

OCKER BRETHREN CHURCH

Serving Christ, Serving Our Community

NOVEMBER 2025

**BOARD OF
ELDERS
MEETING
Wednesday,
November 13th
6:30 pm**

Board Meetings
are open to all.

• • • • •

**HANGING OF
THE GREENS
NOVEMBER 30**



From the Pastor....

Happy November Ocker!

Wow...we have had a busy October. Our Harvest Supper fellowship and annual church business meeting went smoothly... and we seem to be worshipping in Spirit and in Truth.... it has been a good month.

In our book club last month, we recently read a historical novel about Jacob and his life through the perspective of his wives entitled, The Red Tent. It is a fascinating novel that dives deep into the culture of the day, specifically religion. We had a good conversation about the book and Jacob... BUT...

The book prompted me to consider a verse in Genesis that has long been very curious to me.... I wanted to talk about it at Book Club, but the conversation went to a different place. However, I think it is important enough to discuss it here in the newsletter.

The best way to do that is by asking you to read the following essay written by a biblical scholar... In it, she focuses exclusively on the bolded verse below from Genesis. I hope the essay is “food for thought” and perhaps it will help you understand the context in which Jacob (the Father of the nation of Israel) lived and the relationship he had with his God. Hopefully, with that wisdom, we can improve our own personal relationship with the Lord.

Happy Reading...and let me know what you think!

Genesis 32:24: “Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.”

Jacob is a striver. In the course of his life, he ricochets from one ambition to another, always looking for more. The last thing he says to his father is, “I am Esau.” In that moment, he claims the birthright that belongs to his brother, and also plunges himself into a life-long crisis of identity.

...CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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

In The Murmuring Deep, scholar and biblical commentator Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg elaborates on this moment in which Jacob lies about his own name. "Who am I? Jacob or Esau? Who was it that received Isaac's blessing? An original simplicity has been disrupted." Jacob is now divided. What could have been "I am who I am" is now a self that has denied itself.

From this point, Jacob moves from struggle to fraught; every experience brings about another inner war. In Genesis 28, which recounts the famous dream in which Jacob sees a ladder between heaven and earth, the passage begins, "Jacob came upon the place." In English, this is a fairly unremarkable statement. But Zornberg points out that the original Hebrew for "came upon" could easily be rendered as "collided." This makes a lot of intuitive sense, since Jacob is always colliding with people and places—he is a turbulent whirlwind of a person.

Between the time of Jacob's ladder dream and his wrestling encounter in Genesis 32, he has collided with Rachel (and fallen in love), as well as with Rachel's father Laban. He has been in a long-running conflict with his wife and Rachel's sister, Leah, and maintained another protracted conflict with Esau, of whom the text says Jacob was "greatly afraid and distressed" (Genesis 32:7).



Before he crosses the Jabbok with Leah and Rachel, Jacob divides his possessions in two, so that if Esau's people attack while he's gone, they may only come away with half of his belongings. This is Jacob in a nutshell: divided companies, divided heart, divided self.

He departs with his wives and children, but then leaves them and goes off alone. Zornberg says that the word "alone" is uniquely associated with Jacob among all the patriarchs. Despite his many children and his four wives, he has never recovered from his initial loneliness. This isn't solitude. This is a kind of aloneness that is darker and more sinister. He lives in an exile that is both internal and external. When he leaves Rachel and Leah across the stream, along with "everything he had" (32:23), he is turning toward this inner darkness.

Then he is "left alone and a man wrestles with him until daybreak." This is a very strange sentence. It can't be both: he can't be left alone and be with another person. The and—one tiny little letter in Hebrew—contains both volumes and silence. We have to make some kind of interpretive choice, and how we fill in this blank says everything about us. It's our invitation to become involved, or maybe a trap door through which we fall.

Is the man an angel? The tradition has gone this way as if to resolve the tension and explain it away. But the text says nothing about a divine messenger. Is it, as the poet Derek Walcott might say, "the stranger who is himself"? Or is it God? Later Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face," which invites yet another paradox. And if it's a dream, then Jacob paradoxically comes away with a very real injury.

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

Whoever it is, Jacob grabs hold of this person and will not let go. This is the familiar Jacob with his genius for tenacity. He worked seven years to earn the right to marry Rachel. He sustained a lengthy conflict with Esau without capitulation. He spent 22 years in exile. Now he won't let go, no matter how much it hurts.

The first words that Jacob's adversary speaks are "Let me go" (32:26). Yet true to form, Jacob does not relent. Instead he makes a demand, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (32:26). Through this dark night, Jacob has come to understand that the struggle is a holy one. There is blessing in the unknown, and he will have that blessing.

