutral alternatives. These changes were driven by administrators who cited concerns about inclusivity, legal exposure, or the possibility of offending someone—often without evidence of actual complaints. The result was not the sudden disappearance of Christmas, but rather, a slow dilution of its religious meaning.¹

The removal of Christmas from public institutions did not create a neutral space, it created a vacuum instead. As schools and civic organizations withdrew from seasonal traditions, the commercial culture filled the gap. The holiday's meaning increasingly centered on consumption, sales cycles, and marketing campaigns. Without the reduced presence of communal rituals—pageants, traditional stories, and public acts of charity—the season became more transactional and less communal.¹ Every fall we see how successfully the retail industry has marketed Christmas into a billion-dollar business.

The first known use of the phrase "Merry Christmas" was in a letter from Bishop Fisher of Rochester to Thomas Cromwell in 1534: "And this our Lord God send you a merry Christmas." The phrase "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings" replaced "Merry Christmas" to avoid a potentially problematic situation.¹ Asking someone if they prefer "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays" can be a sensitive question, but an increasing number of Americans do not seem to have strong feelings either way. About 67% of Americans choose "Merry Christmas" and 52% say it doesn't matter how people greet them during Christmas.

A recent Gallup analysis showed that approximately 88% of Americans celebrate Christmas, and 71% celebrate Christmas Eve. About 81% engage in traditions such as exchanging gifts and gathering with their family and friends and 77% put up a Christmas tree and decorations. While these figures have generally held steady in recent years, the role of religion in Christmas celebrations has declined. Today, 46% of Americans say they celebrate Christmas primarily as a religious rather than cultural holiday, down from 51% who said this in 2017. A majority of U.S. adults (56%) also say religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less in American society today than in the past, though few are bothered by this trend.² Most Americans believe that elements of the Biblical Christmas story reflect actual historical events, although the percentage expressing this view has dropped noticeably in recent years. Overall, about one-in-five Americans (19%) are non-believers.

Commentary by Art Schmidt

¹ <https://fyivt.com/be-informed/how-the-choking-out-of-christmas-changed-american-culture/>

² <https://www.driverreserach.com/market-research-company/christmas-facts-and-statistics/>

4 Other resources: Google, Wikipedia



ODYSSEA: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Something To Think About

By Art Schmidt

"If anyone is poor among your fellow man in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need." Deuteronomy 15:7-8 NIV

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of only 100 people, with all the existing ratios remaining constant, what would it look like?

60 people would be Asian, 14 black, 10 white, 8 Hispanic, 6 Middle Eastern, and 2 Native American.

51 would be male and 49 female; 32 would be Christian, 26 Islamic, 15 Hindu, 7 Buddhist, 5 would be some other religion, and 15 non-religious or atheist.

1 person would have more wealth than all the others; the wealthiest people would have more wealth than 50% of the others combined.

86 people would be literate; 40 people would live in substandard housing; 10 people would suffer from malnutrition; around 7 people would have a college education; 73 people would own a computer.

When we consider our world from a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, understanding, and education becomes glaringly apparent. So, ponder this:

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million people who won't survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are more blessed than the 500 million who have.

If you can attend church without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than 3 billion people who cannot.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a warm place to sleep, you are more blessed than the 1.1 billion who don't.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them, and share love with them, you are more blessed than the millions of people who have nobody to love or be loved by.

If you can read this article, you are more blessed than over a billion people who are illiterate.

Wishing you a wonderful year of health, happiness, love, and abundant blessings. May your days be filled with gratitude, grace, and generosity.



⌘ BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 4:19 NIV

*God
BLESS
you*



Kayla McDonald and a team of volunteers worked together to make this year's Christmas Dinner a wonderful time of fellowship and great food. They fed about 80 guests. A big thank you to all who donated food and money.



NATIONAL NEWS

Foreclosures are soaring in the US amid an ongoing affordability crisis — with 1 state hit the worst.

By Emily Davis

Foreclosure filings in the US spiked by more than 20% in November compared to the same period last year. The data, first reported by the Daily Mail, comes from property data firm ATTOM. The year-over-year uptick last month is part of a troubling trend for 2025 — November marked the ninth straight month of year-over-year foreclosure hikes.

The findings signal trouble for the average American homeowner. Historically high borrowing rates, dwindling savings and an ongoing affordability crisis are pushing more American families towards default. Americans keeping up on their bills aren't spared by the rash of foreclosures, either. Cheap, bank-owned listings have an outsized effect on neighborhoods, damaging nearby property values.

