

OCKER BRETHREN CHURCH

Serving Christ, Serving Our Community

DECEMBER 2024



DECEMBER 1
HANGING
OF THE GREENS



DECEMBER 15
CHOIR SPECIALS
IN WORSHIP



DECEMBER 22
SUNDAY SCHOOL
PROGRAM &
FINGER FOOD
LUNCH



DECEMBER 24
CANDLELIGHT
SERVICE 5:30 PM

From the Pastor....

*"Like the sun whose
dawning brings in the
light,
the King's coming changes
all history.
Bursting forth suddenly,
lighting up the sky,
He banishes the night."*

Well! We have made it to December and 2024 is almost behind us... but first, we have to go through Advent.

I want to take these next few moments to focus on Advent and what that means for the believer.

The other day, my family and I were having a very interesting conversation about bears and hibernating. Mary had just gotten back from a Baylor event where the bear keepers did a presentation on the Bears. One of the questions by the audience was about hibernation. The trainers explained that hibernation is done in the wild to keep from freezing to death during cold winters and to keep from starving to death because of lack of food

in the winters. Obviously the Baylor bears have plenty of food year round and lets be honest, it doesn't get that cold in Waco, so the Baylor bears don't have to hibernate.

I did some studying...some researching... and found that a lot of common animals hibernate....Badgers, squirrels, prairie dogs, chipmunks, hedgehogs, hamsters, skunks, raccoons all hibernate.

I have heard of hibernation, of course, I even know what it means...but I had never really taken the time to understand it...when an animal sleeps, their heart rate slows and breathing regulates, but their mind is very active. Also they can be woken up quickly. When an animal hibernates their heart rates slows, their metabolic system almost ceases to function, their body temperature drops by up to 30 degrees, there is little brain activity and it cannot be woken

easily. In fact, if a human were to stumble on a hibernating badger, most of us would think it was deader than a doornail.

Christians have been known to hibernate... we curl up in the dark and figure we will wait this cold season of our lives out by just doing the bare necessities to live...Many Christians spend most of our adult lives in spiritual hibernation.

The reason Advent is so important to the Church calendar is that it is a call to hibernating Christians everywhere to arise... to wake up...because the darkness you were once living in is gone, the Light of God has broken forth in the life of this world and in your heart...and the light of God is Christ our Lord.

The scripture defines Advent for us perfectly - it is a time when the Light of Christ shines on you.

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NEXT PAGE

.....FROM THE PASTOR(Cont.)

It is not coincidence that the first thing God chose to create in Genesis was light. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God went on to create the world and saw that it was good.

But, a great darkness settled over the Earth after the fall of man. Adam and Eve's sin brought forth a new age of darkness that covered the earth and the hearts of all peoples. That is why Paul tells the church in Ephesus that we they were once a people living in darkness. Darkness was around them and inside them. Do you feel like that sometimes? Do you feel like darkness is all around you...and even inside you...do you feel that it is inching closer and closer to the center of your soul and there is nothing you can do to fight it off?

If so, you are in luck because.....Advent is about to change all that.

Advent is about waiting for the light to come....of course, we know it has already come...it came two thousand years ago...but darkness still lurks...it still walks this earth and settles in the crevasses of our heart...it still wanders around the world and it settles in churches and towns...it rears its ugly head in hospitals and nursing homes...it dominates the poor and feeds on the weak...it causes good people to go into spiritual hibernation. Advent is a time to feel the light of the world on you, once again.

But Advent is also a pilgrimage. A time of sacred travel. It is a way that we answer what Goethe called "the holy longing." During Advent we will leave the place of our birth to journey to the birthplace of another.

It is a time for followers of Christ to remember the time when there was no light...and then to remember, light has come. Light has come and hope has come with him. Hope that darkness is not the most powerful force in the world anymore, that light has come and can come into our community and our own life again. It is a way for us...for followers of Christ...who feel the ominous dark cloud of life beginning to settle over us to be born again into the light.

Advent is the beginning of the end of all in us that is not yet Christ," wrote Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

So, how do we as Ocker Brethren Church, celebrate Advent. Of course, we light candles on a wreath during the four worship services before Christmas and one on Christmas Eve (the Christ Candle).

