

# Oakleaves

A note from Pastor Ben

George Herbert was a 17th-century clergyman in the church of England who, in his free time, liked to fiddle with poetry. Shortly before his death, Herbert sent his life's work to a close friend inviting him to either publish his poems, if he believed they were of any value, or else to burn them. Thankfully, Herbert's poetry was saved from the ash heap and has gone down as one of the great triumphs in the history of poetry. Today, many still regard Herbert as "arguably the most skillful and important British devotional lyricist of his or any other time."

One of Herbert's best known poems is a reflection on the power and privilege of prayer: **Prayer (I)**

*Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth  
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;  
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,  
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,  
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,  
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
The land of spices; something understood.*

As I read these reflections, I come away with a renewed sense of the power and privilege of prayer, but also with a nagging question: How would the modern church look different if we truly believed in the power of prayer? I think we would spend less time talking strategy and more time on our knees. Our prayer meetings would be as well attended as our potlucks. We would stop groaning about the state of the culture and, instead, bring our complaints before the Lord in lament. We would gather for prayer regularly and expectantly, excited to commune with our king and to see how he will work.

We have a God who hears our prayers and uses our prayers to accomplish his purposes! If this is true, it logically follows that a church that regularly commits to gathered prayer will see the Lord work powerfully in, through, and around their community. Let's seek to become a church that believes in the power of prayer, and acts like it!

Starting in November, FBCO will begin gathering for prayer on the third Tuesday of each month, from 6-7pm. These gatherings will be an opportunity for our church family to labor together on our knees as we seek the Lord's leading and plead for him to move. I'm excited to see how the Lord will work through our prayers.

Mark your calendars to join us for our first prayer gathering on Tuesday, November 19, from 6:00-7:00pm.

With love, **Ben**



*Praying over our new pastor at the installation service! The Ruhl family arrived at the tail end of July, and have fast become an integral part of the FBC Ojai family. We are so blessed to have them here! ❤️*

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## Mark Your Calendars

Prayer Gathering—Third Tuesday of each month—November 19, 6-7 PM

## Youth and Family Ministry

Hello Church Family,

I want to open by thanking you all so much for all your help making our Trunk or Treat a smashing success! It couldn't have happened without you all, so thank you.

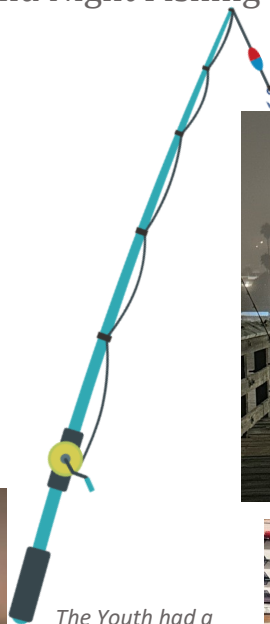
This winter we have a lot of fun things planned for our Youth and Children's Ministry. Starting with youth, we have an all day youth conference called Turn Your Campus (TYC). The focus of the TYC conference is to encourage and empower youth to share the gospel. The recognition is that youth spend most of their time at school, so that is their mission field. We want to equip and encourage our youth to be able to share the good news of the gospel with others. The goal for this conference is that our youth will come away with practical tools of how to be the light in the darkness on their campus. We as a youth group are able to go to events like this because of the recycling you all donate. So from the bottom of our hearts,

we thank you for your contribution. This winter our youth group will be going through a sermon series titled "Dear Theophilus." Theophilus is to whom the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts was written. Theophilus translates to "Loved by God." The hope is that the youth understand that even though this Gospel letter was written to a very specific people, it is written to anyone who is loved by God.

Now onto the Children's Ministry. This winter we will pause AWANA over the Christmas and New Year season. We figured it would be a good pause point to give our volunteers a break as well as give an opportunity for children who have come of age after the original start date to join! So be on the lookout for the sign up for children as well as to volunteer. This past run we had over 50 kids and we would always love to have more. But to have more children, we will need more volunteers so please be praying about possibly serving. **-Jack Jellison**



*The Ojai Police Department doing their job checking up on "suspicious" activity at the church. 😊*



*The Youth had a great time night-fishing from the Ventura Pier and spending the night "locked in" on the church campus.*



## Ojai Valley Family Shelter

Tis the Season Church Family,

Shelter Season is just around the corner. We will be taking sign-ups in November for dinner for our shelter guests. Shelter will continue to be held at the Grange in Ojai (381 Cruzero St) from December 1 - March 31.