In response, as if going to the very heart of the pain of Jacob's life, the wrestler says, "What is your name?" This time Jacob answers, "Jacob" (32:27). Perhaps he is finally ready to claim his own name.

If that is the case, though, as soon as he lays claim to it, the stranger gives him a new name, "Israel," "one who struggles with God" (32:28). It is not easy to see this name as a blessing.

And it furthers the theme in Jacob's life that no matter how much he strives to attain, his true path is dispossession. Eventually, he is called upon even to surrender his own name. In a similar way, the stranger will not give his name, but he does offer a fraught blessing. As the sun rises, Jacob comes away from this dark night with a new name, a limp, and a sense that his struggle is holy.

As tempting as it is to leave the story there, we must note that nothing gets easier for Jacob after this. He does manage to reconcile with Esau, maybe because he has finally learned and accepted his own identity. But whereas until now his struggles have all been about how he can get what he wants, after this mysterious encounter, they all become about loss.

His wives die; his daughter is raped. This puts him at odds both with his sons, who want to avenge their sister, and with the royal family, whose son is the rapist. It's a personal and diplomatic nightmare. Later his sons kidnap their own brother, his beloved Joseph, the only son of Rachel, out of jealousy, and Joseph is lost to Jacob until the very end of his long and largely unhappy life.

If we turn to the Bible for assurance that life will be easy and comfortable, and every prayer will be answered and God's blessing will continually rain down upon us, the story of Jacob is not the place to look.

What we can take from this story is that the struggle within us—those dark nights of the soul—is holy. We live in and with a God who is willing to be intimate in that struggle, to engage the mystery of ourselves, and to bless the struggle even as it wounds us.

How are you doing with the great inner struggle? I don't know about you, but I have some similarities with Jacob...I can't let things go...I always think I am right...I hurt the people closest to me...and a lot of the time, I want to fight with God himself.

For me...this story reminds me that God is willing to put up with all of that...because he loves me. And it reminds me that I am never ever alone.

What about you?

I will see you on Sunday...it is shaping up to be a great day...I will save a seat for you.

Brad

NOVEMBER 2025

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:

The Congregational Meeting of Ocker Brethren Church was held following worship on Sunday, October 26, 2025. A quorum was present. Reports were given by the Pastor, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Sunday School Superintendent, Christian Sisters, Cemetery Committee, BYF, Cradle Roll and Mutual Aide.

Election of Board of Elders took place as well. Outgoing Elders are Darrell Glaser, David Sebek and James Naivar. Ocker THANKS YOU for your dedication and service to the church these last 3 years. Newly Elected Board of Elder Members are Lynne Cassens, Mike Beimer and John Shank.

The 2024 Budget presented by John Paul Chervenka was unanimously approved by the Congregation. The Board of Elders would like to thank the Budget Committee for it's diligence and time in preparing the budget.

• • • CHOIR NEWS! • • •

The Sanctuary Choir will sing special Christmas music during the morning worship service December 21. Therefore, we will begin Wednesday evening rehearsals in November at 6:15 pm in the Sanctuary.

Our rehearsal schedule is as follows:

November 5, 12 and 19
December 3, 10 and 17

If you enjoy singing and making a joyful noise unto the Lord, please join us at 6:15 pm on the above dates. Questions may be addressed to Kim Dillard, Sanctuary Choir Director.

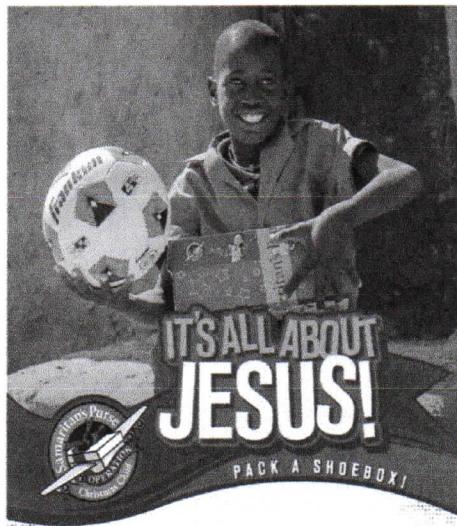
We're on the Web!
www.ockerbrethrenchurch.org
Twitter: @ockerchurch
&
Facebook!

Christian Sisters

The Christian Sisters met on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. We sponsored the Quarterly Craft Retreat that was held the 3rd weekend of October. Maggie Imhoff gave an inspirational devotion to all that were there.

Thanks to all members and everyone else who helped make this event a great success.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, November 18th at 11:30 am. All ladies are invited to attend.