The Advent wreath is a simple circle of evergreen branches that testifies to the continuation of life and life without end found in Christ alone. The four candles that encircle the Christ candle portray God's Son as the light of the world. The four candles represent the four weeks in Advent, and the four themes of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Each Sunday we will light a candle and on Christmas Eve the Christ candle will be lit. With increasing brightness from the candles, we experience the Light of the world and find hope in the coming of Jesus.

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DECEMBER 2024

The Chilean miners who were trapped for days and days at the bottom of a mine said that one of the hardest things to deal with down there was the complete darkness. It must be so hard to live with and in— darkness.

It is a time for followers of Christ to remember the time when there was no light...and then to remember, light has come. Light has come and hope has come with him. Hope that darkness is not the most powerful force in the world anymore, that light has come and can come into our community and our own life again. It is a way for us...for followers of Christ...who feel the ominous dark cloud of life beginning to settle over us to be born again into the light. Perhaps many of you need that this holiday season...I know I do.

The disciplines of Advent is one way we can come out of hibernation and begin living like Children of the light again.

Mother Teresa was a disciple of Advent, and while she is the most famous of all charitable Christians, she never stopped focusing on loving one life...just one she would say...that is my call today, to love one person well.

Jesus himself didn't transform the world by creating a mass movement...he let the Holy Spirit and his disciples do that...instead, he loved his disciples well...and he loved each person he met, well. Advent practitioners live as Children of the Light because they love individually...perhaps we should try that.

At the very mention of Christ's name, hope springs up in every person's life...it just can't help it. At the very whiff of his presence, hope races in and gobbles up the darkness.

I am so humbled to be your pastor...so humbled...and I pray that, this Advent season, the hope (produced by the light of the world) will gobble up the darkness in your life. I pray that for all of us!

Happy Advent!

Brad

WELCOME OCKER'S NEWEST MEMBERS!

Jason & Amanda Bedrich

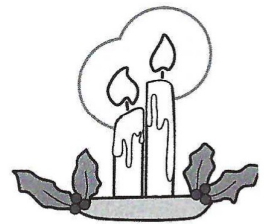
joined 9/11/2024, with their children are Logan & Kylie

Brent & Brittany Harper

joined 10/20/24 by, with their children are Camryn & Brooklyn

Zach & Kayla Fojtasek

joined 11/10, with their daughter Vivienne.



We're on the Web!

www.ockerbrethrenchurch.org

Twitter: @ockerchurch

&

Facebook!



Operation Christmas Child

THANK YOU! 300 BOXES!



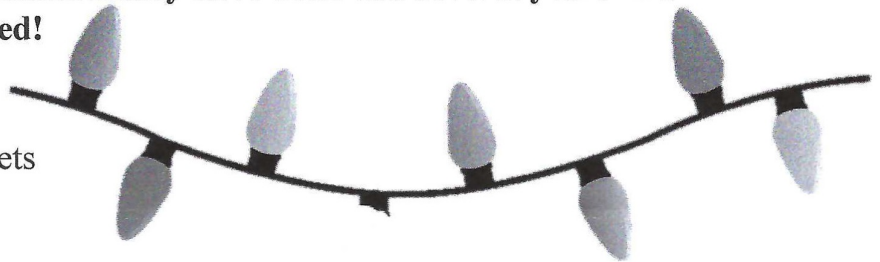
A huge **THANK YOU** to the Ocker Family for the 2024 year!! We are greatly overwhelmed with the generosity for the church family throughout this year. As a church, many donations of various items were brought in for OCC and Ocker was

able to packed **300 boxes!** What an amazing number of boxes that will soon be sent somewhere in the world to bless a child. OCC would like to thank everyone who came out November 16th to pack the boxes, it was a lot of fun! For the next few months, please pray for the delivery of the boxes and for the children who will receive them.

We would also like to thank the Tomlin family for delivering the shoeboxes to the distribution center. The Tomlin family have done this several years in a row and it is greatly appreciated!

MERRY CHRISTMAS,

Erin Brinkley and Tracie Malovets



Ocker Brethren Church

Annual Children's Christmas Program

In preparation for Ocker's Christmas Program, CEC will be hosting a series of practices for children Pre K-5th grade.

