

Oakleaves

A note from Pastor Ben

In 2006, Dream Works Animation Studios released what is easily one of the best animated movies of the past twenty years: *Over the Hedge*. Unfortunately, the movie was criminally overlooked and underappreciated by those who fancy themselves connoisseurs of film. Rotten Tomatoes says that only 65% of (so called) "top movie reviewers" thought the film was any good. However, that just tells you that 35% of "top movie reviewers" are wrong. The movie was spectacular.

The most beloved character in *Over the Hedge* is a neurotic squirrel named Hammy. His hyperactivity isn't only a running joke throughout the movie, but is ultimately the way the central conflict in the movie is resolved. The other woodland animals give Hammy an energy drink turbo-charging his hyperactivity, enabling him to move faster than the speed of light, thus saving the day (told you it was great).

All that to say, recently, I feel a little like Hammy. I'm so excited about everything happening at our church and so eager to press forward with various thoughts, visions, and ideas, that I've been using a binder just to organize my thoughts. It's been an exercise in self-control to simply slow down and take things one step at a time. Still, here is a brief look at some of the things happening in the life of our church over the next few months:

- **PRAYER: Praying in Exile** – At our first six monthly prayer gatherings, we slowly worked our way through the Lord's Prayer. Now that we've finished this series, we will be starting a new series on May 20th called "Praying in Exile." At these gatherings, we will think together about what it looks like to live as faithful exiles in today's world, pray for the Lord's help, and pray for the world around us. I truly believe that this is one of the most important things we can give our time and attention to as a church. I hope you will be able to make it!
- **MISSIONS: Two New Missionaries!** – We're excited to share that we are in the process of bringing on two new missionaries! Both of these missionaries are indigenous African leaders who have long-standing personal relationships with members of our church and have been faithfully serving their mission field for decades. In the months to come, we will introduce you to both of these missionaries and share more about the exciting work they are doing.
- **FACILITIES: Coming Updates** - FBCO has a great building and beautiful grounds that have been faithfully maintained for decades. However, the elders and deacons have begun to consider what it would look like to begin chipping away at some needed updates to our facilities. We are excited for the way these updates will make our building feel like home both for our church family and visitors alike.
- **DISCIPLESHIP: Going Deeper** – As we move toward Summer, I'm excited to continue a tradition started under Gavin's leadership called "Going Deeper." These summer gatherings are an opportunity for the church family to share fun and food as well as a chance to learn and discuss matters of particular importance to our life and faith.

These are just a few of the things happening in the life of our church, however, it's important to remember that we do not do these things to earn God's love or gain his approval. Rather, we do them as an overflow of our devotion to the one our hearts adore. We are jealous for worship to abound to the one who is worthy of all honor, glory and praise. My prayer is that the work our church does would ultimately be to that end.

Soli Deo Gloria, Ben



Our memorial rose garden is in full bloom! Pictures don't do it justice, so come and sit awhile and enjoy the beauty of our campus.

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Upcoming Events

- Quarterly Meeting—Sunday, May 18 after morning service
- Prayer Gathering—Tuesday, May 20 at 6 PM
- Martha Starkweather Memorial—Saturday, June 21 at 11 AM

Youth and Family Ministry

Hello Church Family,

I can't believe that summer is almost upon us already! Got a lot of fun things planned for this summer for both youth and children. Starting with our youth, we have your typical outdoor activities such as beach days, hiking, and worship around a fire pit. The hope is through these events our students will be able to grow deeper in their relationships with each other as well as invite their friends that wouldn't come to a church event otherwise.

