



Church of the Foothills
SEPTEMBER 2020
Sower

Church Staff & Leadership

Rev. John Forrest Douglas	Pastor
Judi Balcerzak	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: Tuesday – Friday, 9am to 11am
 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura, CA 93003
 (805) 644-3036

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

Calendar
September 2020



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 in September:

Thursday, September 3	Zoom Choir Rehearsal, 7pm <i>(see article p. 2)</i>
Sunday, September 6	Drive-Thru Communion, 1-3pm <i>(see Pastor's message)</i>
Sunday, September 20	Aloha Sunday <i>(see Pastor's message)</i>
Thursday, September 24	Drop-off Food, Clothing & Book Drive, 9am-Noon <i>(see article p. 3)</i>

Please continue to practice all COVID-19 guidelines and stay well. See final page for updates.

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.



Aloha Sunday is coming!
 September 20th
 See Pastor's message

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.

Sower editor: Linda Marsi

Remember in Prayer

Karina D'Arcy
 Joan Egeris
 Doris Keyes
 Helga Ohrt
 Jan Osborne
 Nancy Rakow
 Ken Schmidt
 Marie Stauffer
 Fred Widney

The family of Norma Van Riper on her passing
 Students, Teachers, Administrators, and Parents on
 their return to school



Dear Church,



As we continue through these last long days of late summer, I pray that you are well and finding the rest and relaxation these days would normally provide. Preparations are underway for Aloha Sunday, which will be on September 20, 2020. In a normal year, this would be the day we welcome people home from their summer travels and begin the new church programmatic year (and we would have a delicious potluck). While many of us have not gone anywhere in months, we will still celebrate this day. As I am sure you know, Aloha means more than just hello and welcome back—among its meanings are love and mutual well-being. This is the Aloha we will celebrate on September 20! Do you know someone who could use a little Aloha in their life? This is the perfect opportunity to invite friends and family to our online service!

A spirit of creativity is moving among our Community. At our last Church Council meeting, a new committee was formed to dream of new creative ways to be the church together. I am excited to experience the ways the Spirit moves within our church because of that group's work. On September 6 from 1-3 PM, the deacons and I will host our first Drive-Thru Communion. You're invited to 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 (like the one in the picture below).

Would you like a pastoral visit? I am scheduling a block in my calendar each week to meet with people on their patios, porches, driveways, or yards for socially distanced pastoral visits. Please let me know if you would like a visit and we can schedule it!

Blessings to you as we continue our journey through this liminal time.

Peace
Pastor John Forrest



VIRTUAL CHOIR REHEARSAL IS ALMOST HERE!

Church of the Foothills Choir will hold their first Zoom rehearsal of the fall at 7pm on Thursday, September 3.

Are you unsure of how to use Zoom? We will teach you!
Are you nervous about singing with others at choir practice? No worries! We cannot hear you!

Are you reluctant to record yourself for a choir anthem?
That is ok, wait until you are ready.

DO come Zoom with your choir friends on Thursday nights! It is good to see each other's faces and hear each other's news. Your voice will feel stronger after the healing warmups. Your brain and your heart will be "Blessed with the sound of music" as we practice the anthems.

If you are not already on the choir list, email Liz Helms to request a Zoom invitation or with any questions at elizhelms@gmail.com.

Choir, look for a Zoom invitation and rehearsal materials at the beginning of September.

See you at **7pm on Thursday, September 3.**

Thank You, Congregation!

The O&B Board extends extravagant thanks for all the generous donations collected in our 2nd "Drive-thru" Food, Clothing & Book Collection. On July 29th, we collected **30 bags/boxes of food and hygiene products** for Project Understanding, **35 bags/boxes of gently used clothing and shoes** for the homeless, & **9 "Banker's boxes" of used books** for Friends of the Library. Project Understanding expressed such genuine, tearful, gratitude as "without Church of the Foothills, we cannot do our job." The staff at the Transitional Care for the Homeless (One Stop) were most appreciative of the men's clothing, socks, jackets, blankets, & backpacks. With the temporary housing during COVID ending, they were so grateful to receive these items.

Update as we go to press: Our 3rd Collection on August 27 netted 25 bags/boxes of food & hygiene products, 30 bags/boxes of clothing and 9 banker's boxes of books. Thank you again for our generosity!

Outreach & Benevolence Grants

Each year the church budgets resources to support local and global organizations that advocate for life-sustaining needs, empowerment of human dignity, or structural change to promote long-term social and economic justice. **Grant applications are now being accepted for 2021.** If you know of an organization whose mission falls within our criteria (or you would like more information) please download the application and overview from the following link: <https://www.churchofthefoothills-ventura.org/ministries> (under the Church Life tab).

Grant applications may also be obtained by emailing Denise Barr (dbarr49@sbcglobal.net) or Betsy Chess (newwester@sbcglobal.net).

