



Church of the Foothills MARCH 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 remains 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: Tues & Thurs, 9am to 12noon
6279 Foothill Road, Ventura, CA 93003
(805) 644-3036

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

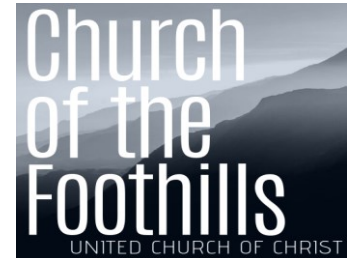
March 2021

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:

Fridays, March 5 & 19	Group Walks are back! 4pm <i>(see details on page 4)</i>
Saturday, March 6	Dining for Women International Women's Day, 10am <i>(see page 4)</i>
Sunday, March 7	Drive-Thru Communion, 1-2pm <i>(see page 2)</i>
Every Thursday	Zoom Choir, Back in Session, 7pm
Saturday, March 13	Daylight Savings <i>(at 2am Sunday; move clocks ahead 1 hour)</i>
Sunday, March 14	One Great Hour of Sharing <i>(see page 3)</i>
Wednesday, March 17	Happy St. Patrick's Day!
Thursday, March 18	Drop-off Food & Book Drive, 9am-Noon <i>(see page 3)</i>
Sunday, March 21	Congregational Meeting after church; ONA vote <i>(see page 5)</i>

We are all doing very well and are clearly moving in the right direction.
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.



**Happy
St. Patrick's
Day!**

Dear Church,

This month marks one year since the beginning of the pandemic. For twelve months we've been immersed in a different kind of reality – one where we carefully distance from one another and cover our faces as a means of keeping one another safe—as a means of loving our neighbors. The losses of this past year are great. Weddings, graduations, birthday parties, and so many more happy occasions had to be postponed or cancelled. We couldn't gather at the bedsides of the dying or joyfully kiss the faces of brand-new grandchildren. Over 500,000 lives lost to the virus and millions upended. The losses are great, and the grief is real. Grief anniversaries can sneak up on us. Sometimes our bodies remember, even if our minds don't make the connection. Maybe that's true for you this year.



While this year has been filled with grief, it has also been filled with the creativity and energy that's been required to learn to do things in new ways. Car parades to those in congregate living facilities, monthly donation drop-off events, virtual choir rehearsal, a virtual Christmas pageant, Zoom Sunday school, Zoom coffee hour, Zoom book club, Zoom everything. All reasons to be grateful.

I pray that faith has been a resource for you in these last twelve months. For the past month or so, I have been using a simple breath prayer using words adapted from Psalm 121 to center myself. I'd like to share that practice with you. As I breathe in, I silently say: "I lift my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?" And as I breathe out, I silently say: "My help comes from God, who made heaven and earth." Maybe this or a similar practice would be useful to you.

Though this has been a difficult year, I am filled with gratitude that we get to navigate these waters together. As we breathe in and out may we all know the love that sustains and empowers us today and always.

Blessings,
John Forrest

Remember in Prayer

Karina D'Arcy
Doris Keyes
Jan Osborne
Fred Widney

George White (Dan Widney's cousin)
Wallace Balcerzak (Judi's brother)

Ted Hostetler & family on the passing of Irene Hostetler

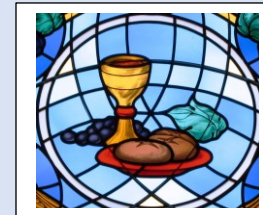
The loved ones of Ken Schmidt on his passing

Signe Smale & family on the passing of Bruce Smale

The loved ones of Barbara Rapko on her passing

Juergen Ohrt & family on the passing of Helga Ohrt

Great big welcome to Simone Eloise Bandy, 2nd child
born into family of Katie, Josh & Malia on February 1



Join us on **Sunday, March 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.



Our 3rd **Car Parade** to Senior Living Facilities in Ventura on Saturday, February 13th was again, a fine event.

