

Oakleaves

A note from Pastor Ben

Dear Church family,

In the coming weeks, we will be introducing a small but significant change to our time of gathered worship. Instead of gathering our offering by passing a plate during the service, we will ask our members and regular attenders who give on Sunday mornings to place their offerings in a giving box at the back of the room. While this may seem like a minor change, I believe that it gives our church an ideal opportunity to make our Sunday worship services more accessible, focused, and secure. In this letter I hope to share 1) three reasons why we believe it's time to make this transition, 2) how this will affect the order and flow of our worship service, and 3) how this will affect the usher position in our church.

3 Reasons We're Making This Change

1) Removing pressure from first-time visitors. Recently, an unchurched friend of mine attended our service for the first time. He'd only been in a church a handful of times in his life and was visibly nervous walking through the doors. When the offering plate came down his aisle, I watched him frantically search his pockets for something to put in the plate. Since our aim is to gather offerings from members and regular attenders, let's do so in a way that doesn't create unnecessary pressure on those visiting our church for the first time.

2) Aligning with current church practices. The offering plate was once the standard method across nearly all church traditions. However, today, some sources estimate that as many as 90% of churches no longer use this approach. While popularity alone isn't a reason to change, continuing this practice does make our services feel somewhat outdated. Since there is nothing sacred about passing a plate, and other valid methods of gathering the offering exist, we believe this is a worthwhile trend to follow.

3) Reflecting how our congregation already gives. Many in our church have already transitioned to online giving. Each time someone moves to digital giving, there's one fewer person contributing to the plate. At this point, so many give online that our offering plate often looks sparse by the time it gets to the back of the room. It's unfortunate that a church like ours—so faithful and consistent in giving—might appear to casual observers as if we're keeping our offerings to ourselves.

For these reasons, we believe that transitioning from passing a plate to putting an offering box in the back of the room better serves both our members and our guests while more accurately reflecting the generosity of our congregation.

How This Change Will Affect the Order of Service

While this is a rather minor change, we feel that simply removing the offertory and leaving the rest of our service as is would leave the first half of our service feeling slightly strange. Therefore, we'd like to implement a slightly altered order of service. Here is the new order of service and the rationale behind it:

- **Greeting & Announcements** – At the beginning of the service, the call to worship leader will welcome everyone with a warm greeting. This is the same as before.
- **Announcements** – Then, rather than moving directly into worship, the call to worship leader will transition directly into the announcements. This will feel a little different; however, we feel that moving this to the beginning will better serve the flow of the service. This will allow us to handle practical details of church business at the beginning of the service before shifting our attention to the Lord with the call to worship.
- **Call to Worship** – With the welcome and announcements done, the call to worship leader will then help lead our church to turn our focus upon the Lord. In other words, this will literally be a "call to worship." The leader will help us do this through scripture and prayer as they do now. **("A note" continued p. 5)**



A beautiful night for Trunk or Treat!



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Upcoming Events

- **Congregational Meeting**— Sunday, December 14 after the morning service
- See more holiday events page 7

Youth and Family Ministry

Hello Church!

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.

Looking forward, our youth group is going to Camp Pondo once again for winter camp. A few things that I adore about Camp Pondo is the size of the camp. I have been to many different camps over the years and Pondo is perfect because it has many activities for the youth to do but it is all localized to the middle of the camp. It's perfect because no matter what activity you choose to do, we as a youth group are all near each other. Camp this year is going to cost \$300 per student. We are planning on doing different fundraiser events such as the pancake breakfast we have done in the past. Be on the lookout for those events because our goal is to make sure every student who wants to attend camp can. This winter our youth group will be roughly half way through our year-long series, Cover

to Cover—focusing on the overarching theme of the Bible: Perfection, Rebellion, Restoration, Sanctification, Perfection. This winter we will be looking at the apex of the Bible, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Now to Children's Ministry! I am super excited to share that we are doing another two Kids' Night Events! They will be November 15 and December 13. We will be partnering with Redemption Church again. They will be hosted on our campus. The first one we hosted was super successful. Kids had a grand time as we look forward to being able to bless parents with a night off and kids with an event that is packed full of games, crafts, and fun. Also starting this winter is AWANA. We will be starting that in January. Be on the look out for the official start date as well as the sign up. We will have both of those by the November Kids' Night Event.