Sunday Dec.1~Assign parts *Parents be on the lookout for paperwork*

Wednesday Dec.4~ Rehearsal 5:30-7:00 *Dinner provided*

Wednesday Dec.11~ Rehearsal 5:30-7:00 *Dinner provided*

Sunday Dec.15~ Rehearsal *During Sunday School*

Sunday Dec.22~ Program & Meal/Gift Exchange

Please be at the church at 9:00 for a run through



If you have any questions please contact Chelsey Pierce (254) 718-2847

Check Out the Upcoming Children and Youth Activities

Wednesdays, December 4 & 11: Youth Bible study AND children's program practice.
Dinner provided for all.

Saturday, December 14: Children's Christmas Camp

Saturday, December 14-Sunday, December 15: BYF Lock-in and Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 18: Youth Bible study

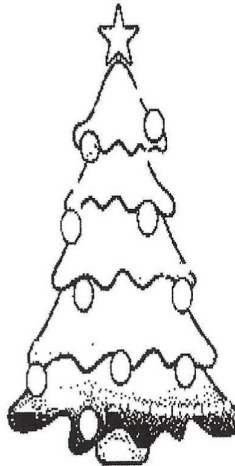
Sunday, December 22: Children's Christmas Program, SS luncheon, and gift exchange.
See Tracie Malovets or Chelsey Pierce for more information.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS CAMP

A one-day Christmas VBS for children ages 3 & up. Youth are welcome to attend and volunteer for the day.

Saturday, December 14
Drop off 7:30-8:00am
Pickup 3:00-3:30pm

Breakfast, lunch, and snacks provided.



Church-wide DECEMBER SERVICE PROJECT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15 **Following Worship**

Families are invited to travel to Temple to distribute Christmas cards/ornaments and visit at an assisted living facility. We will then eat lunch together at Cici's Pizza.

Unity Events at Hus Encampment

January 4-5: Winter Youth Retreat (Form Deadline is December 22)

February 1: Synodical Meeting

March 7-9: Spring Youth Retreat

March 8: State Children's Rally (Forms Due February 16)

April 4: Unity-wide Christian Sisters Fellowship at the Hus Encampment

April 26: Primetimers' Fellowship at the camp (Ages 50+)

July 19-20: Youth Volleyball Retreat

Summer Camps

June 8-13: Discovery (going into 9th/10th grades)

June 15-18: Encounter (going into 2nd/3rd/4th grades)

June 20-28: Hus Camp (going into 11th/12th/college freshmen)

July 6-11: Pioneer Camp (going into 7th/8th grades)

July 13-17: Alpha Camp (going into 5th/6th grades)

Contact Jenn Chervenka for more information: (254) 913-1244.

HULL MISSION PROJECT

Dear Everyone at Ocker,

November 2024

“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” John 17:3
(Your hearts desire spelled out beautifully by Jesus Himself)

What a wonderful life we are all experiencing even through hardships, but also moments of greater joy! We can all be so grateful that Jesus promises: ***“I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.”*** Matthew 28:20

THANK YOU to each one of you for also being there with us in so many ways in: **Prayer, Financial Support, and Encouragement!** Thank you! Thank you!

Many of you hopefully have seen our updates on Face Book concerning our activities for the last 5 months. We pray your forgiveness that we have not been able to make a newsletter since last May. So with or without internet, it is not for a lack of desire to communicate. We have just had to prioritize when extra busy, and determine first to have a time daily for prayer and feeding in God’s Word to recharge our spiritual batteries, before jumping into the day of service which is of course our joyful ***“Go ye”*** Mark 16:15 ! **Thanks everybody for praying for us!**

Hope the **INCLUDED PICTURES** will help you to know how to pray for the people and happenings.