We met at The Townehouse, then on to Aegis, Cypress Meadows & Cypress Point.

Gift bags were put together by several members, including colored pages by our children's group.

Thanks to all who participated!

(See sweet thank you note from Dixie Zimmer on page 8)

Purpose of Special Mission Offerings

United Church of Christ Special Mission Offerings (SMOs) exist to allow congregations and individuals to meet people at points of critical need in their lives. Though many options exist for direct, individual support of these needs, the SMOs allow a common witness and make a collective positive impact. Our church is a "5 for 5" church which indicates our support to UCC's Wider Mission and the four Special Mission Offerings – four areas where critical human needs exist. These offerings sponsor vital ministries that bring hope to people in the U.S. and around the world. The four areas where these critical human needs exist:

1. In places lacking health and educational resources and/or where disaster has struck;
2. Within systems of injustice which oppress daily life and opportunity;
3. In the lives of church leaders without sufficient resources to live with dignity;
4. In the nurture of youth and congregations just beginning their lives of faith.

These SMOs collectively serve to lift people closer to the abundance and wholeness to which our faith has called us to work together to bring about.

****Special Mission Offering: *One Great Hour of Sharing*, Sunday, March 14th ****

On Sunday, March 14th, you will be invited to give to one of the special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ - ***One Great Hour of Sharing***. This offering aids families around the world needing food, water, shelter, health care and comfort.

Offerings can be sent to the church office at any time by check with ***One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)*** written in the memo line or on the church's on-line giving portal available on the church's website.

Please consider giving to this important program. Your gifts join others to lift people out of poverty, restore their dignity and fight injustice. We thank you in advance for your generous heart toward those in need.

Outreach and Benevolence

Volunteer Opportunities at Food Share

In these trying pandemic times, let us join 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>
Mon	3/15/21	11:45am-3pm	California Works Drive-Thru Food Pantry
Wed	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.



Our Friday group walks are back!

Please continue to follow COVID protocol of masks and 6' distancing.

**Friday, March 5 &
Friday, March 19
at 4pm**

Same location:
Riverview Linear Park
1950 Montgomery Ave
Ventura 93004

The Silver Pantry

There is a new prepared food service that offers fresh meals for Ventura residents. Please see <https://www.thesilverpantry.com> and contact Laura Gulovsen at eandl157@twc.com, 805-642-6544 (home) or 805-320-5617 (cell) for any details.

"All our meals are low sodium, prepared locally, delivered fresh, and never frozen. No long-term contracts. There is a plan for everyone!"



Dining for Women

We invite all members to join the International Women's Day Zoom meeting, March 6, 10am
diningforwomen.org to register

For info, contact Linda Marsi
or Candace Reynolds

**March Grantees:
Women's Advocacy
Project
Zimbabwe**

**African People and
Wildlife
Tanzania**

On Sunday, March 21, following our worship service, our church will have a special meeting to determine whether we wish to formally become an Open and Affirming congregation.

This will consist of voting whether to adopt a new Welcoming Covenant. Final wording of the new covenant, as adopted by the Open and Affirming Committee, appears below. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

Church of the Foothills
Open and Affirming Covenant

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

As a community of faith that believes in and strives to live into these words, Church of the Foothills lovingly declares that we are an Open and Affirming congregation in which all people, including persons of every race, ethnic background, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, socio-economic background, marital status, and faith background are welcomed and embraced in the full life and work of our church.

We recognize that many people in these communities have often been the target of discrimination and judgment in the name of God, and we consciously choose to renounce said discrimination and judgment by embracing justice and welcoming all people into the full life and communion of our church. Furthermore, we affirm a faith that calls us all into radical kinship with one another and celebrates each individual as a beloved child of God.

We recognize that declaring Church of the Foothills to be Open and Affirming is not the final destination but the continuation of an ongoing journey to seek justice for all of God's children and to love our neighbor as ourselves, in accordance with the teachings of Christ Jesus.

