



Orchard Covenant Church

95 Berkshire Street
Indian Orchard, MA 01151

IMPORTANT MATERIALS INSIDE!

- ⇒ Annual Meeting News
- ⇒ Prayer Week Guide
- ⇒ 52 Week Bible Reading Plan

The Messenger

Orchard Covenant Church
95 Berkshire Street
Indian Orchard, MA 01151
413-543-4204



MESSENGER
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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Selah: "Pause with a Purpose": A New Year's Resolution

Enclosed in this Messenger is our Covenant Prayer Week guide for 2012, entitled *Selah, Pausing to Pray in a Rush Hour Life*. "Selah" is a Hebrew word found in the Psalms; it indicates a pause in the reading or singing for meditation and reflection, before moving on. I'd like to encourage our whole Orchard Covenant family to begin the New Year by pausing to pray and to reflect on God's Word. Don't rush into 2012 without a prayer break! And don't just pray alone, join us:

- Every Sunday morning at 9:15 to pray, and of course in our 11am worship.
- Wednesdays at 10am in my study.

Sunday Evening January 8, at 6:30 in the Blue Room for "Selah," an evening for the whole church to pause and pray.

Prayer is possibly the most important thing we do as followers of Jesus, and my heart's desire is to see our Orchard Covenant family continue to grow as a praying community. I long to see us passionately prioritizing prayer, and joining together for all kinds of prayer, as God continually transforms us into the likeness of our Lord

I express this longing humbly, as a person who struggles with inconsistencies in my own prayer life. Just when I develop a routine of settling into prayer in the mornings, something happens to disrupt me. Just when I experience deep connections with God and the presence of the Spirit, and think that I've finally learned to pray, I go through a dry spell. *This is normal!* In a genuine relationship with God, we do not need to pretend we have "made it," we just need to pray.

Will you *Selah*, pause to pray, along with me in 2012? And experience the power and presence of God?

See you – and pray with you! - in church, Pastor Nancy Ebner

We wish all of you joy and peace from God in the New Year!

Orchard Covenant Church

Our vision:

to be God's heart and hands in the Orchard and beyond

Our mission:

to develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ who love God and love people.

Pastor Nancy Ebner, Orchard Covenant Church, 95 Berkshire Street, Indian Orchard, MA 01151
(413-543-4204) pastor@orchardcovenantchurch.org or nebner@charter.net

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 22, 12:30 after church

All members are urged to attend and participate: We need every one of you! We will grab a light lunch before starting.

At the Annual Meeting we will:

- Vote on the slate of leaders prepared by the Nominating Committee, and say "thank you" to those Council members who have finished their time of service.
- Approve new applicants for membership
- Approve our church budget for 2012,
- Hear a report about our Strategic Planning initiative, including some goals and plans for 2012. Discuss any new business.

This meeting is important in the life of our church. We want to follow Jesus with integrity and good order. God is in our midst!

Questions

Here are some questions I (Pastor Nancy) will be asking each of you in 2012:

How are you? Where is God moving in your life? What gives you joy? When do you feel close to Jesus, and when do you feel far away from him? How do you sense God is calling you to grow in 2012? How can I pray for you?

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 1 - Reverian Butonyi
January 1 - Sylvestre Nyabenda
January 1 - Jacqueline Butonyi
January 1 - Janet Nyabenda
January 7 - Angel Barahona
January 7 - Isaac Antwon Foster
January 11 - Mike Jefferson
January 12 - Mike Foster
January 12 - Ron Newlin
January 13 - Linda Howell
January 19 - Tammy Thomas
January 22 - Al Bamford
January 24 - Diane Decker
January 29 - Jessa Wapner

ANNIVERSARIES

January 3 - Wally and Nancy Ebner
January 19 - Rob and Sharon Campsie

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

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 1-8 Prayer Week
January 8 - Prayer Service at 6:30 pm
in the Blue Room for "*Selah,*" an evening
for the whole church to pause and pray.
January 14 - Men's Breakfast
January 22 - Annual Meeting

Visit our church website at:
www.orchardcovenantchurch.org

Sermon Topics to Start the New Year: Let Us Pray!

We will start with our Covenant Prayer Week devotional guide, *Selah - Pausing to Pray in a Rush Hour Life* - and continue with Richard Foster's teaching about three movements of prayer, using examples from the Bible:

January 1: "Moving Inward - Seeking the Transformation We Need"
January 8: "Moving Upward - Seeking the Intimacy We Need"
January 15: "Moving Outward - Seeking the Ministry We Need"

How is God moving in your prayer life?

The Men's Connection

*Saturday, January 14
Time: 8:30 to 9:30 am
at the Orchard Covenant Church
Breakfast will be served.*

This is the time of year for flu and bad colds. Remember that hand washing is one of the best prevention methods. Sing Happy Birthday twice as you wash your hands with soap!