For our new FBCO family, here is a little info on the Ojai Valley Family Shelter. Beginning in December and for four months, the Ojai community provides for the homeless a safe, restful, and clean environment in which to spend the night. A light breakfast, sack lunch, and dinner are provided.

A BIG thank you to all who have prepared meals in the previous years. Let's represent FBCO well again this year!

Thank You For Your Support,

**Steve & Cyndi Hassien**

Shelter Coordinators



Mark Your calendar



## Thank You from the Nordykes

Dear FBCO Family and Friends,

Thank you so much for the many years of love and friendship that we have developed and felt over the years. There are not enough words to express how Mike and I feel. Thank you so much for Jack and the teens for helping load the pod. Thank you for David, Max, Austin, Todd, Jack and Lincoln for all the muscles that went into lifting heavy items. Thanks for those who also came to load the truck. Boy! That was a job. Thank you so much for the women – Deborah W., Tina, Jan S., Annette, and I know that I am missing some for helping pack the house and garage. We really miss all of you. Sitting in our familiar places on Sunday morning, popping in to say “hi” to Jack and Tina, hearing Cyndi Hassien saying “Hello, Chica” ....all of our church family in Ojai. God has truly blessed our family and even in Idaho. We are loving it here. May God truly bless each and every one. Keep spreading God’s Word! Our door is always open to those would like to visit.

Love,

**Mike, Retha,**

**& Nick**

The Nordyke’s new address:  
8194 E. Caspian Drive  
Nampa, ID 83687



### Deck the Halls

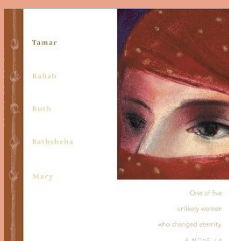
Everyone is invited to come together as a church family to decorate our sanctuary and foyer Christmas trees on Saturday, November 30, at 2 PM. We will have music, coffee, hot cocoa, and cookies as we welcome in the Christmas season. Join us for a festive, fun time!



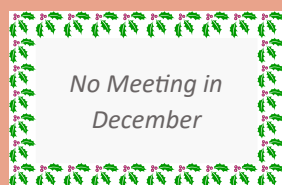
*We miss you, Nordykes!*



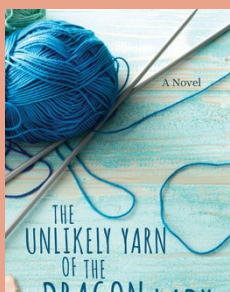
## Book Club Selections



*Unveiled: Tamar* by  
Francine Rivers—  
November 9  
10:30 AM



*No Meeting in  
December*



*The Unlikely Yarn of  
the Dragon Lady* by  
Sharon J. Mondragon -  
January 11, 9:30 AM



## Women's Ministry

Greetings FBCO family,

Wow, time sure flies when you're having fun! We are enjoying our Bible study 'In His Image,' exploring ten characteristics of who God is. Sadly, our study will end November 13, and we will not start another study until next year. I wanted to give a shout out to David and Max Abe for providing childcare during our Bible studies. They have been great with the kiddos. We do have a Women's Christmas Party scheduled for Sunday, December 8, at noon at the home of Kara Ralston. The luncheon will be catered and there will be a minimal fee. Please bring a dessert to share. Also, ladies 'tis the season' to dress in your prettiest Christmas attire!

On September 20-21, we were blessed to have a small group of women who were able to attend a women's conference (Extraordinary Women/Faith Tour) at Calvary Chapel Westlake. Many wonderful speakers were present to share their testimonies and encourage us in our journey of faith. We had a wonderful time worshipping God

together and were given beautiful scriptures to meditate on. One in particular touched my heart:

2 Corinthians 2:14-15

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

Our next Bible study will start in January and we will be studying Priscilla Shirer's new book *I Surrender All*. On your Christmas break, please pick up one of the wonderful books the book club has read. I heard they are wonderful! Thank you Jill Adams for leading the book club and doing a great job.

