



Church of the Foothills
FEBRUARY 2021
Sower

Church Staff & Leadership

Rev. John Forrest Douglas	Pastor
Eleanor Wilson	Moderator
Rev. John Martin	Pastor Emeritus
Elizabeth Helms	Music Director
Karen MacConell	Accompanist
Craig Rhea	Church Administrator
Marie Stauffer	Bookkeeper
Lena Martinez	Office Assistant
Jim Harris	Facilities Manager
Johnny Martinez	Facilities Assistant

Church Office Hours:

(Note: Our campus is closed, but staff is in the office several days a week)

Rev. John Forrest: Tues-Fri & Sunday
 pastor@foothillschurchinventura.com

Craig: Mon, Wed, Friday, 9am to 2pm
 admin@foothillschurchinventura.com

Marie: Mon, Wed, Thurs & Fri, 9am to 11am
 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura, CA 93003
 (805) 644-3036

After-hour emergencies: (805) 228-4167
www.churchofthefoothills-ventura.org

February 2021

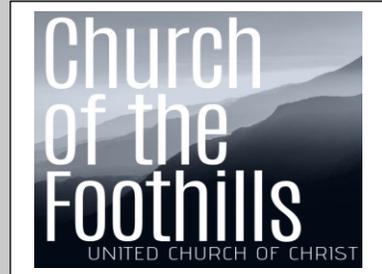
We remain amidst an unprecedented time of uncertainty and patience. Most church activities on site continue to be postponed, cancelled, or moved online.

However, please make note of these special dates:

Every Thursday	Zoom Choir, Back in Session, 7pm
Alternate Fridays	Group Walks on hold
Sunday, February 7	Drive-Thru Communion, 1-2pm
Saturday, February 13	Car Parade at Senior Living Facilities, 2:30pm <i>(See page 3)</i>
Thursday, February 18	Drop-off Food, Clothing & Book Drive, 9am-Noon
Wednesday, February 24	Dining For Women via Zoom <i>(Details page 4)</i>

Please continue to practice all COVID-19 guidelines and stay well.

The Church Council would like to remind you that the **Pastor's Discretionary Fund** will be used to address financial needs within our community as they arise. If you feel led to give in this way, please feel free to donate to the fund either online or by mailing a check to the church office.



Recordings of our past services can be found on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/foothillsventura and on our website: www.churchofthefoothills-ventura.org/ under the "Worship" tab.

You will find previous editions of the Sower on our website, as well, under the "Church Life" tab.

Remember in Prayer

Karina D'Arcy, Irene Hostetler, Doris Keyes, Helga Ohrt, Jan Osborne, Ken Schmidt and Fred Widney

Nancy Kersnowski and her mother Barbara
 Family of Mike Gibbs on his passing (father of Wendell & Denise Allen's daughter-in-law)
 The Holmgren family on Bob's passing (friends of the Allen's)

Family & friends of Jane Tobias on her passing

Dear Church,

It's not easy to get physically lost these days – not compared to the generations before us who didn't have the use of GPS, maps in our phones, paved roads with street signs, and very little unexplored territory. When Moses set out from Egypt, there were no sidewalks or highways, no AAA to call for roadside assistance. Making the journey from Egypt to Canaan meant leaving the familiar and predictable and entering something unknown, mysterious, dangerous.



The last 11 months have been a prolonged wilderness time for all of us in many different ways. We have had to change so much about our daily lives as we continue to navigate living through a global pandemic. We witnessed (and continue to experience) political unrest in this country like none of us have ever seen before. Many of us have experienced job loss, the loss of family members and friends, and other losses we may not fully understand until we come out the other side. We did not choose to enter this wilderness time, and yet here we are.

As people of faith on a journey through a wilderness time, we find ourselves in good company among our ancestors of faith who have also been on wilderness journeys. A common theme we see in almost every wilderness experience, is that the journey changes us. God can use this time to transform us in ways that may not be possible if we had stayed comfortable in our status quo.

Wilderness was the theme that we were exploring as we entered into this time of pandemic, who knew what an appropriate theme it would be! As we enter a new season of Lent this month, let us embrace this wilderness time again. May we listen deeply with open minds and open hearts to the ways in which God might be working to transform us as individuals, as a community, as a nation, and as a world.

Blessings,
John Forrest



Happy
Valentine's Day!



Join us on **February 7th**, from **1-2pm**, for our **Drive-Thru Communion**. Please drive up to the church, roll down your window, and a volunteer in protective gear will give you a sanitary, disposable, and individually pre-packaged communion wafer and juice set.