-Pastor Jack

Ojai Valley Family Shelter

Shelter Season is just around the corner. We will be taking sign-ups in November to provide dinner for our shelter guests. It will continue to be held at the Grange in Ojai (381 Cruzero St) from December 1 - March 31. FBCO provides a meal the 3rd and 5th Saturday of the month. If you would like to help this important ministry, please reach out to Michelle Reynolds (805) 223-3384.



A huge thank you to Pastor Jack, Pastor Ben, Steve Hassien, Darrell Ralston, and Chad Wolsky for taking down our old play structure. We won't use the word "death trap"...

August Baptisms

We had such a joyful time in August to celebrate three baptisms: Davie Ruhl, Jennifer Geiter, and Edward White. What a precious time to witness this beautiful sacrament as a family.



Davie Ruhl with her dad, Pastor Ben



Jennifer Geiter after a wonderful testimony!



Baptized!



Edward White, our fearless worship leader

Below: A cloud of witnesses ❤️



Good News Club

GOOD NEWS CLUB is starting at Topa Topa Elementary School every Thursday at 2:30-4:00 in room 17. This Bible Study for kids (by specially trained Christians) helps kids know that God wants to be their friend and Jesus came to forgive sins so we can have everlasting life with Him. Your child will also benefit by learning Bible principles, moral values, character qualities and respect for authority. Join us in being Christians who are concerned for the spiritual well-being of children.

Any questions call Laura Masonheimer 805-402-2799

-Laura Masonheimer

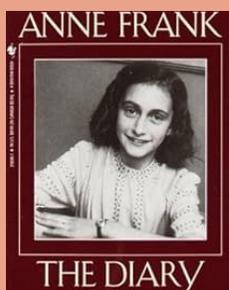


Women's Book Club

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:



The Hiding Place by
Corrie Ten Boom—
November 8
10:30 AM



The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank -
January 10,
9:30 AM

Women's Ministry

Greetings Body of Christ,

This past August we put together a quick but special baby shower for Katie and Jack Brewer. The summer caught up with us way too fast, however, we had a lovely luncheon for the Brewers at Ojai Pizza following Sunday service on August 24th. Approximately 20+ women attended and we showered Katie with precious baby gifts. We are so grateful to welcome the Brewers to our FBCO family, especially baby Liam!

This past September (12-13) our FBCO ladies attended a local conference in Santa Clarita, at Grace Baptist Church. Author Jen Wilkin was the guest speaker and spoke on "Wisdom": What is Godly wisdom (Psalm 111: 10, Proverbs 4, 9:10), what area in our life do we need wisdom (James 1:5), and how is wisdom acquired (James 3:13-18). It was a wonderful time spent in God's word and with our FBCO women!

The women's fall Bible study is almost completed and what a wonderful study it's been. Lisa Harper encouraged us to live "A Jesus Shaped Life." This seven-week study has taught us how biblically sound theology deepens our relationship with God and each other. We have explored the depths of God's character, His love for us, and how our relationship with Him should transform us. Lisa's video sessions are encouraging,



Katie Brewer ready to open gifts at Ojai Pizza

and personal. She emphasizes that theology is not some academic subject only pursued by professors and seminarians, but it's a way to connect to our Redeemer. What a fantastic study this has been!

Ladies don't forget we have our Annual Christmas party, date to be determined.

A huge thank you to Jill Adams who continues to lead our Women's Book Club. New ladies are always welcome! Please view the new selection of books on the left and join them one Saturday a month for a great discussion.

There are also going to be some exciting opportunities to serve in the coming months - Operation Christmas Child, the Ojai Valley Family Shelter, etc. - so make sure you watch out for announcements and sign-ups.

Finally, let's make a special effort to welcome the new women in our congregation. We have been blessed with new friends over the last several months, and we want FBCO to feel like home for everyone.

A special thank you to Olivia Ruhl for stepping in and carry some of the load leading Bible studies. Ladies...what a gem we have in our midst!!

Have a blessed Holiday Season.