Over summer the youth will be going through the Book of Acts. I will be roughly halfway through it when summer officially starts. The title of the series is the "Acts of the Holy Spirit." The Book of Acts primarily looks at how the early church was started and how it spread throughout the known world. The reality is that it was all done through the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. Everything the apostles and disciples did in the Book of Acts is directly related to the Holy Spirit resting, leading, and transforming. Each study we will be seeing how the Holy Spirit is resting, leading and transforming. To give an example, looking at Acts 2, the Holy Spirit **rested** on each of Jesus' disciples. The Holy Spirit **led** the surrounding people to the disciples. The Holy Spirit **led** Peter to deliver the Gospel. Lastly the Holy Spirit pierced the heart of the listeners

which led to **transformation**. Part of our structure at youth group is asking the students if they had an opportunity to share their faith. It's pretty open ended; it could be with believers or unbelievers. The goal when we first started doing it was for the youth to be comfortable talking to others about what God is doing. Our hope after this series is that the youth see these opportunities to share their faith as the Holy Spirit influenced and empowered. The Holy Spirit is resting in them for they have given their lives to Christ. The Holy Spirit is leading people to them. The Holy Spirit will present our youth with opportunities to share about their faith and the person's response isn't indicative of their ability to share the Gospel, rather the Holy Spirit moving within them.

Children's Church is partnering with Redemption Church to put on a Vacation Bible School! The dates for that will be July 21-25. Last year the VBS theme was a spoof of Marvel's Avengers. We are doing a part two to that series. It is going to take a village to put on the VBS this summer so start praying now about volunteering your time to serve. To add incentive, I will be playing a character so you will not only have the pleasure of sharing the Gospel with children, but you will get to see me dressed up in a costume. On top of that, in the Children's Church they will be finishing up the Book of Acts and going through the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible). I am excited for what God is going to do in and for our youth and children this coming summer!

Pastor Jack Jellison



The kids getting ready for Palm Sunday



*Left: Cal Ruhl and his goodie bag
Above: Sweet friends Abi Garvin and Davie Ruhl*

Thank You from Winnie

♥♥ I FEEL THE LOVE ♥♥

I am SO BLESSED and THANKFUL for ALLLL the cards filled with prayers of healing and love. Your prayers worked! ♥ I'm getting better and stronger every day.

We have the most amazing and loving church family. When Pastor Chad left several years ago, I could have gone on to other churches that I was interested in, but because of this amazing, loving, church family I am a part of here at FBCO, I stayed right here with all of you. I couldn't abandon you all. I am so blessed and grateful to have a family like this, I can't thank you enough for loving and caring for me the way you all do.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart,

Winnie

P. S. Speaking of Pastor Chad, our Pastor search committee did a fine job filling his shoes by finding Pastor Ben! Those were some tough shoes to fill and I think you will all agree that Pastor Ben certainly has filled them. Thank you Pastor Ben and family, for moving to Ojai to share your love and kindness with us and to teach us His Word. God blessed us when he sent us the Ruhl family.



Winnie surrounded in LOVE!

Easter Egg-Splosion



FBCO partnered with Redemption to share the good news of Easter at Easter Egg-Splosion at Libbey Bowl and Park



Faith Garvin showing off her Easter egg haul

Some Thoughts on Prayer

From God's Little Devotional Book

"Men may spurn our appeals,
reject our message,
oppose our arguments,
despise our persons,
but they are helpless against our
prayers."

"To look around
is to be distressed.
To look within
is to be depressed.
To look up
is to be blessed."

"We can expect big trouble
when we try to answer
our own prayers!"

"If we could hear
Jesus praying for us
in the next room,
we would have no fear.
Yet distance makes
no difference.
He is praying for us."

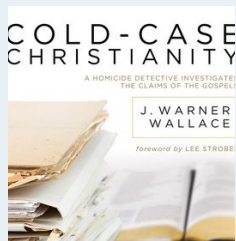
Submitted by Jan Worsham



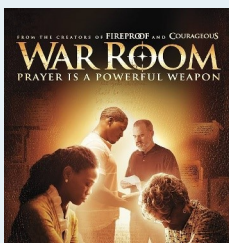
Beauty from our rose garden

Women's Book Club

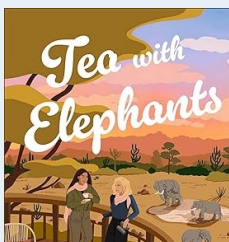
Our Women's Book Club is always open to new women who enjoy reading and fellowship! They meet on the second Saturday of each month (usually!) at 9:30 AM in Smith Hall. Here are the upcoming selections:



Cold-Case Christianity
by J. Warner Wallace
May 17



War Room by
Chris Fabry
June 14



Tea with Elephants by
Robin Jones Gunn
July 12

Women's Ministry

Greetings FBCO Family,

What a fast start to a new year! We've finished one Bible study already (*I Surrender All*) and are planning the next one.