Virtual choir practices have begun again, and all are welcome. We meet with Zoom on Thursday evenings from 7pm to 8pm.

We enjoy chatting before and after.

If you would like to join us, contact Elizabeth Helms and you will be sent a Zoom link.



We are planning our 3rd Car Parade to Senior Living Facilities in Ventura on **Saturday, February 13th.**

Please meet just before **2:30pm** in the parking lot at the Townhouse, 4900 Telegraph Road.

We will continue to Aegis, Cypress Meadows & Cypress Point.

Feel free to decorate your car with signs, streamers & balloons.

It is a lot of fun and all are welcome!

COVID-19 Team Update

Dr. Nancy Merrick

Ventura County continues to recover from the Holiday Surge in COVID-19 cases, but though we remain under tight restrictions, there is hope on the horizon as vaccinations begin.

Here in Ventura, the initial 6 weeks of vaccinations (mid December to end of January) focused on vaccinating 45,000 health care and other front-line workers. But now, the County has begun vaccinating those 75 and older, a group of about 130,000 people. Given the sizeable group, many deserving seniors still have weeks to wait for an appointment – but now is the time to begin trying to register.

For now, registration information for those 75 and older is available at:

<https://www.venturacountyrecovers.org/vaccine-information/portal/>.

New appointments become available Monday mornings at 7:30am online and often quickly fill up. Those without internet can also call for appointment help at **805-477-7161**. (Note that the appointment system is expected to change in coming weeks as California delegates BlueCross/Blue Shield to manage vaccine delivery.)

You can also request **transportation assistance to a vaccine appointment** or for COVID-testing by calling the **Area Agency on Aging's call center: 805-477-7300**. They require you to have a vaccine appointment before scheduling a ride.

Want to help? We are looking for volunteers to assist our Church of the Foothills seniors in making appointments online or in getting to their vaccination appointments when other transportation is unavailable. Please contact Nancy.Merrick@gmail.com if interested in helping with either.

And for now, keep being careful! We want you to stay well.

Outreach and Benevolence

Volunteer Opportunities at Food Share

In these trying pandemic times, let us join together to help those in our community that are unable to afford sufficient nutrition. The following opportunities are available to help Food Share feed our neighbors:

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>
W	2/17/21	2-5pm	Pop-Up Food Distribution College Park Oxnard
M	3/15/21	11:45-3pm	California Works Drive-Thru Food Pantry
W	4/14/21	2-5pm	Pop-up Food Distribution College Park Oxnard

To sign up for one of these opportunities to volunteer, or to search for others, go to [Volunteer Opportunities - Food Share of Ventura County](#). For any questions, call, message or email Scott Marsi at (609) 713-0254 or scott.marsi@gmail.com.

The **Men's Book Study** just finished Nelson Mandela's autobiography
"Long Walk to Freedom"

Our next book is "Ten lessons for a Post Pandemic World" by
Fareed Zakaria

We have changed the book study night to **Thursday night** as one
of the guys has a conflict on Wednesdays.

We will meet on Zoom at 6:30 PM and we finish at 8:00 PM

All are welcome. If anyone wishes to join contact Steve Treanor for
the meeting link.

Dining for Women continues to
meet monthly via Zoom.
Zoom meeting will be
February 24, 2021, 7pm
Contact Candace Reynolds
or Linda Marsi

February Grantees:

**Speak Up for the Poor
Bangladesh**

**Catalyst Foundation
Vietnam**

**Regarding our Welcome
Covenant for ONA:**

There will be a vote held immediately following church service on March 21.

Please remain after service to assist in reaching a quorum for the vote.

Open & Affirming (ONA) Update

Church of the Foothill's Council has set Sunday, March 21 as the date that church members will be asked to vote on whether to adopt a Welcoming Covenant.

The vote will be held after worship service.

The Welcoming Covenant is the product of our church's ONA Discernment Team. The new Covenant expressly communicates our intention to welcome and include members of the LGBTQ community, people of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and more into all aspects of our church's family and leadership. A draft can be found on the Church website (choose ONA from the drop down menu under the Church Life tab) or by clicking [HERE](#). A final Covenant will be written and disseminated in February, considering any input received from our congregation.

The ONA Discernment team has prepared a document with informational facts and frequently asked questions regarding becoming an Open and Affirming congregation. The facts sheet also can be found on the Church website (again, choose ONA under Church Life tab) or [HERE](#).