Lovingly, **Cyndi & Tina**



The ladies were "In the Word" in September at the Jen Wilkin event

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- **Worship in Song** – As the call to worship leader prays, the band will silently make their way to the front and will lead us in three songs. At the end of the third song, Ed will invite people to greet one another and release the kids to children's church.
- **Greeting Time** – The greeting time will look the same as it does now.
- **Pastoral Prayer** – After the greeting time, Ben will call people back to their seats and lead the congregation in a pastoral prayer. As the prayer comes to an end, Ben will transition straight into his sermon. We believe that a time of extended prayer right before the sermon will actually serve to prepare our hearts for the preached word. The rest of the service after the sermon will then look the same as it currently does.

It's worth noticing that this new flow to the service doesn't only help our church better stay in a posture of worship but actually will significantly streamline the service, requiring the call to worship leader, the band, and Ben to only go up to the front and back once, rather than twice each.

How This Change Will Affect the Role of Usher

With the offertory removed from our service, you might wonder what this means for our ushers. While no longer gathering offerings, we have reworked the usher position to handle some other important needs we have on Sunday mornings.

1. **Security:** The usher will be responsible to offer some simple security for the church on a Sunday morning. While many churches have robust security teams, the usher will simply escort the kids back and forth to their classrooms, check that all doors not in use are locked, carry a walkie talkie that connects to the kids' rooms, and sit in the foyer during the sermon.
2. **Welcome:** While the usher will keep his eye out for new people for security reasons, this will also position him well to offer visitors a warm welcome and make them feel at home.
3. **Attendance:** The usher will be responsible to take a basic head count each Sunday. He will count the kids and teachers as he escorts them over to their classrooms and count the adults once he returns to the sanctuary.
4. **Communication:** The usher will be responsible to be in communication with children's church teachers and helpers. This means sitting in the foyer during the service with the walkie talkie, ready to help with any needs in the other building. This might be anything from getting in touch with a parent to helping with a security concern.
5. **Handle Offering:** Though the usher will not be responsible to pass the plate, we still need two people each week to take the offerings and put them in the church safe. The usher will be responsible to find one other member to help move the money after the service is over.

In short, I think this is an exciting opportunity for our church to address some important needs we have on Sunday mornings. We believe these changes will incrementally help our worship services be more accessible for visitors, as well as more streamlined, focused, and secure.

With love,

Ben



We love our Pastors! Culminated Pastor Appreciation month with a delicious cake. Pastor Ben on the left and Pastor Jack on the right. We missed you, Ed!



Worship Spotlight



Dear Church,

Like God's chosen people were asked to remember holy days, we, too, are asked to remember. Many of their ancient practices have gone by the wayside as we look to Christ as the fulfillment of those remembrances, but the practice of remembrance should not be left behind as something only the ancients did. When Jesus asks us to remember Him in the Communion sacrament, he is evoking the same ancient practices that were happening at that specific time: the Passover. Our church family, in fact, shares this meal more often than the Passover remembrance occurs in a calendar year, but it does not lessen the impact nor importance for us as Christ's followers.

Like many of the Jewish holy traditions, however, we choose to remember Jesus' birth every year. In doing so we marvel at its impossibility and its magnificence – Emmanuel, God came to be with us. He emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7) and we celebrate that. Even though many cultural practices around the holiday are not particularly exclusive to our faith, we faithful celebrate the Word incarnate that came to show us the Way to reconcile with Him and the gift of Grace that it is.

Yet, this is not the ultimate part of the story. Jesus' bodily life on earth was in time and, therefore, temporary. But he will return! (Better than a James Bond film!) So, like God's chosen people, we wait for the Messiah. Not to come, but to return. In doing so we mirror the promise of the Passover: that a greater rescue was to come. We also mirror by remembering in our waiting. And as Tom Petty so aptly states, "waiting is the hardest part," but this is only made harder if we do not allow God to fill that waiting with hope! So, although difficult, remembering how the Lord's people waited – remembering how the unknowing world waited – is just as important as celebrating the arrival. Waiting while knowing there is something great to come gives us the opportunity to trust fully in the promises given to us.

So our remembrances should reflect that waiting. This coming Advent season should remind us that in the waiting, God is free to give us HIS strength (Isaiah 40:28-31).

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living!

Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord! (Psalm 27:13-14)

Agape,

Edward White



Mark Your Calendars



Christmas Eve Service

DECEMBER 24

5:00 - 6:00 PM

CAROLS, CANDLES, COOKIES...