NATIONAL COLLECTION WEEK

November 17 to November 24

Ocker is a Drop-Off location and will be open each day!

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

As a ministry, OCC wants to bring the hope of the Gospel through shoebox gifts for children across the globe. Drop-Off Locations are the first step in the journey of a shoebox and have the opportunity to provide a transformational experience for each donor. Our desire is that we collect these shoebox gifts in a way that the donor feels valued, we accurately count each shoebox gift, cartonize them effectively, and transport them to our Central Drop-off in Temple efficiently. You, as a volunteer, will be a crucial part of this mission to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth and make disciples.

Four volunteers a day are needed for a 2, 3 or 4 hour shift.

Hours of Operation are:

Monday, Nov 17	10 am - 1 pm
Tuesday, Nov 18	2 pm - 6 pm
Wednesday, Nov 19	1 pm - 4 pm
Thursday, Nov 20	2 pm - 6 pm
Friday, Nov 21	10 am - 1 pm
Saturday, Nov 22	9 am - 12 pm
Sunday, Nov 23	12 pm - 2 pm
Monday, Nov 24	10 am - 1 pm
Monday, Nov 24	1 pm - 3 pm

On the last day of Collection week we will need stronger individuals to pack the trailer(s) with fully loaded cartons to be delivered to Central Drop-Off.

During down times we will pack Ocker's shoeboxes. Donations will be received until November 16. Or – take an empty shoebox and fill as a family!

Volunteers must be at least BYF age - but younger youth are welcome if they are with an adult.

Type this link into your browser to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0F45A8AC2CA6FF2-59818706-operation>



Drop-off Location Hosts



Core Task of a Host: Creates an environment where each donor feels encouraged and more connected to what God is doing within their community and around the world through Operation Christmas Child.

Responsibilities of a Host:

Welcome: Joyfully receives each donor and provides a positive, Gospel-oriented experience at the drop-off location.

Gather Data: Helps donors complete a drop-off form, preferably digitally, while the unloader brings in the shoebox gifts.

Collect: Receives the shoebox gifts from the donor and unloader, being careful to keep the integrity of the shoeboxes by not removing or adding anything from them.

Connect: Becomes better acquainted with the donor, offering refreshments if available. As appropriate, shares about the journey of a shoebox, *The Greatest Journey*, or year-round Operation Christmas Child volunteer opportunities.

Affirm: Offers the donor a thank you note, sticker, and/or year-round recruitment card, affirming them for investing in the life of a child.

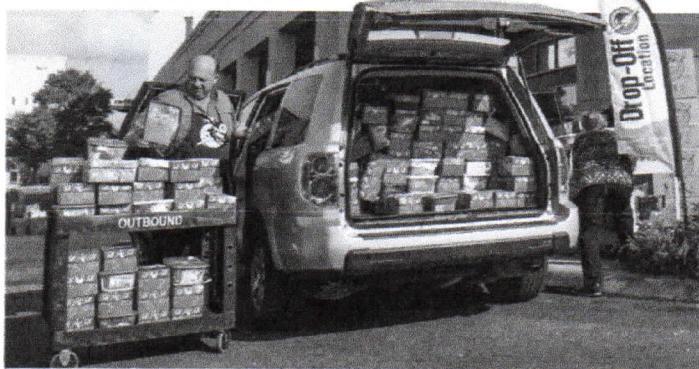
Pray: Offers to pray with each donor, asking if they would like to share any prayer needs.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

—MATTHEW 5:16



Drop-off Location Shoebox Unloaders



Core Task of an Unloader: Collects and carefully counts shoebox gifts and accurately records this information on the drop-off form totals sheet.

Responsibilities of an Unloader:

Collect:
Curbside—Unloads shoebox gifts from donor vehicles according to directions by the drop-off location host.
Inside—Caries shoeboxes for donors needing assistance unloading a large number of shoebox gifts.

Maintain Integrity: Treats every gift with care. Ensures the integrity of the shoeboxes by not adding or removing anything from a donor's shoebox gift.

Organize: Carries shoeboxes to a designated counting table, stacking the boxes by fires so they can be counted quickly and accurately.

Record: Writes the number of shoebox gifts that were dropped off by each donor on the drop-off form totals sheet.

Pray: Prays over the shoebox gifts, for their safe transport and arrival at their final destination.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

—MATTHEW 5:16



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Drop-off Location Greeters



Core Task of a Greeter: Welcomes shoebox donors to the drop-off location.

Responsibilities of a Greeter:

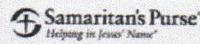
Welcome: Actively watches for donors to arrive and enthusiastically welcomes them to the drop-off location.