**SAVE THE DATE:** We will be having a baby shower for Megan Burris on Saturday, January 18, 2025, for brunch from 11am - 1pm in Smith Hall.

May the Lord richly bless you this holiday season!

**Cyndi Hassien & Tina Abe**



*It's always time for cake! Women's Bible study celebrating Char Hartenstein and Olivia Ruhl's birthdays*



*In September, nine women from FBC Ojai attended the Extraordinary Women's Conference in Westlake Village.*

## Thoughts from Karly

As some of you know, I am a writer, and have published a handful of pieces in recent years in various small publications. Some of you may even follow my writing online (if you do so, thanks and also, I'm sorry).



What you might not know is this past year, I submitted a book proposal to a handful of agents, one of whom, has worked on some of the most popular titles in the last decade (I cannot name names, but I guarantee you or a formerly teenage girl in your life has heard of a certain vampire novel she worked on). I was amazed and, frankly, taken aback, when this agent not only liked the sample I sent, but requested a full manuscript. I waited anxiously for a month or so, wondering if the agent was reading it, wondering if they liked it, wondering where they were in the story I had labored over off and on for the better part of a decade.

When I got the response, I tried to prepare myself for the most likely outcome, but still, the rejection was crushing. To have been dismissed out of hand, I told myself, would have been one thing, but to have my story in an agent's hands—not unlike putting a small, vulnerable part of yourself in the hands of your high school crush—only to have it rejected, was almost too much.

I told myself it was an honor to even make it that far, but deep down, I didn't believe it. While I continued posting writing online, my creativity suddenly ground to a halt. I lost confidence in what I had to offer, and what I could do with it.

I threw myself into parenting full time, trying my best to be, if not World's Best Mom, then at least World's Okayest Mom. But, too often, I'd come to the end of the day exhausted, discouraged, and frustrated with my failings, and how little I felt like I had to offer the world (that is not to say that being a full time parent is not a good and valuable job and for some people that is their one and only true calling, which is noble in and of itself). But deep down, I was scared of putting my work out there again. Like a teenage girl who has been rejected by too many would-be lovers, I felt like I was just going to box up my heart. I started looking into new career paths for myself, and quietly prayed that God would "call" me to something else.

In this Oakleaves, my husband is writing about the Parable of the Sower. For me, it's the Parable of the Talents. You're likely familiar with the story; a rich man leaves various amounts of money with several servants, with the expectation that they will make something of what they've been given. Two do just that, while one, fearful, buries his talent in the ground, and is cursed for it. Isn't it interesting that that's the term for the currency? It's certainly no coincidence, as it never is for any of the stories Jesus relays.

You can, of course, bury your talent in the ground. Maybe you don't play music anymore because your career never went anywhere, or don't cook because you live alone, or don't volunteer your time because you feel under-appreciated. Maybe you just decided that, because you couldn't make a living on it, it wasn't worth spending time on.

But I don't believe that. Deep down, I think we all have a talent—maybe you make a great ambrosia salad, maybe you're a wonderful listener, maybe you, like me, have a novel or two inside you trying to fight its way out. And look, I wish I could say we will all be blessed to quit our day jobs and dedicate ourselves to this pursuit full-time, and make heaps of worldly riches in the process. But most of us will only have what we have, and the choice, before us, to try to multiply it, or bury it in the ground.

I wish I could end this with a hopeful note about how I'm now a New York Times Bestseller, but that's simply not true, and in all likelihood, never will be. But I'm writing again, because God, quite literally, sat me down and told me that this was a part of me, and he doesn't want me to see it buried. I don't know where it will take me, but I am sharing it in my own way, and maybe for now, that's enough. Every time I feel like giving up, at least one person will approach me to say how my words meant something to them, and that too, is multiplication.

May you find yours again, and multiply it tenfold.