After Easter we will begin a new study by Stephen Witmer (a good friend of Pastor Ben & Olivia). This study will be on the book of Jonah, entitled *Jonah: The Depths of Grace*.

This six week lesson will reveal the depths of God's grace, both to "outsiders" and to "insiders." It will show us God's compassion for the lost and His patience with His wayward people. This guide will help uncover the wonderful message of Jonah, and we will come face to face with the greatest evangelist of all - the Lord our God Himself.

Save the Date

Fast forward to September 12-13 and a women's conference in Santa Clarita, put on by LifeWay. Jen

Thank You from Megan & Cyndi

I want to thank you ladies for all the wonderful and thoughtful gifts for Baby Ember Willow Burris. I am so grateful to have so many love on our little family. Your love and support has been such a blessing during this life transition. Mitchell and I are so thankful to have such a wonderful church family.

With love,

Mitchell, Megan & Ember Burris



Baby Ember Willow Burris

FBCO Ladies, thank you for an amazing baby shower. Baby Ember Willow has her very own "First Alphabet Book" made by all you beautiful women – what a keepsake. This was so nostalgic for me. Megan's own baby shower was in Smith Hall and Pastor Skeels dedicated her after she was born [see picture on page 6 ❤️].

Thank you for blessing our family with so many beautiful and special gifts.

May God Richly Bless You All,

Cyndi Hassien

Wilkin, a familiar author to us women, will be presenting "In the Word" from Friday evening through Saturday noon. The cost is \$70.

Thank You

A special thank you to Jill Adams who continues to lead the Women's Book Club and selects amazing books to read.

Also a special thank you to Debbie Evans who faithfully continues to head the Prayer Chain for our congregation, and Stephanie Paige, who does our Card Ministry. Ladies, THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts for your dedication, time and energy you both put forth in these precious ministries! The congregation is blessed to have you both.

Lovingly,

Cyndi and Tina

Co-Chairs Women's Ministry

Worship Spotlight

Dear Church,

My daily practice for the last year or so is to start the day with a psalm and recently I've accompanied that with a devotion-al that I have chosen from the bunch that are available on the Bible app. One such devotional is labeled "Surfers Love the Psalms" and I couldn't help myself from doing it... even though I do not surf.

I grew up in San Diego so, like many of you in Ojai, the beach and the ocean were not strangers to me. I spent many after-
noons or evenings catching waves with my sponge board (or Boogie/Body Board) in the cool, salty water under a clear sky
as vast as the Pacific surrounding me. I often joked that I don't surf because I will leave the standing on water to Jesus —
comic gold, I know— but I have always loved watching surfing. Being in the water like them in a similar line up just
waiting...but waiting with purpose.

I've previously mentioned my affinity for the band Switchfoot and a large part of their personality is their San Diego surf
culture: they love to surf! And as I grew up with their music and lyrics I can't help but hear that ability to wait with purpose
within many of their tunes. That purpose to find that next wave while being held up on a tiny board compared to the vast
ocean swelling beneath you, with time to consider the nature found above that you can see, and below that you often can-
not as well as the heights that go on forever compared to the depths that seem to do the same. I have been hard pressed
to find a surfer that did not find their time in the line up to be a spiritual moment. I believe those moments are what
breathe life into Switchfoot's songs and what affected my life so much by asking real questions and, like most Psalms, land-
ing back at God:

Life and love and why

Child, adult, then die

All of your hoping and all of your searching for what?

Ask me for what am I living or what gives me strength that I'm willing to die for

Being in the line up, we are at the whim of something much larger. Something that if we choose to fight, may even kill us.
However, if we ride with the ebbs and flows, the dips and swells, the ocean can carry us back to shore so that we can ride
again... even if we wipe out.

Take away from me this monstrosity

'Cause my futile thinking's not gonna solve nothing tonight

Ask me for what am I living or what gives me strength that I'm willing to die for

Creation itself calls out God's glory. The vastness and beauty in nature show us much of who God is. Being truly held by
that nature is a great reminder of who it is that we worship. That not everything has to be in its perfect place in our own
eyes for God to be working or to even be present. We do not have to be in constant motion, but instead we can rest in that
vastness and ask all the questions.

