

The Messenger

Orchard Covenant Church
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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

THE GIFT OF REPENTANCE

Pastor Fred

When I was in my twenties, I approached a couple friends from church and asked if they were interested in meeting together as a small group. I told them I was interested in being real with each other about life, sharing challenges and praying for each other. The first time we met, one of the guys said, "Fred, I'm really glad you suggested meeting to confess our sins to each other." The other guy said, "Me too. A group for confession is a great idea." I said, "Confession??? Did I say confession? I don't remember saying anything about confessing our sins to each other." But apparently, I had. And that's what we did. Every week we met, we confessed our sins to each other and prayed for each other. The strange thing is, we never ran out of things to say! But we did experience the grace of Christ and the transforming work of the Spirit in our lives in big and small ways.

As of February 26, we have entered the season of Lent, a season about six weeks long leading up to Easter. Lent is traditionally a time for Christians to prepare spiritually to remember Christ's death and celebrate his resurrection. Many Christians set aside Lent as a season of repentance, an invitation to recognize our need for forgiveness and all God has done for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

If you're reading this issue of the *Messenger*, you are probably aware that you fall short of God's moral standards and you are grateful for God's gift of forgiveness in Christ. The sad truth is that despite our best efforts as Christians, and despite the real, transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we still choose to disobey God in various ways until our dying days. Most of us, though, don't like to admit the ways we sin. We may be embarrassed or ashamed, or we think we should be past that pattern of sin by now--so we avoid admitting our sin and weakness to others, to God and to ourselves. And yet here is the gift I stumbled upon in that confession group years ago.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9-11)

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16-17

Notice the promise when we confess our sins to God; He forgives our sins AND cleanses us from unrighteousness, meaning he works to change our ways. When we confess to one another and pray for one another, we let the light into the dark places of our lives and invite the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to blow in. I'm not suggesting anyone broadcast their sins and failures to the whole world or even to the whole church. I am suggesting making confession a regular part of your prayer life. And I also encourage you to take steps to try out mutual confession with a trusted brother or sister in Christ and praying for each other. Repentance is a gift that restores your intimacy with God and invites the transforming work of the Holy Spirit into your life.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

March 1 – Sue Wages
March 9 - Bill Bromage
March 10-Francis Nakitare
March 13- Margaret Johnson
March 16-Jeanne Foster
March 19- Karen Ebner
March 22- Sean Mullins

ANNIVERSARIES

March 11- Mark and Tammy Thomas

[If your date is wrong or your name has been omitted, please contact the editor.]

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 1 – First Sunday of Lent
March 2– Council Meeting; 6:30 pm
March 8 – Daylight Savings begins
March 19 – First Day of Spring
March 21 – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
April 9 – Maundy Thursday
 Bread and Soup supper – 6:00 pm
 Worship and Communion – 7:00 pm
April 10 – Good Friday
April 12 - Easter Sunday
 Breakfast at 9:30 am
 NO Sunday School or Coffee Hour



The Men’s Connection

Saturday, March 21

Time: 8:30 to 9:30 am

at the Orchard Covenant Church

Breakfast will be served.

YOUR 2020 CHURCH COUNCIL

Executive Board:

Chair--Mike Foster
Vice Chair--Francis Nakitare
Secretary—Roberta Glassman
Treasurer—John Howell
Financial Secretary—Dick Warner

Ministry Teams:

Christian Formation--Dina Hokanson
Evangelism/Outreach—Reverian Butoyi
Care and Nurture--Gail Joseph
Worship and Music--David Cioch
Properties--David Wapner

GREAT NEWS!

As your Council chairperson, I am happy to report that, following the unanimous vote of the membership on February 9, we extended a Call to Karen and Nicholas Munn, to be our next Pastors. I want to inform you that the Munns have accepted, and will join us, in late May or early June.

The search committee, consisting of Phil Foster, John Hayden, Dina Hokanson, Marlon Joseph, Francis Nakitare and Toni Wapner, with Linda Howell, as their most capable and diligent chair, worked very hard to bring us to this day. We are all very grateful to them for their responsible and prayerful work. As Council chairperson, I want to also say a personal word of thanks to John Hayden, who used his considerable expertise to work with Nick Munn on the details of the financial package.

Michael Foster, Council Chairperson

GREETINGS OCC!