-Karly White

## Worship Spotlight

Dear Church,

My family and I just returned from Tokyo, Japan, a place that I have visited three times by myself, but with the kids... Well, what an adventure! In my studies at Talbot, I have been asked to go deeper into some of the habits and tendencies that make up my personality and view them in relation to my faith in our God. The questions that I have asked myself have been both insightful and fun to explore. One of these questions had to do with why I have visited Japan so many times when there are other places in the world I want to visit and have not yet. During the week of my trip, one of my classes was focused on the Parable of the Sower, so I was reading many theologians musings on the passage in Matthew 13:1-23 during my visit. I think that my personal discoveries line up well with my discoveries within this passage.

Even though most of you are not agriculturalists, you probably understand the importance of good soil for growing things. As I read through my homework, I connected the parable to the people in my life here and those that I encountered in my trips to Japan. From my experience, I can compare many Japanese people to the soil described as weedy or rocky soil - similar to our SoCal soil - in contrast to the American people, where many could be described as hardened soils both in and out of church. My understanding is that Japanese culture seems to be, in general, a culture receptive to the Word, but this is a manifestation of being almost too receptive to anything and everything. On the other hand, they are also a country where many people express anxiety about the cultural expectations of purpose and their historical relation to the concept of Bushido.

In thinking more on the parable, I asked myself "Who takes care of the soil? Is it the individuals' responsibility to be ready for the seed? The Spirit's? God's people?" The Sunday afternoon service we attended in Tokyo was all in Japanese (with English translation), has an all-Japanese music team, and is a mixed congregation (we met a Rwandan medical student and our kids played with Afghan, American, and Japanese children). Part of the message was about not letting language barriers stop preaching the Gospel - which was a wonderful reminder that it's not our work that spreads the Word, but the Lord's and, again, led me to thinking about who is responsible for the care of the soil. I see a church of God's people longing to bring the Kingdom of God to the here and now as the caretakers of the soil.

After service, Karly and I reflected on the refreshing nature of a church that is trusting God for its viability in a culture not hardened to their existence, but not fully embracing it. Where weeds are growing steadily and fallow ground abounds. Our culture, generally hardened to the Word, presents a different set of hurdles to tending the soil. But the reminder that God will sow seeds through us should encourage us to break through the barriers to caring for the waiting soil.

**Agape— Edward White**





# Care Ministry

## Fall 2024 Care Ministry

What a privilege it is to serve as Deaconess of Care Ministry at FBCO. Many hands make the work light and for that I am extremely grateful. I encourage you, if you are not actively serving our church body, please contact our church staff and ask what areas your gifts can be put to use. I know you will be blessed beyond measure. 😊

For those who may not know, Care Ministry encompasses the following:

**SUNDAY GREETERS:** Susan and Steve Holland have graciously agreed to greet every Sunday with Sharon Markley assisting as needed.

**CARD MINISTRY:** Our sweet Stephanie Paige sends out greeting cards for birthdays, anniversaries and encouragement. Thank you Stephanie for the encouragement and care you send out via US Mail.

**MEAL TRAIN:** Coordinate an online meal train calendar and/or volunteering to make and take a meal to someone. Please contact Tina Abe in the office or me if you would like meals provided to you and your family.

**PRAYER CHAIN:** Debbie Evans is our wonderful prayer warrior along with many who have signed up and are committed to pray for others as the need and opportunity arises.

**HOME:** Help Our Moms Endure ~ This ministry is near and dear to my heart. We have "seasoned" moms and wonderful mom-like volunteers that are willing and able to help our young moms with childcare, errands and household tasks.

Tina Abe~ Childcare, Household chores

Jena Harris~ Household chores, errands

Sue Lakes~ Household chores, errands

Flo White~ Childcare, household chores, errands

Debra Woodall~ Childcare, household chores, errands

Please feel free to reach out to our helper moms directly.

It was wonderful to serve the Scotts this past summer. This gave Krystal the opportunity to participate in a Mommy and me gymnastics class with Olive. What a blessing to be used by God in this way. Daddy Rick got to join in a few times as well and I had so much fun hanging out with Job during this time.