First Baptist Church of Ojal
930 Grand Avenue
805.633.9055
fbcojai.org

Our holiday calendars are starting to fill up, so don't forget to get these on your calendars:

- **Deck the Halls**—Saturday, November 29—A wonderful afternoon decorating our sanctuary and foyer for the Christmas season
- **Women's Christmas Party**—Sunday, December 7—Our annual Christmas party for women of all ages. More details to follow!
- **Christmas Eve Service**—Wednesday, December 24—A beautiful service of Scripture and carols, and a perfect time to invite family, friends, and neighbors



Deck the Halls

Everyone is invited to come together as a church family to decorate our sanctuary and foyer Christmas trees on Saturday, November 29, 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!



Precious Additions



We're growing FBCO one baby at a time! We had two precious additions in September:

Left: Eden Krystal Scott

Born September 12, 2025
7 lb., 10 oz. & 21 inches

Right: William Clark Brewer

Born September 26, 2025
7 lb., 6 oz. & 19.5 inches





Trunk or Treat

Every year is better than the last! On Saturday, October 25, we brought back the cake walk this year and had an amazing display of trunks for the community. Thank you to Pastor Jack for all of his hard work coordinating volunteers, decorating, and all he does in preparation for this big day. Thank you to Michelle Reynolds for an incredible cake walk. Thank you to Zack and Lauren Morehead and the youth who served popcorn and decorated pumpkins. Thank you to those who brought candy and 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. It was a great night!



Jan Worsham's "sweet" trunk of candy corn



Above and Below: the Swezeys brought the fun



The Woodalls fishing trunk was a hit!



The cakewalk was back!



Above and Below: The Moreheads killed it with an amazing trunk and arguably the cutest puppy



You'd never know this was the Babcocks' spooky trunk!





The Ralstons are two peas in a pod 🍷



The Thatchers had ALL the games for a fun night!



Jill Adams and her crazy spider



Above: The Reynolds Family and their undersea ping pong game

Below: The Ruhl Family Spiderman trunk



The Griffins pulled out all the stops for Candyland—special props to Joel!



Sue Lakes reminds us to "Paws" and Give Thanks



Above and Below: The Abe Family played Twister Treat and knocked out the Ghostbuster ghosties



Pictures



Jan Worsham started off the new school year at Topa Topa with this cake for faculty and staff



FBCO Ladies celebrating the Brewers at Ojai Pizza with a sweet baby shower



A good old-fashioned hymn sing at the women's event in Santa Clarita



Congratulations to Hannah Hassien for graduating from the Los Angeles Fire Department Academy in October. What an amazing achievement! Here she is with dad Steve (LAFD), sister Megan (LAPD), and mom Cyndi (LAPD)



Have you joined a small group, yet? Here's the Saturday morning group celebrating anniversaries and birthdays.



Birthdays

November

Mary Kass	1	Josh Garvin	13
Brianna Turner	4	Ruth Granger	14
Joel Griffin	8	Sharon Markley	20
Gabe Garvin	10	Lela Queen	28
Mary Babcock	12		

December

Jim Kresge	7	Linda Verkuil	28
Bryan Queen	24	Lincoln Robison	30
Edward White	25	Samantha Showers	30
Elmer Ellis	27		

January

Jack Jellison	5	Abi Garvin	17
Darrell Ralston	5	Don Adams	19
Todd Robison	7	Megan Burris	19
McKenna Turner	9	Philippe Mathieu	19
Selah Queen	10	Katie Brewer	21
Bonnie Griffin	15	Larry McMillan	21
Philip Woodall	16		

"I sought the LORD, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed...Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" Psalm 34:4-5, 8

Anniversaries

November

Barry & Mary Babcock	12
Edward & Karly White	16

December

Steve & Cyndi Hassien	10
Alan & Jana Fletcher	16



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 September 30, 2025:

Actual Giving: **\$233,830**

Actual Expenses: **\$232,752**

Budgeted Giving: **\$236,250**

Budgeted Expenses: **\$244,682**

GIVING BREAKDOWN for our MISSIONS 2025:

Philip and Corenne Smith: \$2,780

Dan and Sarah Chetti: \$2,780

E&K Northwest Africa: \$2,780

ABCOFLASH: \$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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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