We are pleased to accept your church's call to have us as your next pastors! The warmth and kindness that we experienced in getting to know many of you encourages us as we prepare to serve Orchard Covenant. While June 1st might seem to be far away, it will be upon us in no time and we are excited to begin the work with you all. In the meantime, Karen is working on ending her time at UCC Medfield well. We both are working hard to get our home ready to sell, and watching daily for houses in the greater Springfield area to come on the market. Our 3 boys are excited as well for this new adventure though not without some anxiety about what is being left behind. Your prayers are coveted for our family during this transition and for God's providence in aligning the selling and buying of houses. We also hope that you will pray earnestly for this next step in the life of Orchard Covenant, and the role that God has for *you* in it. Change is both a challenge and an opportunity, and we hope that you are praying that, through God's grace, the opportunities will vastly outweigh the challenges.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Karen and Pastor Nick

A NOTE FROM PASTOR NANCY

I'm writing to say that having you all as my brothers and sisters in Christ and doing ministry with you at OCC has been a very wonderful thing. I am very grateful. I also want to apologize - I've misplaced my list, of who I have written a thank-you note to, and who I have missed. So thank you all, for all that happened around my retirement. You've been very kind and generous.

By God's grace, all our plans that have been up in the air, are now working out - we got out of the house on Monday (2/10), and out of Mom's apartment on Tuesday. Our son David drove our car with Wally to Chicago on Monday and Tuesday, and my sister Linda and I flew with Mom on Wednesday (2/12). Our daughter Laura picked us up at the airport.

Mom and Linda are staying in a guest room at Mom's new place, Covenant Living of Northbrook, IL, and Wally and I are camping out in our empty house in Chicago until the truck comes on Monday (2/16). Mom will move into her new room after her furniture comes. All is well, and God is good! We are very thankful.

It's cold and snowy today and I am simply resting and reading.

Peace and blessings to you all, and I keep praying for OCC's continuing time of transition. Stay close to Jesus and persevere in love for all people.

Pastor Nancy and Wally Ebner"



THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

By Matt Dehaan in Daily Bread on 2-20-2018

When Dr. Rishi Manchanda asks his patients, "Where do you live?" he's looking for more than an address. He has seen a pattern. Those who come to him for help often live in conditions of environmental stress. Molds, pests and toxins are making them sick. So Dr. Manchanda has become an advocate of what he calls Upstream Doctors. These are health care workers who, while providing urgent medical care, are working with patients and communities to get to the source of better health.

As Jesus healed those who came to Him, He lifted their eyes beyond the need for urgent physical and material care. With His Sermon on the Mount He offered more than a medical miracle. Seven times Jesus described attitudes of mind and heart that reflect a well-being that begins with a new vision and promise of spiritual well-being. Two more times he called blessed those who experience relentless persecution and find their hope and home in Him.

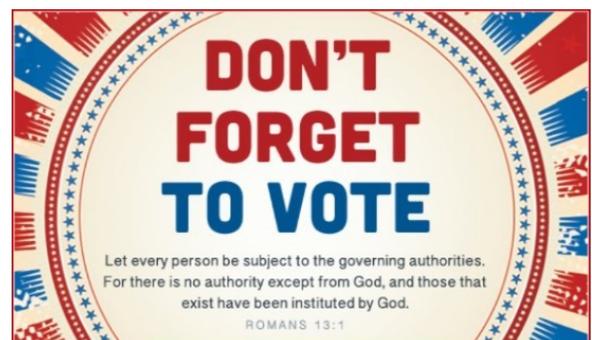
Jesus's words leave me wondering where I am living. How aware am I of my need for a well-being that is greater than my urgent need for physical and material relief? As I long for a miracle, do I embrace as enviable the poor, broken, hungry, merciful, peacemaking heart that Jesus calls blessed?

Pray for those at risk of and have contracted the rapidly spreading Coronavirus. Ed.

THANKS FROM THE Q99.7

You are helping so many people like Lauren: "I'm a single mom having to work two jobs. Just dealing with all life can throw at me can be challenging, but the music you play helps me make it through the day." Thank you for being part of the Q99.7 family.

Nate Thomas, General Manager



**TUESDAY, MARCH 3
MASSACHUSETTS PRIMARY**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Pray for Pastor Nancy and Wally as they establish their home in Chicago near their family.

Praise for the Search Committee as we welcome Rev. Karen and Nick Munn to be our new pastors. Thank God for His provision for our congregation.

Pray for Rev. Fred Elliott-Hart as he begins his ministry among us as Interim Pastor.

Pray for the new Church Council as they seek to follow God's leading.

Pray especially that the church's financial needs can be met with generosity and abundance.



A PRAYER FOR SPRING

Creator God, forgive our moments of ingratitude,
the spiritual blindness that prevents us
from appreciating the wonder that is this world,
the endless cycle of nature,
of life and death and rebirth.
Forgive us for taking without giving,
reaping without sowing.
Open our eyes to see,
our lips to praise,
our hands to share,
and may our feet tread lightly
on the road that, together, we travel.

THANKSGIVING FOR YOUR GREAT MERCIES TO US AT ORCHARD COVENANT CHURCH