Please reach out to me if you have a need or would like to serve in any of the above areas. [flowhite1@gmail.com](mailto:flowhite1@gmail.com) or (805) 701-4397

I Peter 4:10 (NAS): As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Joyfully in His service,

**Flo White**



*Flo White and Job Scott*



*Mommy and Daddy  
Gymnastics with Olive*





*The Woodalls with their shark trunk*

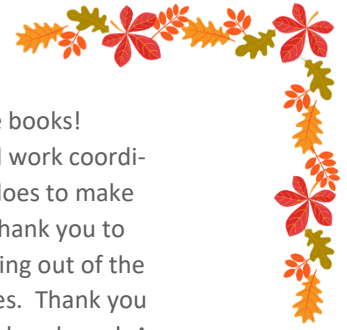


*The Turners decorated to the max!*



*Sharon Markley and Pastor Ben at her "ribbeting" trunk*

## Trunk or Treat



Another successful Trunk or Treat is in the books! Thank you to Pastor Jack for all of his hard work coordinating volunteers, decorating, and all he does to make sure the event goes off without a hitch. Thank you to Steve Hassien for keeping the hot dogs flying out of the kitchen and tending to the concession sales. Thank you to those who brought candy. We had an abundance! A big thank you to all who showed up with their trunks decorated, ready to interact with all the parents and kids who made their way onto our campus this year. May the Lord sow seeds this year in our community.



*Jack's dad Jon joining in the fun*



*Annette Lathrop spreading some Sunshine*



*The Hartensteins "Bee-long" to Jesus!*



*The Swezeys with some racecar antics*





*The Ruhls brought their stomp rocket*



*A medieval fall wonderland  
with the Burrises*



*Jack's mom Suzanne with  
her vintage bug*



*Ahoy! The Scott family pirates*



*The Reynoldses with their  
amazing ping pong fun*



*Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg in  
the house! Better known as Karly  
and Edward White... ☺*



*The Babcocks never disappoint—  
Jurassic Park AND a pirate!*



*Above and Below: The Abe family  
crazy bat and "I Spy..."*



*Jack's sister Bridget was  
our autumn fairy*



## Pictures



*Alan and Flo White celebrated their Golden Anniversary at the end of August*



Jan Worsham organized a garage sale in October to benefit Mark Ministries. Mark Ministries runs the grief support group here at FBC Ojai. With the help of many, she raised \$811.51 for the ministry!

**Top Right:** Just a part of the wares for sale

**Middle Right:** Jan and Sue Lakes enjoying the cool of the morning

**Bottom Right:** Sue and Jan Sommer at the check out stand



*Cal Ruhl preparing for Halloween*



*Even Pastor Ben's bicycle joined in the fun at Trunk or Treat*



## Birthdays

### November

Mary Larkin	1	Justin Rohweller	8
David Rohweller	4	Gabe Garvin	10
Brianna Turner	4	Mary Babcock	12
Jackie Rohweller	7	Ruth Granger	14
Joel Griffin	8	Sharon Markley	20

### December

Noelle Abe	6	Elmer Ellis	27
Jim Kresge	7	Linda Verkuil	28
Edward White	25	Lincoln Robison	30
		Samantha Showers	30

### January

Jack Jellison	5	Philip Woodall	16
Darrell Ralston	5	Abi Garvin	17
Todd Robison	7	Don Adams	19
McKenna Turner	9	Megan Hassien	19
Selah Queen	1	Philippe Mathieu	19
Bonnie Griffin	15	Larry McMillan	21

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*"For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life." Proverbs 9:11*

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## Anniversaries

### November

Barry & Mary Babcock	12
Edward & Karly White	16

### December

Steve & Cyndi Hassien	10
Alan & Jana Fletcher	16
Michael & Sherri Hoover	20



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First Baptist Church of  
Ojai

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Office Hours:

Tuesday—Friday: 9 AM to 1 PM

Phone: 805-633-9055

Email: [office@fbcojai.org](mailto:office@fbcojai.org)

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## Financial Update

Average monthly offering needed to meet budget: \$24,954

YTD as of September 30, 2024:

Actual Giving: **\$233,835**

Actual Expenses: **\$195,774**

Budgeted Giving,: **\$224,587**

Budgeted Expenses: **\$270,049**

GIVING BREAKDOWN for our MISSIONS 2024:

Philip and Corenne Smith: \$2,780

Dan and Sarah Chetti: \$2,780

Wes and Penny Chappell: \$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

First Baptist Church of Ojai

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Ojai, CA 93023

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Website: [fbcojai.org](http://fbcojai.org)  
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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