November saw 35,651 properties hit with foreclosure filings, in a 21% increase from November 2024. Foreclosure starts, as the first step of the formal foreclosure process, increased by 17% year-over-year in November, hitting 23,720 properties.

A total of 2,884 US properties were repossessed by lenders in November, according to ATTOM. States from the American West to the Northeast saw alarming rates for foreclosure filings. **Delaware saw the highest rate of lender interventions**, where one in every 1,924 homes had a foreclosure filing.

Delaware's high rate of foreclosure activity was followed by South Carolina, Nevada, New Jersey and Florida. Philadelphia, with one filing for every 1,511 housing units, ranked as the most foreclosure-burdened metro among those with populations of 1 million or more. Las Vegas, Cleveland, Orlando and Tampa followed behind. A perfect storm of high day-to-day costs along with increasing taxes, insurance and interest are leaving Americans behind on their bills.

Reminders of the 2008 housing crisis are difficult to ignore. Although loans are indeed safer than they were before that bubble burst, anxieties are high. More than half of Americans in a recent survey reported feeling financially frozen this year, with many struggling to maintain monthly budgets and grow their savings.



Resource: <https://www.newsbreak.com/share/4390499528757-foreclosures-are-soaring-in-the-us-amid-an-ongoing-affordability-crisis-with-1-state-hit-the-worst?>



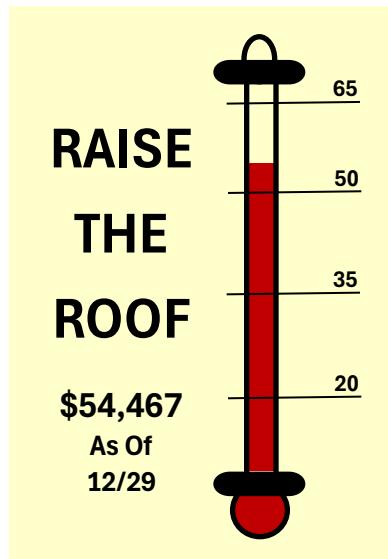
"God Can Do It: We Can Help"

The second "Raise the Roof Night of Praise & Purpose" was held on Sunday, December 21 and led by Pastor Miller. The donations received at that event totaled \$1,013. THANK YOU to all those who attended and donated to the roof fund.

As the new year begins, we look ahead first with gratitude for where our church has been and accomplished, and second with hope for the future as God continues to lead us on our journey together. The new year offers our church a variety of spiritual challenges and opportunities. Our major financial challenge will be to meet the rising cost of operations and complete the needed repairs to the building. Together through our prayers, participation, and support, we will be able to live out God's plan for our church, maintain a close relationship as a family, and serve our community. Looking ahead, I am excited by the strength and dedication of our church's ministry. Great things await our church!

May the coming year be filled with peace in your heart, joy in your days, and strength in your spirit. May you walk into each moment with hope, embrace each challenge with courage, and cherish each blessing with gratitude. Happy New Year!

— Art Schmidt, Treasurer



A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR PASTOR ALLEN



The Board of Elders presented a special gift to Pastor Allen at the beginning of the 11am worship service on Sunday, December 21.

The chair near the pulpit had been used by Pastor Allen for many years and had become worn and very uncomfortable. So, as a special surprise, the Board of Elders presented Pastor Allen with a new wingback chair as a Christmas gift.

After the announcements, the "Joy to the World" music video started to play and everyone stood up to sing along. Then, the sanctuary doors opened, and Ted Brown led the elders down the aisle with two of them carrying the new chair. The new chair was put in place and Pastor Allen read the card aloud followed by a round of applause.



Report from the Board of Elders

It has been quite a while since we reported to the congregation about 2 projects which were brought to the Boards attention, and which require resolution sooner than later. We have also had a lot of new faces at church, and you may not have heard all the details about these projects.

Roof Project:

First is the condition of the metal roofing. The original asphalt shingle roof was installed in 1974 or 1975 when the Sanctuary was erected. Approximately 1995 there was a metal roof installed over the existing shingles, which showed signs of leakage where the fastening screws are. The screws have neoprene washers which are beginning to fail. The Board discussed our options, from power washing, priming and painting the existing metal, or replacing all the fasteners with longer screws, which was done once years ago, to compete removal of the metal and old shingles and installing a new roof. It was decided that if we just painted the roof, or changed the screws, which have zero warranty, it would only be wasting money and just putting off the inevitable. There is no way of knowing if there is any damage to existing plywood sheathing, which could lead to even further damage to dimensional lumber. We decided the best approach would be to remove the metal and shingles and any damaged plywood. We received quotes for replacing it with a metal roof or to go with asphalt shingles.