We have to mention, as surely all of us feel the same: **THANK THE LORD FOR A VERY PEACEFUL ELECTION!** We have friends worldwide who had committed themselves even to fast and pray for the American elections at this time. A missionary buddy sent us a pensive message that we received a few days before November 5th, and perhaps you may have seen it as well traveling around the internet, which gives a very correct Christian viewpoint about political convictions which says it all in a nutshell. I thought it was really good, so have included it here after the fact:

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD SPEAK UP DURING THIS ELECTION

1. We are the **salt of the earth**, meant to preserve and savor, not just to be sweet like sugar and liked by everyone.
2. Jesus said, ***‘You are the salt of the earth,’*** not ‘the salt of the church.’ Salt does no good if left in the salt shaker. We must interact and be salty. Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world, which **calls us to engage**, not withdraw, from culture. He taught us to **pray, ‘Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven.’**
3. Jesus **warned** that when salt loses its flavor, it ceases to be effective as salt. Salt could lose its flavor due to impurities. We can lose our flavor through conformity to the values of the culture (Rom 12:2) and by being cowards, bending to the pressure of the culture (Rev 21:8), or by being contaminated by the political spirit (Mark 8:15).

While engaging in politics, we **shouldn’t adopt a political spirit**. A political spirit treats national identity as greater than heavenly citizenship, prioritizes political parties over spiritual family, and equates the country with God’s kingdom. It looks to candidates as saviors and views revival as a top-down societal takeover.

Christians have dual citizenship. We are **citizens** of Heaven (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19) and **ambassadors** for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Our heavenly citizenship does not negate our earthly citizenship and the duties therein.

While our nation is not our refuge, it is our mission field.

There is nothing wrong with being a Christian patriot, worshipping Jesus, and loving your country, but **our ultimate hope is in King Jesus and His coming reign on earth.** (Right on target!)

GOD CARES In the middle of typing this, we were called by a pastor friend of ours who asked us to run over and help a widowed lady friend of ours who is legally blind to move her huge storage. We were able to bless her, and the Lord blessed those who could help her as well.

So, on with our little newsletter: We want to mention this update regarding **MANAMI’S BOUT WITH GALLSTONES** **Your prayers are being answered.** She has had no fever and no pain for over a month. We are presently in Brownsville, Tx, talking with our doctor friend here, discussing his findings, and planning the smartest steps to take. He is not charging us anything, and even has a kind surgeon friend who also wants to help us. We will keep you updated.

(Just so you understand, part of our mission work is helping families of low income, but even we are considered also as a low income family. As missionaries, we truly live by faith, and Manami won't even have Medicare for another 3 years or so. ...But God is surely doing it for us, and **"He who has begun a good work in us, shall complete it..."** Philippians 1:6 **Amazing is your God,** and **"His ways past finding out"!**) Romans 11:33

We need to tell you a **TRUE STORY that helps us to be thankful for life, how important it is to BE ON GOD'S PERFECT PATH, AND IN HIS PERFECT TIMING, that could even save someone's life:** A little over a month ago, we were in Chihuahua driving through downtown on a little street, with only a few cars in front of us, a taxi driver had just hit two young ladies who were asked to remain lying down on the street until an ambulance could come. I jumped out of our car immediately and ran over, telling them that I am a missionary, and would they permit me to pray for them. The more alert girl agreed quickly, and I prayed for them and their hurts, and for them to know Jesus' love for them. Afterwards, we left them in good hands, and the ambulance arrived a few minutes later. Sometimes we can simply be right in the right place at the right time. It always pays to pray, and just follow, ready to reach out to help someone, somehow.

A general manager in Brownsville gave us 50 special flyers from Whataburger for **FREE CHILDREN'S MEALS**. We sometimes assist Pastor Teddy and Maria with local church activities, so the children recipients are beginning to appreciate these meal gifts. The same GM is so kind and asked us to search out a family in need, to give them a **COMPLETE THANKSGIVING MEAL** for late November. This dear pastor knew of the perfect candidate, now a single mom, Laura, with three children. The mom had suffered abuse from her husband. The GM donor is thrilled about helping her. **God is so kind and merciful to us all.**