If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Douglas or any other member of the ONA Discernment Team: Scott Marsi, Craig Rhea, Margaret Seawell, Lena Martinez, Keri Prout.

Regards,
Scott Marsi

Open & Affirming
My Personal Journey
by Craig Rhea

Think about how much has changed for the LGBTQ community over the past 40 years:

When I came out in 1981, I never dreamed I would be able to marry the man I loved, adopt children, raise a family and now become a grandfather. In 1981, we were just beginning to learn about the AIDS epidemic. A religious leader from Virginia, Jerry Falwell, was proclaiming to all who would listen that AIDS was God's retribution on homosexuals. Quite a lot to take in as a young man in my 20s who was newly out.

Fortunately, I found a progressive Presbyterian Church to counter Falwell's claim. Led by a young Yale Divinity School graduate who could not be ordained because he was Gay, I found a church home that embraced me for who I was. A spiritual, intelligent, compassionate man, our un-ordained minister preached from the pulpit each Sunday but could not serve our monthly communion. A retired Presbyterian minister fulfilled that role for us; he was also gay, but because he had been ordained many years before coming out, it did not seem to be a problem for the larger church. That is a bit of a head scratcher, *n'est-ce pas?*

Later, Allen and I found a progressive Episcopal church in Hollywood that welcomed our new family with open arms...2 dads with 2 adopted kids, then ages 6 & 7. Our first visit there was on Easter Sunday in 2004; we stayed for 13 years.

When we moved to Ventura 4 years ago, I began looking for a new church home. The first time I walked into Church of the Foothills, I knew this was it. This warm, compassionate, caring community welcomed me on day 1 and I never looked back!

Although the LGBTQ community has made great progress in my adult lifetime, discrimination still exists; there are those who would like to take away my right to marry, adopt children and raise a family. Sadly, many of the most strident voices come from those who claim the mantle of Christianity.....and Gay folks know it.

That is not who we are at Church of the Foothills.

I have been fortunate in my spiritual quest over the past 40 years to find church homes that welcome me for who I am as the child of God. I would like to extend that welcome to all who are searching for a spiritual home.

Church of the Foothills is that place for me and I want others to know it can be that place for them, as well.

Your Generosity Continues...

The Outreach and Benevolence Board extends many thanks once again to our church community for all the generous donations. On January 21st, our monthly "Drive-thru" Food, Clothing and Book Collection at the COTF yielded **48 bags/boxes of food and hygiene products** for Project Understanding and **33 bags/boxes of clothing, shoes, socks and blankets** for the homeless served at the County's One Stop program. In addition, several boxes of used books were collected to help support Friends of the Library.

Next monthly event will be Thursday, February 18th from 9am– noon in the church parking lot.

2021 Grant Awards

This past year has challenged many in our community and, in turn, many of our service organizations. We had an unprecedented number of applications for grants this fall. All the listed organizations provide services for our marginalized and less fortunate neighbors, both locally and globally. The Outreach and Benevolence Board will award twelve financial grants to the following organizations:

- CASA
- Dining for Women
- Family to Family
- Friends of Chimps
- Homeboys Industries
- Interface Family and Children Services
- Project Understanding
- RAIN
- Step Up Ventura
- Tender Life Maternity
- Turning Point
- Ventura Homeless Prevention

If you have any questions about these organizations, the Outreach and Benevolence Board keeps a summary of each and their area of emphasis.

COTF Food, Clothing & Used Book Drive **2021 Schedule**

The drive-throughs continue! Many of you regularly contribute canned goods, non-perishable packaged foods, hygiene products and other items to Project Understanding's food pantry or gently used adult clothing to our homeless neighbors. We also collect used books in support of Ventura libraries. Ventura Friends of the Library will be on hand to accept used books for resale or recycle.

We will continue **monthly** collections through the 2021 year on **Thursdays from 9:00 am to 12 pm**. Mark your calendars! The January – June 2021 schedule is as follows:

- February 18th
- March 18th
- April 22nd
- May 20th.
- June 17th

Same place: Church of the Foothills parking lot between church office and sanctuary

Same process: Just drive up to the designated area and pop your trunk or have a door unlocked and a church member in personal protective equipment (PPE) will unload your contributions. No need to leave your vehicle.

It is simple and will benefit those in need during these times. Even if you do not have any donations, come on up to the church drive through just to say "hi". Even when masked, it is good to see everyone and have a little chat.

Thank you in advance for your generous contributions. Your Outreach and Benevolence Board