

MARCH 2026

OCKER BRETHREN CHURCH

Sewing Christ. Sewing Our Community

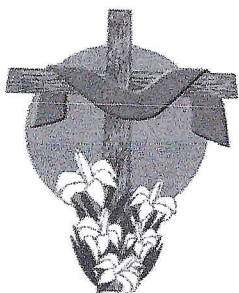
HOLY WEEK

SCHEDULE

*Palm Sunday
Worship Service
March 29
at 10:15 am*

*Maundy
Thursday
Service April 2
at 6:30 pm*

*Easter
Sunrise
Worship Service
April 5
at 7 am*
Followed by
Pancake Breakfast
and Egg Hunt.



From the Pastor....

I have been thinking a lot about the Abilene paradox lately. To that end, I thought I would use this section to offer a sermon I preached about Abilene a few years ago. I think I might have even put it in the newsletter. But, it is good to be reminded of this concept every few years...just to make sure we aren't all going to Abilene!

Enjoy:

What is a healthy church? Have you ever asked yourself that question? What does a healthy church look like? What does a healthy church do? What type of people go to a healthy church? Does a healthy church ever fight or disagree...is everybody always smiling and happy in a healthy church? Is a healthy church always growing like crazy and busting at the seams?

Is Ocker a healthy church?

First and foremost, I think healthy churches love one another. Healthy churches function like a family...they operate from a foundation of love. It doesn't mean they don't fight or the people always have a smile on their faces...it does mean through it all, they return to their baseline...love. I think healthy churches don't have to be growing exponentially... I think healthy churches know who they are and where they are going and growth is a natural product of the love that is shared among the people. Others think to themselves, I want to share in that love...I want to be a part of that family.

Primarily, I think healthy churches do their best to be engaged with God and the world around them...and they try to live in harmony with one another and with God.

And, healthy churches never ever go to Abilene. But more on that in a minute....

....continued on next page

...continued From the Pastor

Part 1

I don't think I have ever, in my life, listened to or preached a sermon from Joel. I would venture to say, it has been a while for many of you as well. There are several reasons, I think, that lead to preachers not mentioning Joel too often in their sermons. Joel is, after all, a very very short prophetic book with four chapters in the English version of the Bible and five in the Hebrew version... the first half of the book deals with an ancient locust plague that lasted for several years. Joel, more of a prognosticator prophet than a prediction prophet announces that the locust are a result of divine judgement. Add that to the book's unfamiliarity and its uncertain origin; and you have a book that few believers ever read, much less hear a sermon on.

But, I want to focus on the last half of Joel. I want to focus on the speech he gives when the locust armies leave and the people are in harmony with God. Because, that is what we want isn't it? To be a people.... a church in harmony with God. That is what a healthy church is trying to accomplish... harmony with God.

When that happens, Joel says, when the nation or group of people or church resumes its harmonious right "love" living, God will pour out his Spirit and sons and daughters will prophesy, old men will dream dreams, young men will see visions. On both men and women, God will pour out his Spirit.

Did you catch that? When God's people are healthy... everybody is in on the action.... Not just one group of people but everybody. God pours out his Spirit on the young and the old... on men and women... nobody is excluded. They dream dreams and have a vision for where they want to go... everybody is engaged.

I think the problem with most churches is, its people aren't honestly engaged in the vision of "love living" harmoniously with God and one another.

Part 2 — Jerry Harvey and Abilene

I think, most of all, healthy churches don't go to Abilene. Let me explain what I mean by that...

Like many of you, I have had the privilege to meet some wonderful people throughout the course of my "job." CIA officials, members of Congress, Ambassadors,

nurses, doctors, amazing teachers, business owners and the list goes on and on.

One of the most extraordinary persons I ever met was Jerry Harvey.

Jerry was a member of the church I pastored in Washington D.C. He passed away while I was the pastor and I was honored to take part in his service. Jerry was extremely smart, and he had a reputation for hazing new pastors in love. I met Jerry on my first Sunday at the church. People had already warned me that he was an amazing man but to watch out for his hazing. The service was over, and I was greeting people on their way out... I saw him coming and braced myself. He was sick and weak by then, but still mentally sharp. He had his wife roll his wheelchair over to me. I greeted him with a smile and an extended hand. He quickly brushed my hand aside, pointed his index finger at me and said, "Who are you and what are you doing in my church?" I laughed nervously, hoping that Jerry would break into laughter as well... but he didn't... he wanted an answer to his question. And why shouldn't he. I was a young "cowboy" from Texas who had the nerve to move his family to D.C. and pastor his church. Who did I think I was?

I realized later that Jerry was trying to protect his church... he wanted to know if I had what it took to keep people engaged and centered on a vision...to make sure that we were harmoniously living in love with God and others... and in D.C., where some members of the church were staunch Democrats and made their living working for a democratic president and other members made their living in the opposition party subverting that president and what he stood for.... well let's just say that is a very very tall task.

Jerry was a management expert and lecturer on sociology. He developed a now famous social theory called, *The Abilene Paradox*.

