



Orchard Covenant Church

95 Berkshire Street
Indian Orchard, MA 01151

The Messenger

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413-543-4204



MESSENGER

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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

“Ten Years” - 9/11/2001 to 9/11/2011

Ten years. When I think of ten year anniversaries I think of marriage, and life shared, and good things. But we are celebrating ten years after a disaster. What has ten years brought? Terrorist attacks. Grief, pain, challenge, change. War and ugliness. Destruction. Mass shootings. Road Rage. Economic downturns, unemployment. But also great transitions. Honesty, Heroism. Healing. Growth. Celebrations. Beauty. Hope. A continuing conviction that God is good.

9/11/01 was my first day of seminary. That morning I walked into the building where I would register for orientation, and the TV was on in the student lounge, and the first World Trade Tower had been hit, and we cried and prayed and watched it go down. Then the second tower... that day as I started to absorb and reflect on this event, God spoke to me and said, “This is the world to which I am calling you. This hurting, broken, world of grief and conflict is where you will serve me. And I am good.”

These last ten years have been the most difficult of my life so far. How about you? How about our country? We have tried hard to make peace. We have honored many heroic efforts by courageous troops to eradicate evil, and yet we must admit that human success is elusive. But God is good.

At the same time, these last ten years have been full of joy and celebration. For my family - graduations, weddings, a grandchild. Summer flowers. At Orchard Covenant, we have new brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world. In America, a black man has had a chance to lead us – a great triumph against our terrible history of racism. There is a lot to remember besides trouble. God is good!

In the Bible, God's people gathered at important moments, to worship God, to remember and re-tell their stories of God's faithfulness, and re-dedicated their lives to God.

On 9/11 we will return to our 11:00 am worship time. I invite you to gather for worship, and bring friends, for a time of remembrance, reflection and prayer, a time to listen to God's Word and pray and let God speak to our hearts and heal us, and consider how God is asking you to respond to God's goodness. I can't help but think of 2 Chronicles 7:14 where God asks his people to be humble and prayerful, to seek God and turn from evil. Then God promises healing. God is good!

See you in church, Pastor Nancy Ebner

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SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Lastenia Thomas
- 4 Rob Campsie
- 9 David Ebner
- 11 Helen Ham
- 18 Charlene Abrahamson
- 22 Gerry Rice
- 23 Earl Preissler
- 24 Jessica Foster
- 25 Josh Bromage
- 25 Ellen Clark
- 29 Loretta Laferriere

Sunday School begins again on September 11! The Sunday after Labor Day we will return to our fall schedule of Bible classes at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 11:00 a.m. Please bring the children and pray that as we all open our Bibles, that our church will be full of learning and growing. If God is calling you to teach or assist in our children's ministry, please contact Pastor Nancy or Dina Hokanson. We are presently planning for the following groups

- Ages 0 to 3
- Pre-K and Kindergarten
- Grades 1 to 3
- Grades 4 to 6
- Confirmation
- Grades 9 to 12
- Adults.

See you there!

ANNIVERSARIES

- 25 Rich and Patty Forbes

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

DATES TO REMEMBER

- September 7 – First Choir Rehearsal
- September 11 – Sunday School begins at 9:45 a.m.
WORSHIP AT 11:00
- September 17 – Annual ACTS Mum Sale
- September 20 – ACTS Tutor orientation
- September 27 – ACTS Tutoring begins

be·nev·o·lence

noun

1. desire to do good to others; goodwill; charitableness
2. an act of kindness; a charitable gift.

Have you heard of the "Benevolence Fund" at church? This fund is made up entirely of donations from our congregation, and was created to help those among us who have urgent needs.

In the past, this fund has been used to help pay a utility bill, purchase heating oil, or help to pay a medical bill. It may be used to help purchase food for a hungry family. It allows us to do "acts of kindness" for friends in need.

The balance in this fund fluctuates over the year, and presently is very low. Your donations to the Benevolence Fund are tax deductible, and should be above and beyond your giving to the General Fund. If God leads you to do so, please give generously and be sure to clearly mark your donation to the "Benevolence Fund."

Hebrews 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

SUNDAY NIGHT SUPPERS

Pastor Nancy and Wally Ebner will be hosting "Second and Fourth Sunday" Supper Fellowships this fall at their home, to which all are invited to sign up. They will be on the second and fourth Sundays at 5:30 p.m. They would like to fill their table with eight to ten people and you may sign up as a single person, or with family, or invite a friend to come with you. Children are welcome. The dates for these suppers are September 11, October 9 and 23, and November 13 and 27. Wally has made sign-up sheets that are in the Community Hall.