Direct: Joyfully directs donors to where they can drop off their shoebox gifts efficiently.
Curbside—Guides donors where to pull up their vehicles, letting them know that they do not have to get out of their vehicles if they would like the shoebox gifts to be unloaded for them.

Parking Lot—Shows donors where to park their vehicles and enter the building. Opens doors for donors, especially as they are carrying shoebox gifts.

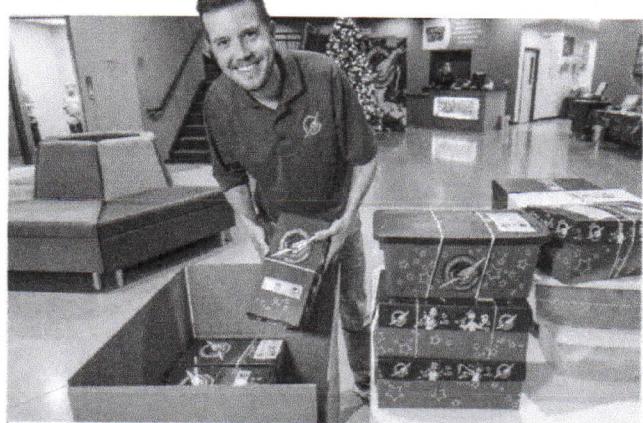
"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

—MATTHEW 5:16



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Drop-off Location Shoebox Cartonizers



Responsibilities of a Cartonizer:

Pack: Efficiently and carefully packs shoebox gifts into each carton, with the first layer packed vertically and the top layer horizontally. Makes sure the carton is not overpacked.

Count and Label: Counts the number of shoebox gifts in cartons as they are filled and legibly writes the number in the designated box on the side of the carton.

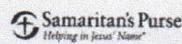
Tape: Immediately tapes a carton closed after the filled shoebox carton is labeled. Uses two strips of tape to secure the bottom of the carton and one strip to secure the top.

Separate: Collects any loose items not packed in shoebox gifts that donors bring to the drop-off location. Places them in a carton labeled Filler items. Does not add the items to shoebox gifts.

Pray: Remembers to pray over each carton, for the shoebox gifts' safe transport and arrival of their final destination. Prays that the children who open the gifts will know that God sees and loves them.

"Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord."

—COLOSSIANS 3:23



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GIRLFRIENDS & GOD FRIENDSGIVING

**Please plan on joining us on
Monday November 24th as we
host the OCC collection drop off at
Ocker from 10am-1pm.**

**After our shift, we will enjoy a festive
“FRIENDSGIVING” & Fellowship.**

**Bring your easiest variation of traditional
Thanksgiving foods to share with our
group.**

••• C.E.C./Sunday School News •••

Sunday School classes are going great. Thank you to everyone attending and being a part of our biblical education and seeing that your little ones are getting here.

We have a couple of exciting months ahead with the holidays drawing near. The Hanging of the Greens will kick off the Season and we will be on our way. Please note that our children's program has been set for Sunday, December 14 during Worship. I hear we are expecting a special that morning during our fellowship time. Everyone is asked to bring finger foods to share and then fellowship together as the children and youth participate in their gift exchange. Everyone is encouraged to stay, eat and fellowship – and meet / see our special guest!

November First Sunday Fellowship is provided by the Books of the Bible Class. December First Sunday is POTLUCK – everyone is asked to bring a breakfast item to share on December 7th.

Lisa Sebek

Come and explore the Harmony of the Gospels with us. Learn what each writer thought was important to them as they shared the good news. See how the gospels are similar. There is always an extra chair.

Maggie Imhoff

FOR THE YOUTH: 6th Grade and up

- Youth Bible Studies: Wednesday nights in November from 6-8pm. Dinner Provided.

State Youth Retreat at Hus

Encampment: November 8-9

For ages 6th grade and up. See Jenn if you missed the registration deadline. The bus will leave the church at 7:45am. More information can be found on the youth website: www.unityofthebrethrenyouth.org.

CALLING ALL POTENTIAL CAMP STAFF: MANDATORY TRAINING DECEMBER 20

If you plan to volunteer as a counselor, CIT, helper, director, or in any position at the camp this summer, you must attend this in-person training.

Camp staff applications are open! Please see Jenn or contact Jordan Barbisich if you have any questions.

Summer camp dates are posted at www.huscamp.org and on the youth website.

Children's Christmas Camp



Saturday, December 6

8am-3:30pm

Children ages 3 & up

A one-day Christmas VBS filled with Bible stories, crafts, music, games and more. Breakfast and lunch included.

Mark your Calendar now!