All grant requests must be submitted by 11:00 a.m. on Friday, November 20, 2020 to be considered.

Past Outreach and Benevolence Grants recipients:

Above & Beyond "Ordinary" People	CASA of Ventura County
CLUE	Engineers without Borders
Family to Family	Food Share
Friends of Chimps	Future Leaders of America
Homeboys Industries	One Stop – Healthcare for Homeless
Peruvian Orphan Fund, Inc.	Project Understanding
RAIN	Salvation Army
Step up Ventura	Turning Point Foundation

COTF Food, Clothing and Used Book Drive

Many of you regularly contribute canned goods, non-perishable packaged foods, hygiene products and other items to Project Understandings' food pantry or gently used clothing to our homeless neighbors. We are now including collection of used books in support of Ventura libraries. Ventura Friends of the Library will be on hand to collect used books for resale or recycle. We are continuing a once-a-month "drop-off" day at the church for you to contribute. Here are the particulars:

- **WHEN: Thursday, September 24th from 9:00 am – Noon**
- **WHERE:** Church of the Foothills parking lot between the church office and sanctuary
- **HOW:** 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's a simple way to benefit those in need during these times. Thank you in advance for your generous contributions. Even if you don't have a donation, we encourage you to come on up to the church to wave to others from the safety of your car at these monthly drives.

- October's drive: Thursday, October 22nd from 9am to Noon
- November's drive: Thursday, November 19th from 9am to Noon

Neighbors in Need

****Special Offering:** coming Sunday, October 4th**

On Sunday, October 4th, you will be invited to give to one of the special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ – **Neighbors in Need (NIN)**. This program offers support to the Council of American Indian Ministry (CAIM) and a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts and direct service projects through grants. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Offerings can be sent to the church office at any time by check with **Neighbors in Need (or NIN)** written in the memo line or via the giving portal available on the church's website.

Please consider giving to this important program. We thank you in advance and appreciate your generosity.

Open and Affirming Discernment Committee Monthly Update

Hello church family,

For the next few months, the ONA team will be focusing on individual outreach with congregants as we continue our discussions of the open and affirming process with our church family. These discussions give us an opportunity to share the paths that led us each to Church of the Foothills as well as answer any questions you may have about the process. These meetings also give us an opportunity to get to know one another a little better and allow us to connect on a personal level, which is especially important during the disconnection we face during the pandemic. We are trying to reach out to most everyone in the church over the next few months. Are you interested in participating? You can reach out to any member of the ONA committee to move your name to the top of the list! Committee members are:

Margaret Seawell, Keri Prout, Jeff Klemme, Scott Marsi, Nyx Canchola, Craig Rhea, Lena Martinez, and myself.

The team is also busy working to put together additional seminars and educational opportunities for the church in the fall and winter timeframe. More to come in next month's Sower!

Are you interested in finding out more about the Open and Affirming process in the UCC church? You can find more resources at the following link:

https://www.ucc.org/lgbt_ona

Blessings,

Dave Crouch – ONA Chairman

As part of our monthly update, we will be providing facts on the ONA process as well as ways our own church has been involved in the LGBT community:

Did you know?

To be an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation, we must explicitly state and demonstrate that we welcome the participation of all people into the life of our church. We need to be clear that welcoming all people includes those with different sexual orientation and gender identities, that is gay men, lesbian women, bisexual people and those who are transgender.

Church of the Foothills behaves largely as an ONA church is expected to, but without declaring our intention to do so.

- We have called openly LGBTQ persons to serve as our pastors and interim ministers
- We have gladly welcomed LGBTQ persons into our church family as new members
- LGBTQ persons have chosen to be active in the life of our church, serving on many committees and boards.
- We have elected LGBTQ persons to serve in positions of leadership in our church, including the position of Moderator
- We have baptized the children of gay and lesbian couples
- We have performed weddings of same-sex couples

PROJECT PLAYGROUND UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER

For those of you who saw the video update on August 23rd you know that we had some exciting news to share. We also heard from some of our youth who shared why having a playground at church is important and how excited they are about it.

For those of you who missed it, I want to share the update with you now but I do suggest you also go to Facebook and watch the video so you can see what the kids had to say. Basically, there is great news about our playground project! First, let me give a little background about this project and where we started. When we came up with a final design back in 2019, we received a quote that included a grant of \$11,000 and the completed price was \$67,176.00.

Unfortunately, because we could not order in time, we lost the grant and the price. We knew that the equipment prices were expected to increase about 5%, but we also knew that grants could be available again in August 2020.