THE COMMUNITY SURVIVAL CENTER

Emily Hayden

Did you know...The Open Pantry in Springfield does NOT provide food for all the hungry people who live there? Our own Indian Orchard Community Survival Center serves four Springfield Zip Codes including I.O and Sixteen Acres, as well as all of Ludlow. Recently the Center supplied over 400 Thanksgiving Dinners to Families in our part of the city. It could not have happened without YOU and several other churches and individual donors in this area.

Did you know...The Bridge of Hope Thrift Shop at The Community Survival Center sells "the best of the best" donations it gets. There you will find gently-used, NEW, and Name Brand clothing items for \$2 apiece. All proceeds go to pay for food purchases and operating expenses. The Community Survival Center is a NON-PROFIT business which has existed for over 25 years. Check out the Thrift Shop for Christmas money-saving Christmas gifts!

LEGACY PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP

Both current and legacy charitable gifts are part of our stewardship of what God has entrusted to us. Our current gifts to ministries we love help maintain their daily operations, but may not have much impact on the future. Even if we cannot afford large gifts during our lifetime, a legacy gift from our estate can be a significant ongoing support to ministries that are close to our hearts. Please consider writing a legacy gift to Orchard Covenant Church in your will.

TRINIDAD / TOBAGO TAKE OUT

Gail and Marlon Joseph are having a Food Sale of Trinidad and Tobago Cuisine at their home at 83 Fisher Street Springfield, every other Saturday, consisting of Roti, Curry Goat, Stewed Oxtails, Stewed Chicken, Fried rice, Ground Vegetables and Dumplins. There is also a complimentary drink with each meal and a different menu is served every other Saturday, the meal can be collected anytime after noon.

Additionally they have home made snacks such as Coconut and Strawberry Ice cream, Yogurt, Red Mangoes, Khurma and Meat pies. To order, please call 209-8548. Inquires can be made concerning the menu.

John and Linda say the food is great, portions generous.

ON THE WEB

Do you know Orchard Covenant has a website? www.orchardcovenantchurch.org On that website you can click on “calendar,” to get information on events and times. We also have a Facebook page, which you can access by clicking on the website or typing in “Orchard Covenant Church.” If you are a social media buff and would like to help us communicate better electronically, please contact Pastor Nancy. You can email her at pastor@orchardcovenantchurch.org, phone or text her at 413-896-8875, or even talk with her in person!

January 8 is Three Kings Sunday



Advent: ‘In the Dark Streets Shineth’

| ECC | News

PUNE, INDIA (December 22, 2011) – *Editor’s note: Advent is a season for both reflection and anticipation – celebrating the incarnation of Jesus while looking forward to the Messiah’s return and the kingdom of God in all its fullness. It arrives amidst the reality of a world filled with desperate needs, grief, anger and frustration. We find encouragement, however, in celebrating lives being transformed through our shared ministries, reminders of what is yet to come. Covenant News Service is publishing occasional Advent reflections on ministry within that reality.*

Budhwar Peth is a commercial area in Pune, India, that is home to many electronics shops, retailers and restaurants. And it is home to more than 5,000 commercial sex workers. Last June I walked through the streets of this red light district as part of a vision trip with other pastors and church leaders.

Ministers from the Hindustani Covenant Church who reach out in this area led us through the streets. “Don’t take pictures,” they said. And we didn’t. “Stay together,” they warned. And we did.

Two times we lapped around an eight-block area of the city. The darkness was visceral. The buildings were visually darker than the rest of the city – stained with smoke from burning coal and years of neglect. People moved about with an odd silence, eerily devoid of the hustle and bustle of normal city life. Our group was equally silent as we walked in a tight huddle. We were keenly aware of the darkness present in the faces of solicitors and customers alike.

This Advent season, I was struck by the line in the famous hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem” that reads: ‘yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting Light.’ And when I sing those words, I remember so clearly the darkness that we felt on the streets of Pune back in June. So often the message of Advent describes the juxtaposition of darkness to light.

Living within this juxtaposition can be difficult. Each individual in our group expressed a sense of exhaustion after walking through this red light district. The darkness seemed so powerfully overwhelming. What could be done? How do we even begin to help this kind of situation? How can the light penetrate such a dark place?

Light is breaking in, however. Ministry workers walk into these neighborhoods and slums to meet with women and care for their children. The Hindustani Covenant Church has set up an informal school where children of commercial sex workers can attend while their mothers are working. There they learn the basics of hygiene, the alphabet, songs to sing and stories of Jesus’ love. They indeed bring light into the darkness and proclaim life through Jesus. I am honored to work with the Covenant, whose gifts through the denomination’s [Covenant Kids](#) scholarship and [Covenant Cares](#) gifts are helping to make these ministries possible.

I also am humbled by the faithfulness by those for whom Advent is very real. Every day teachers like Ms. Sarwanshe face the realities of darkness in the streets of Pune. But they know that the everlasting light that shines in the dark streets is Jesus, and that “In him was life, and that life was the light of all people.”

Editor’s note: Kim Crawford serves as associate director of mission mobilization and connection in the Department of World Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church.