Power wash and paint = at least \$12,000 and no warranty

Power wash and silicone coating on existing = \$89,842, with a 20-year warranty

Remove old and install new metal = \$184,336, with a 35-year warranty

Remove old and install new asphalt shingles = between \$38,540 to \$44,793, 50-year warranty

The board decided that the most reasonable approach would be to remove both roofs and take care of any other damage before we have further issues. All quotes have a price per piece for plywood replacement. There is no way of knowing if there may be something unseen. The best option is to go with shingles and a 50-year warranty.

Brick Wall:

The brick face on the exterior wall of the Sanctuary is pulling away from the structure. When the brick was installed, they use metal clips which are fastened to the wood sheathing and then are set in the mortar joints of the brick, thus holding the wall in place. It appears that these clips have failed allowing the wall to pull away, or the foundation supporting the weight of the brick was not adequate. There are 2 options. One is to remove the entire brick work from the wall and replace it with either white vinyl siding, imitation brick or stone, with the cross done in lighter color imitation brick or stone, or real brick. Second option is to pin the wall back to the original structure to keep it from pulling away any further. This would be done by cutting at least one horizontal hole in the interior sheetrock wall, drilling through the brick, inserting a rod through the hole, install blocking to the existing studs, fastening the rod to the blocking on the inside, installing a large star shaped nut to the exterior. This will keep the wall from moving any further. We are still obtaining quotes.

Remove brick and install white vinyl siding = \$19,298

Remove brick and install imitation brick or stone = \$28,377

Pin the existing brick wall = \$9,439, with no warranty.

We have not researched a quote to replace the brick with brick at this time.

On behalf of our parish family, the board wishes to thank you for your generous response to our special appeal. Your kindness is not only helping to meet our needs but has also been a beautiful witness of God's love in action. May the Lord bless you abundantly for your open hearts.

Thank you all and God Bless

—Your Church Board

TOPS

TOPS is a non-profit, non-commercial weight loss support group. TOPS has been in existence since 1948 and has chapters worldwide. TOPS does not promote a quick fix or set of unrealistic goals. The program focuses on making small, doable, steady lifestyle changes that lead to lasting weight loss and improved health. TOPS provides you with the information, support, and accountability you need to be successful with your weight loss journey.

This chapter of TOPS has been meeting at the church since 1985. How it works – each Tuesday morning, the private weight-in time takes place between 8:45-9:45am and followed by the meeting 10-11:00am. What you will find is support, accountability, encouragement, friendship, and fun while you are losing weight or maintaining your weight loss. TOPS does not promote any type of weight loss program. You will set goals and we help each other to reach them.

No matter what diet, exercise program, or health goals you set for yourself, having the support of others who share the same goals and challenges can make a difference. It's like rowing a boat – when you are pulling together with others, you may find better progress instead of going at it alone.

The first meeting is free so that you can come to check TOPS out for yourself. More information is available at: www.tops.org. You are welcome to come and see if this group will benefit you on your weight loss journey and help improve your overall health.

Happy New Year!



TOPS

**T.O.P.S. meets at the church
each Tuesday morning.**

**Join us for the
support, accountability
and connections that you
need on your journey
to better health.**

**Weigh-In: 9:00-9:45am
Meeting: 10:00-11:00am**

The first meeting is FREE!

Meeting Here:

tops
CLUB INC.®

**TAKE OFF POUNDS
SENSIBLY**

www.tops.org



*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17*

[The] unfathomable idea of an actual identity exchange is implicit in conversation...As a result of this stuff-exchange, we carry within us not just the image of, or the philosophy of, or faith in, but the actual substance of God. One staggering consequence credits us with the spiritual genes of Christ; as we stand before God, we are judged on the basis of Christ's perfection, not our own unworthiness.

† Paul Brand

NEW YEAR—NEW YOU

By Sandie Wysocki

How many resolutions have you made over the years hoping for a different outcome in your life? I know I've made so many that I can't remember even one that I've kept more than a week. I bet even you can say the same thing.

You can't become a "new you" by your own resolution to change or do better than last year. It may take shape for a little while but sooner or later than we care to admit, we slip back into the old habits.

Through the years, I found a resolution that is sure to work if you follow this lead.

Make a resolution to become a friend of Jesus. It's a strong give and take relationship. He does most of the giving and you do most of the taking. Jesus is there when you need him and there when you think you don't.