5 MONTHS OF ACTIVITIES compiled from Monterrey, Saltillo, Chihuahua, Brownsville, Houston, & Oklahoma:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Music ministry in restaurants 23x * Visiting w/ & sharing the Lord at friends' homes & them visiting us 29x * Bible classes individually 8x * Gave away individually Bible class booklets 40x * Birthdays 5x * Cambia Tu Mundo food kitchen 2x * Patch roof 3x * Girl's night out: exercise dancing * Beach swim 2x * Ministering to dentist friends 2x * Chauffeured Pedro our dear associate 4x | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Helped our friend clear her trees & vines, and caught ouchy poison ivy * Visited/ministered in hospitals and clinics 5x * Supplied needed handicap walkers 2x * Gave meat to three locations to help in time of need * Gave small financial gifts to needy situations every month * Collected a truck load of food donated for a very poor area. Ice-cream company also assisted in the event. * Men's rehab ministry and Bible class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Invited to participate at churches 19x * Helped w/ building/repair projects 3x * Contact with all 7 of our children. Son Jonathan even drove his motorcycle all the way down from Toronto, Canada to southern Oklahoma to visit with us. * Distributed lots of tracts and gospel messages * Prayed for/with lots of people all over the place * Friends, family, and you dear Ocker, helped pay Manami's Mexican hospital bill. Thank you! |
|--|---|--|

May we all find grace and trust together, and lean on Him in our hours of need.

YET AN ADDITIONAL ICE-CREAM STORY Here's a cute little way that we found to share Jesus. We bought a box of 6 individually wrapped ice-creams that would be too much for us to eat, so after paying for them, we announced to the girls doing the checkout and bagging: "Who wants an ice-cream?" The hands went up, and we gave away 5 of them. Then...the final question: "Who believes that Jesus loves you and wants to live in your life?" They all agreed, and took it a step further by praying with us to ask Jesus into their lives! They all got a tract too, and **know that God loved them that day!** (That's fun stuff!)

Here's a quote from a dear friend of ours: "Jesus refused to save himself, so he could save us." - Pastor Brad

Love to each and every one. Your missionaries, *Will & Manami*

DECEMBER 2024

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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 5 – Judy Jeske
- 6 – Ramona Gerich
Brayden Gilliam
Wayne Hoeldscher
- 7 – Jana Jeske
- 10 – Donald Malovets
- 11 – Roger Cassens
- 12 – Alicia Buck
- 14 – Kathy Jordan
- 18 – Taylor Jungmann
- 19 – Brenda Marek
- 20 – RoseAnne Groseclose
Darcy Daskocil
- 23 – Megan Weathersbee
- 24 – Jordan Krcha
- 25 – Savannah Sebek
- 27 – Doug Hutchins
- 30 – Quintin Hoelscher
Macie Sebek

Want to be included on birthday/anniversary
calendar? Send info to:
ockerbrethrenchurch@gmail.com



December Anniversaries

27 – Ryan & Ashlyn Zdroik

Looking ahead:

C.E.C. Meeting after Worship
on January 12, 2025.

••• CHOIR NEWS! •••

The Sanctuary Choir will be performing two specials during the worship service on Sunday, December 15. Rehearsals take place on Wednesday, December 4 and Wednesday, December 11 at 6:15 pm. Join us!



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CHRISTIAN SISTERS

Next meeting of the
Christian Sisters will take place
January 21, 2025

* * * * *

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School Program and
Gift Exchange will take place
following worship service on
Sunday, December 22, 2024. All
are asked to bring finger foods
to share. There will be a special
visitor and an opportunity for
pictures.



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

DECEMBER 2024

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
First Sunday Fellowship 8:30 am HANGING OF THE GREENS SERVICE 10:15 am BOOK CLUB 6:30 pm			YOUTH BIBLE STUDY 6-8 PM YOUTH PROGRAM REHEARSAL 5:30 PM 6:15 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	Senior Adult Fellowship 9 am – 1 pm		
8 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am	9	10	YOUTH BIBLE STUDY 6-8 PM YOUTH PROGRAM REHEARSAL 5:30 PM 6:15 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	12	13	14 CHILDRENS CHRISTMAS CAMP BYF LOCK-IN
15 Sunday School 9 am YOUTH PROGRAM REHEARSAL DURING SUNDAY SCHOOL Worship incl. CHOIR SPECIALS 10:15 am BYF Service Project following worship.	16	17	YOUTH BIBLE STUDY 6-8 PM YOUTH PROGRAM REHEARSAL 5:30 PM 6:15 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	19	20	21 Senior Adult Fellowship 9 am – 1 pm
22 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM & GIFT EXCHANGE w/FINGERFOOD LUNCH	23	24 CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 5:30 PM		26	27	28
29 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am	30	31				