Allyship Beyond the Binary

Expanding the inclusion and affirmation of people that may today be on society's margins takes intentional work on the part of communities of faith.

On February 13, Church of the Foothills held an educational event entitled Allyship Beyond the Binary, focused on improving our understanding of our transgender community, the issues that this community faces and ways in which we can better come into solidarity with our Trans neighbors.

The event included 30 or so of our congregation, several excellent workshops, and was offered by teaching duo, Jude Johnson (They/Them/Theirs), M.Div./CSR, Pacific School of Religion, Member in Discernment, United Church of Christ, and Rowan Queathem, Assistant Director of Inclusion at New England College in New Hampshire.

Our thanks to Pastor Douglas for arranging for this important opportunity!

COVID-19 TEAM UPDATE

March 2021 is here with a brighter outlook as several outdoor activities resume at church and our church family gets vaccinated. I was thinking about that last night as I left CVS with my prescription, when I noticed a man entering the store without a mask. I had to guess he had completed both doses of COVID19 vaccine and thought it was okay.

But here is why he likely was escorted back out of CVS – and more importantly, why all of us need to keep wearing masks and distancing, including when attending church activities. Simply put, we do not know if fully vaccinated people still pose a small risk of transmitting the virus to others, particularly those not yet immune. Experts also remind us that even fully vaccinated people still have some risk of acquiring COVID-19 if exposed (although current vaccines greatly reduce the risk of hospitalization or death). For both these reasons, those COVID precautions will continue awhile.

So:

- 1) Get vaccinated when you can! (And let us know if you need help getting signed up).
 - 2) Keep wearing your mask, washing hands frequently, and social distancing.
 - 3) Remember - limited gatherings outdoors are safer than indoors, especially compared to poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Herd immunity gets closer with every vaccination – and when it arrives, we will get back to normal. Thank you, church family, for hanging in there with us. We know “returning to normal” can’t happen soon enough!

-- Dr. Nancy Merrick, on behalf of the COVID-19- Team

2021 Grant Awards

Each year Church of the Foothills' Outreach & Benevolence Board selects social service organizations to receive grants. For 2021, the church budgeted \$10,000 for this purpose. The recipients will be:

CASA of Ventura County	\$ 500
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Dining for Women	\$ 500
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Family to Family	\$1,000
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Friends of Chimps	\$1,500
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Homeboy Industries	\$ 500
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Interface Children & Family Services	\$ 500
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Project Understanding	\$1,000
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Rain Communities, Inc	\$1,000
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Our Church's Wider Mission (UCC)	\$1,500
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Step Up Ventura	\$ 500
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Tender Life Maternity Home	\$ 500
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Turning Point Foundation	\$ 500
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Ventura Homeless Prevention Fund	\$ 500
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If you would like to learn more about the great work these organizations do, contact the church office or Scott Marsi. Or, use the links above to navigate to their websites and read more.

Regards,
Scott Marsi

COTF Food and Used Book Drive *(Please note – currently no clothing)*

Your Generosity Continues...


The Outreach and Benevolence Board extends many thanks once again to our church community for all the generous donations. On February 18th our monthly "Drive-thru" Food, Clothing and Book Collection at the COTF yielded **33 bags/boxes of food and hygiene products** for Project Understanding and **30 bags/boxes of clothing, shoes, socks and blankets** for the homeless served at the County's One Stop program. In addition, **6 boxes of used books** were collected to help support Friends of the Library.

The County's One Stop program has been fortunate to have many local houses of worship donate clothing and blankets to their homeless clients over the past 3 months. Because of this, they are running out of room for storage and request a short hiatus of donations for the next couple of months. Project Understanding always welcomes non-perishable food, hygiene products, diapers and pet food. There is still a great need there.

Our next monthly event will be **Thursday, March 18th from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.** At this event, we will only collect for Project Understanding and books for Friends of the Library. We will let you know when clothing donations for the homeless resume.

Thank you for all you do.

Dear Anngret:



american greetings

Yours for a better year ahead,
Grateful,

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