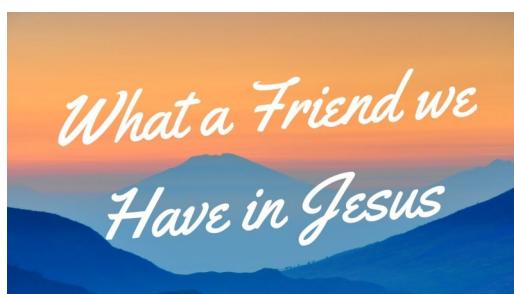
How can anything surpass this arrangement?

All He asks for this resolution to be permanent is for you to invite him into your life.

You'll be so satisfied that another resolution will never be necessary.

Come near to God, and He will come near to you. James 4:8 NIV

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24 NIV



WHERE WOULD I BE

Your hand in every part
Of my whole life from the start
Jesus, You have always been with me
No matter where I was
You found a way to show up
Jesus, You have always been with me.

Oh, there's never a season, never a place
Where I am alone,
Where You don't show Your face
Right here I remember, how could I forget
Your faithfulness has never left me.

Oh Jesus
Where would I be without You
Where would I be without Your love
I'm amazed by all You've done.

And all the ways You save
And pull me out of the grave
Jesus, You have always been for me
Oh my life is the proof
That You can make anything good
Oh Jesus, You have always been for me.

Oh, Jesus
Where would I be without You
Where would I be without Your love
Oh, I can't say thank You enough
No I can't say thank You enough
Oh, I can't say thank You enough.

I wanna say thank You, thank You
I have to say thank You, thank You
Can't help but say thank You, thank You
For all You have done.

I wanna say thank You, thank You
I have to say thank You, thank You
Can't help but say thank You, thank You
For all You have done.

Song By: Tribl – Maverick City Music 4/29/22



Cameron and Alayna



Sky and Rand



Pastor Allen and Carol Miller



Pastor Ed and Sue Vidzicki

Send your snapshots in JPEG, TIFF, or PNG file format to Art (artisea@msn.com)

COMING EVENTS

1/4 Fellowship Luncheon
Following the 11am Service

1/5 & 1/19 Dinner & Discussion:
Countering the Culture
Dinner 5:45-6:30
Class Session 6:30-8pm

1/12 Church Board Meeting 5:30pm

1/18 Raise the Roof
Praise with a Purpose -5pm

1/19 Dinner & Discussion 5:45pm

1/23 Meals for Missions Dinner
3:30-6:30pm
AUCE Chicken & Dumplings \$15

2/1 Special Combined Service
10am Combined Service
11am Congregational Meeting
12pm Fellowship Luncheon



REMEMBER THAT NEW YEAR RESOLUTION YOU
MADE TO TRY NEW THINGS?

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



1 David Quigley
4 Sue Vidzicki
5 Dave Rossington
11 Mark Wolf
12 Mary Ann Gandy
13 Kristin Hoelzle
15 Troya Fortier
19 Dixie Wolf
21 Dave Hammer
24 Marvin Malone
25 Kristi Williams
28 Marge Hurt

*I think I made too many
New Year's resolutions
this year. It took me
almost a full day
to break them all.*





Community Church of Oak Orchard

Where Friends Become Family!

32615 Oak Orchard Road, Millsboro, DE 19966



Church Weekly Activities

SUNDAY WORSHIP

8am or 11am
in person or online.

Morning Elective- 9:30am
Open Prayer- 6pm

Watch our services on:
Facebook—
@oakorchardchurch
YouTube—
@CCOakOrchard/streams

Wednesdays 9:30-11am
AGAPE Bible Study
(Followed by lunch outing)

Thursdays 3pm
Kingdom Prayer Meeting

Thursdays 6pm
Rooted Women's Ministry
The Forge Men's Group

Church Monthly Activities

1st Sunday

Fellowship Luncheon
12:30pm

1st & 3rd Monday (Oct-Mar)

Dinner & Discussion:
Countering the Culture
5:45pm
Special Series:
U.S. Constitution

Other Activities

Tuesdays 10am
T.O.P.S. Meeting
(Take off Pounds Sensibly)

Tuesdays 6:30pm
Zoom Bible Study
(From Home)
Wednesdays 8pm
C.D.A.

Newsletter Staff

Editor: Kayla McDonald
Layout/Design: Art Schmidt
Advisors: Pastor Allen,
Pastor Ed, Ted Brown



ONLINE DONATIONS

Use the portal on
our website:

oakorchardchurch.com

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

Office: 302-945-0633; Kayla@oakorchardchurch.com

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

Scan this QR Code
to visit our website.



SCAN ME