On Sunday September 25, they wish to invite the whole church to come for an outdoor evening – "we'll barbeque, and everyone may bring a dish to share and a folding chair. We hope to figure out a campfire, s'mores and singing! We're looking forward to time together with you." Pastor Nancy and Wally

New Bible Study Group

"Priorities: Tyranny of the Urgent" is a six-week bible study fellowship group that will meet on Tuesday nights, September 20 to October 25. Pastor Ebner will be the leader and the group will meet at her house at 81 Berkshire St. next to church from 6:30-8:00pm

Have you ever wished for a 30-Hour day? Every week we leave a trail of unfinished tasks. These studies are designed to help you put your life in order by discovering what is really important. Find out what God's priorities are for you.

Anyone is welcome. The Study Guide costs \$7.00.

THANKS

Dear Church Family,

It is difficult to put into words to tell you how grateful I am for your continual prayers, cards and support before and after a most stressful time in my life.

You were there for me during Dana's sickness and after his passing. Pastor Nancy was with me all of the way, too. I will always remember her prayers of comfort which brought me peace.

The beautiful flowers came after Dana's funeral and reminded me once again how blessed I am for my church family. Thank you very much.

Love and prayers, Helen Ham

Thanks to all for your prayers, food, visits, and help with transportation during Jay's hospitalization and homecoming. Your prayers and encouragement helped during those difficult days.

Phil and June Foster and family

GOD OF THIS CITY

This summer we produced our fourth "Summer Neighborhood Drama," and thanks in large part to Ellen Ebner's insightful re-write of a purchased script and skillful directing, 18 neighborhood youth put on a wonderful show, "God of This City," on Saturday August 23. It was a story about a choir, a homeless shelter, and a garden, and how God works in us and through us to bless others. Ellen's friend Abby Forcier helped the kids make their own set, creating the brick wall that still beautifies our stage.

Practices were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays for seven weeks. Children (and adults) grow and develop when they participate in a complex relational activity over time, and it is such a privilege to work with, pray with, and pray for, our neighborhood children as they work through from beginning to end all the steps of putting on a musical drama. When they memorize their lines and the words to the songs, scripture words - faith words - will stay with them in their hearts and minds. Thank God and thanks to Ellen and Abby!

Sunday School / Christian Formation meeting

All teachers and interested people are invited to attend an informational meeting on **Thursday September 8th at 6:30 p.m.**

CHOIR

A special thanks to those who participated in choir last year. Your hard work was appreciated. Our new choir year will be starting soon. We would love to have several new people join us as we begin the new choir year. Choir practice will begin on Wednesday, **September 7 at 7:00 p.m.** If you are interested in being part of the choir this year, please notify June Foster.

ANNUAL MUMS SALE

It's time again to order beautiful fall mums to help support the ACTS tutoring program. Please fill out the order form found in the bulletin on September 4th and 11th and the flowers will be delivered to church on **September 18th.**

Tutor orientation will be held at OCC on **Tuesday, September 20** and the program will begin the following week. New tutors are always needed and, if Tuesday is not a good day for you, speak to John Howell about volunteering at some other site.

ACTS RECEIVES AWARD

The Council of Churches of Greater Springfield celebrated their 75th anniversary on August 25th with a dinner at the Sheraton. As part of their emphasis for this occasion, six **Pillar of the Community Awards** were given: Spiritual, Health, Education, Economic, Social and Youth. ACTS received the Pillar of Education Award.



AN EXCITING GROUP EVENT

On August 25, 22 people, young and old, packed into cars and headed to a warehouse in CT to participate in the Feed My Starving Children assembly line food packing event. OCC joined with people from Bethany Covenant Church in packing 22,600+ MRE (meals ready to eat) to be sent to starving children in various parts of the world. With the terrible news we see from Somalia, this is indeed a timely event. Emily reports that "it was a spectacular feat accomplished with simple directions, user friendly equipment and boisterous joyful camaraderie." One of the best parts of the time was adults and children working side by side with a little friendly competition won by Austin and Roy. Also, the staff of FMSC got to talk with Mama Esther about her orphan feeding program in Muhudu. Praise God for all aspects of this day.