Wednesday, December 3 & 10-
Children's Christmas Program
Practice

Sunday, December 14-
Children's Christmas Program

Saturday, January 24-Sunday,
January 25- Youth Retreat at
Hus Encampment

Please contact Jennifer Chervenka if you have any questions:

(254) 913-1244; jennchervenka@gmail.com

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 Nov.16~Assign parts

Parents be on the lookout for paperwork, start practicing reading parts at home

Wednesday Dec.3~ Rehearsal

5:30-7:00 Dinner provided

Sunday Dec. 7~Practice

During the last 20 minutes of Sunday School

Wednesday Dec.10~ Dress Rehearsal

5:30-7:00 Dinner provided

Sunday Dec.14~ Program & Meal/Gift Exchange

Please be at the church at 9:00 for one last run through



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



MUTUAL AID SOCIETY OF THE UNITY OF THE BRETHREN



"A Tradition Worth Preserving."

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Are You a Member of Mutual Aid?

Why Should I Be A Member? (It's not just insurance!)

1. The Society provides survivors of deceased members financial help in a time of need.
2. The Society provides loans at a lower rate of interest to the denomination for building of churches, fellowship halls, educational buildings, etc.
3. The Society supports our youth and the future of the Unity through donations to the Unity Youth Coordinator as well as the Society's college scholarship program.
4. The Society has always adhered strictly to the teachings, doctrines, and beliefs of the Unity of the Brethren Church.

**We would like for YOU to become a part of this
great effort in our Church!**

How Much Will It Cost Me?

Membership Dues are billed annually. Age below is age at entry and your rate **stays the same for life**. This amount includes a \$4.00 administrative fee which increases infrequently to cover costs.

Age 16 thru 19	\$19.00
Age 20 thru 24	\$20.50
Age 25 thru 29	\$22.00
Age 30 thru 34	\$24.25
Age 35 thru 39	\$26.50
Age 40 thru 44	\$30.25
Age 45 thru 49	\$33.25
Age 50 thru 54	\$41.50
Age 55 thru 60	\$49.00
Age 61 & up	\$100.00 per year

How Do I Join?

Contact your Local Secretary, Sandra Dubcak, at 254-985-2374 today!
She will get you the application form to complete and return to her.
Or contact Natalie Outlaw, General & Jr Dept Secretary, at 979-589-2012.

Bear Ye One Another's Burdens and So Fulfill the Law of Christ Gal. 6:2

Serving the Unity for over 100 Years!

NOVEMBER 2025

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Christian Sisters
Hospitality Coordinator:
Deanna Naivar
Phone: 254.931.5720

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Jessica Chervenka
- 2 – Tracey Elkins
- 3 – Kara Hoelscher
- 6 – Aaron Martin
- 10 – James Stepan
- 12 – Adam Trojan
- 13 – Camryn Harper
- 14 – Parker Buck
- 16 – Lanelle Lesikar
- 17 – Kenneth Jeske
- 19 – Holden Tucker
- 21 – John Paul Chevenka
- 22 – Richard Lesikar
- 26 – Donald Williams
- 28 – Tessa Koslovsky
- 27 – Cayslee Pierce
- 29 – Max Jordan



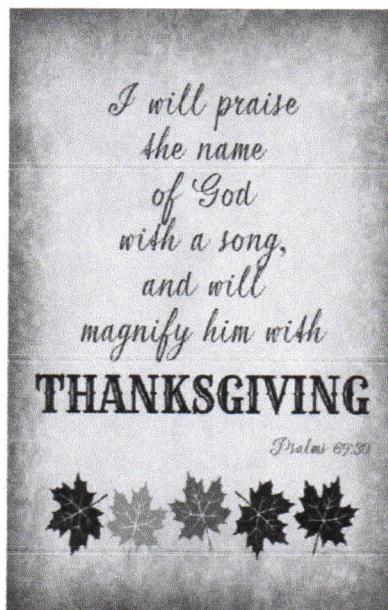
November Anniversaries

- 5 – Andrew & Desirae English
- Allen & Melody Hill
- 14 – Larry & Darlene Pechal
- 21 – Chris & Taryn Tucker
- 26 – David & Lisa Sebek
- Joseph & Debbie Bedrich
- 30 – Matt & Mandy Sebek

Ocker Welcomes its newest members:

Joseph & Debbie Bedrich.
Their children are Paisley, Brady & Cooper

John Shank



Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study "ACTS"

Come and learn about how the Church grew in the beginning. See what was important to the early Christians and how it relates to us today.

We have a place for you! Come and join us for the adventure as we continue our study in Acts.

Maggie Imhoff

November

SUNDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