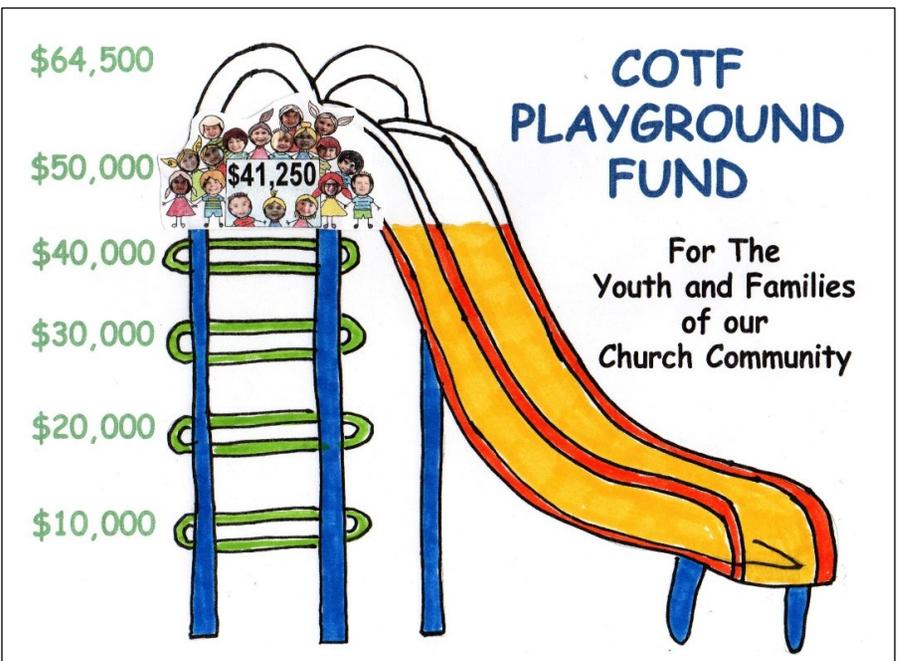
Well, here it is August 2020 and we have been raising funds for 6 months. I just received a new invoice for the playground and the good news is the equipment price did not increase as much as expected. The great news is the grant that we qualified for increased to \$15,000! This means the cost decreased to \$64,386.00, a savings of \$2,700.

We do, however, have some more money to raise, but we are well on our way. Between the church start-up money and donations received, we have \$41,250.00 towards our goal. That means we still need to raise a little more than \$23,000.00 to make this project a reality.

We do have a little problem. The equipment must be ordered by the end of October or we will lose that \$15,000 grant. So, we have a bit of a time crunch. For those of you who have been waiting to donate, or those of you have already given and might want to give a bit more, **NOW IS THE TIME**. Please send your checks to the church with "Playground" noted on the memo or you can also donate online by clicking the Donate Here button on the church website and designate: **Playground**.

Thank you so much for your support of this important project for the youth and families of our church.

Sharon Groeneveld,
Playground Committee Chair



COVID-19 UPDATES

Nancy Merrick

I recently read an article on how people acquire COVID-19 and was pleased to learn that scientists are closing in on understanding factors that greatly increase infection and by how much. But one fact stood out above all the others in my mind. *Outdoor activities* appear to be about 20 times *safer than indoor events* when it comes to COVID-19 transmission.

With that in mind, the C-19 Team and newly-formed Staying Connected Subcommittee are working to create safe outdoor events like walks, drive-through communion and other new offerings to keep us communing with one another. Church of the Foothills also continues to ensure services and events are accessible to those remaining safely quarantined at home.

I hope you'll contact us with your ideas and thoughts. Nothing about COVID-19 has been easy so far, but we will do our best to create some bright spots in this challenging time.

As noted above, we have now developed a Staying Connected Subcommittee of the COVID-19 Team. This group will be brainstorming ways for us to interact with each other moving forward. For example, here is a great idea that Karen MacConell is working on:

A casual gathering of walkers is being organized, possibly a biweekly afternoon get-together. We will stroll along an East Ventura path that overlooks the Santa Clara riverbed and is accessible to people of all ability levels. It is a nicely paved, tree-lined walking trail. We ask that all participants wear masks, walk at suggested 6' physical distances and follow all COVID-19 protocols to remain safe.

More details will be provided as they become available. If you are interested, please contact Karen MacConell at 805-585-8137 or the church office at 805-644-3036.

Photo Directory Update

We've all been eagerly awaiting the arrival of our new photo directories. Unfortunately, everything came to a standstill in March with the stay-at-home orders put in place across the country.

On July 13, we finally received a proof of our directory, which was corrected and returned to Lifetouch on the same day.

Normally, turn-around time from corrected proof to finished directory is 3-4 weeks. Because Lifetouch currently has a skeletal crew working on production at their facility in Arizona, they anticipate the current turnaround time to be 6-8 weeks.

With that in mind, we still expect to receive our beautiful new directories by mid-September, at which time we will determine the best way to distribute them to our church family.

Until then, thank you for your patience!