Could it be true?

Can life be new?

Could it be all that I am is in You?

Could it be this?

Could it be bliss?

Can it be You?

Can it be You?

Agape,

Edward White



*Lyrics from "Life and Love and Why" by Switchfoot

Pictures

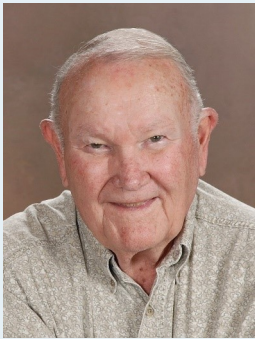


Pastor Ben at Libbey Bowl for the Ojai Valley inter-church Good Friday service



* * * * *
 * *Ember Willow Burrís* *
 * *Born March 16, 2025* *
 * *7 lbs. 2 oz.* *
 * *19.5 inches* *
 * * * * *

Lincoln Anderson



On March 29, our friend and longtime member of FBCO Linc Anderson went home to be with the Lord at the age of 94.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalm 116:15



Derek Swezey aka itamae teaching humble student Philip Woodall the art of making sushi

Throwback



FBCO Pastor Wilbur Skeels and the Hassien family at Megan's dedication. Where did the time go?

Birthdays

May

Lorrie Rutkowski	2	Jackson Reynolds	12
Matthew Adams	5	Jared Reynolds	12
Elijah Robison	6	Steve Hassien	15
Javai Garvin	10	Michael Hoover	17
Kaylie Turner	10	Stephen Rohweller	19
Faith Garvin	11	Bill Handley	24
Vesta Hunt	11	Jane Swezey	25
Misha Mathieu	12		

June

Paxton Queen	4	Coral Queen	24
Cami Abe	16	Hannah Hassien	26
Sherri Hoover	17	Barry Babcock	28
Sue Lakes	20	Jenny Owen	29

July

Susan Holland	1	Derek Swezey	15
Rod Owen	1	Ken Hartenstein	17
Kara Ralston	3	Brian Turner	20
Davie Ruhl	5	Jana Fletcher	22

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8

Anniversaries

May

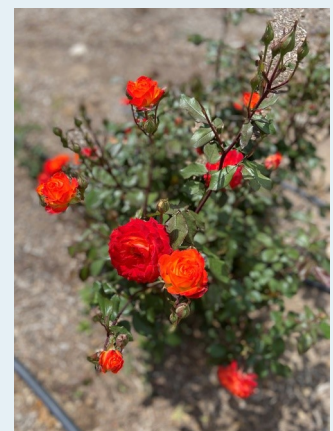
- 1 Darrel & Kara Ralston
- 2 Jim & Marcia Hall
- 14 Dave & Jackie Rohweller
- 18 Steve & Susan Holland

June

- 9 Jim & Linda Verkuil
- 10 Philip & Deborah Woodall
- 11 Joe & Debbie Evans
- 20 Derek & Jane Swezey
- 21 Matt & Jan Sommer
- 29 Brian & Sarah Turner
- 30 Jim & Jo Jacobsen

July

- 25 Ben & Olivia Ruhl
- 30 Harry & Vesta Hunt



More blooms from our campus

First Baptist Church of
Ojai

Office Hours:

Tuesday—Friday: 9 AM to 1 PM

Phone: 805-633-9055

Email: office@fbcojai.org

Financial Update

Average monthly offering needed to meet budget: \$26,250

YTD as of March 31, 2025:

Actual Giving: **\$85,306**

Actual Expenses: **\$75,546**

Budgeted Giving: **\$78,750**

Budgeted Expenses: **\$78,897**

GIVING BREAKDOWN for our MISSIONS 2025:

Philip and Corenne Smith: \$2,780

Dan and Sarah Chetti: \$2,780

E&K Northwest Africa: \$2,780

ABCO FLASH: \$2,225

Short-term Missions: \$7,560

Life Choices: \$1,080

Good News Club: \$750

Topa Topa School: \$1,080

Operation Christmas Child: \$100

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