In his book on the subject, Jerry explains the idea in this way, "It is a hot afternoon visiting my family in Coleman, TX. We are playing dominoes on the porch, until my father-in-law suggests that we take a trip to Abilene (53 miles north) for dinner. My wife says, "Sounds like a great idea" despite having reservations because the drive is long and hot, I think that my preferences must be out-of-step with the group, so I chime in, "Sounds good to me. I just hope your mother wants to go." My mother-in-law then

says, "Of course I want to go. I haven't been to Abilene in a long time." The drive is hot, dusty, and long. When we arrive at the cafeteria, the food is as bad as the drive. We arrive back home four hours later, exhausted. One of them dishonestly says, "It was a great trip, wasn't it?" My mother-in-law says that, actually, she would rather have stayed home, but went along since the other three were so enthusiastic. I say, "I wasn't delighted to be doing what we were doing. I only went to satisfy the rest of you." My wife says, "I just went along to keep you happy. I would have had to be crazy to want to go out in the heat like that." My father-in-law then says that he only suggested it because he thought the others might be bored. The group sits back, perplexed that they together decided to take a trip which none of them wanted. They each would have preferred to sit comfortably but did not admit to it when they still had time to enjoy the afternoon.

Different than "group think," the Abilene Paradox describes a situation where the group decides to do something that individuals in the group don't want to do but agree to because they wrongly assume that others want to participate in the activity.

Conclusion

I have seen that paradox play out over and over again in churches and it is so very harmful. An unwanted group decision is made because the individuals aren't honest with each other. Their dishonesty doesn't have malevolent intent, on the contrary, the intent is pure and selfless...the desire is to do something because the other person "wants to do it." However, it is dishonest, nonetheless. I have seen this paradox play out at Ocker a few times over the past three years...And, that is okay...it means we love one another and want to appease each other at the expense of our own thoughts and desires....and that is a good thing.

But, living in harmony does not mean sacrificing your opinion or giving up your God-inspired vision.

But, as we continue through the beginning of this new year, I pray we will love each other enough to break the paradox and be honest with one another...honest about what we believe Ocker should be doing (our goals)...honest about where we should be going...honest about how we should be getting there. If we do that...well then, get ready for God's spirit to be all over this place and in your heart's.

Please Let's not all go to Abilene just because we think everybody else wants to go but us.... because, the reality is – none of us really want to go to Abilene...it is too hot anyway.

Brad



Choir News

The Choir will sing special music for Easter. Rehearsals will be held Wednesdays, March 11, March 25 and April 1 at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary.

If you enjoy singing please join us! Questions may be addressed to Kim Dillard, Director.

CEC News

The CEC met on February 15 immediately after worship service. Items of discussion included were Easter, April Sunday School sponsored Craft Retreat, Graduates recognition and luncheon, summer Sunday School schedule and classes, VBS and implementing a Sunday School budget.

Easter occurs on Sunday, April 5. There is a NEED for candy to fill the plastic eggs or monetary donations so the candy may be purchased. Monetary donations may be given to Tracie Malovets or Jennifer Chervenka. The stuffing of the eggs will occur on Wednesday, April 1 in the evening. There will be a NEED for many adult volunteers to help stuff the eggs.

April Craft Retreat is hosted by the Sunday School and is scheduled for April 17 & 18. Set up will occur on April 15 or just before. Each adult Sunday School class is asked to provide a meal for around 50. Meals are provided on Friday evening, Saturday lunch and Saturday evening. The Life Applications class has graciously volunteered to provide the Saturday morning kolaches and the desserts for

the weekend. Thank you so much!

Graduates' Recognition and Luncheon - the Graduates luncheon is used to recognize our graduating high school seniors each year. We, generally, include our college graduates and those 8th graders graduating into high school. On May 3 at our first Sunday breakfast, we would like to recognize our regular Sunday School attendees that are High School Seniors and those 8th graders graduating to High School. This will be a special recognition for these students and their parents. On May 17, the church will host the Graduates Luncheon to recognize these regular Sunday School attendees and our church wide High School Seniors, 8th graders and college graduates. We have several Wednesday night youth attendees that will be recognized at this time with their parents. Parents, please reach out to Tracie, Dianne, Lynn or Lisa with your graduate's name so we don't miss anyone from this group, please. Chicken tenders and cake will be provided. **The church is asked to bring sides for the meal.**

Summer schedule for Sunday School will change some for the summer. Our first Sunday in June, we will continue with first Sunday

Summer schedule for Sunday School will change some for the summer. Our first Sunday in June, we will continue with first Sunday breakfast rotations. Adults, along with current 6th graders and up, will stay in the Fellowship Hall for a "Today's Issues" discussion. Children will go to the sanctuary (5th graders and below) for a short Sunday School lesson and then music. A little more time is needed for these kiddos to have a good music lesson and then present to the church on first Sundays.

Vacation Bible School is tentatively set for the evenings of August 2, 3, & 4. Mark your calendars.

Fall Sunday School classes – there will be a confirmation class this fall. More information for these classes will be forthcoming.

Dates to Remember:

April 1 – Easter Egg stuffing – helpers needed

April 5 – Easter Sunday

April 17 & 18 – Craft Retreat Sunday School sponsored

May 3 – 1st Sunday – Muffins with Mom – Recognition of our Sunday

School High School Seniors, 8th graders graduates and college graduates

May 17 – Graduates Luncheon recognizing our church wide High School Seniors, 8th graders graduates and college graduates. We have several that join us on Wednesday nights for youth activities.

May 17 – next CEC meeting after Graduates Lunch

June 7 – 1st Sunday – Donuts with Dad

July 5 – 1st Sunday – Potluck – everyone to bring a breakfast item to share.

August 2 – 1st Sunday – CEC provides – new Sunday School year begins.

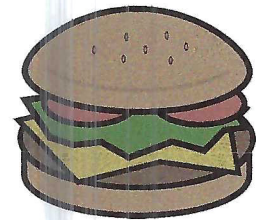
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CHRISTIAN SISTERS

Christian Sisters met on Tuesday, February 17 with 8 members present. Jean Coufal gave the devotional on why we have Ash Wednesday.

Easter plans were discussed. Delegates to the Christian Sisters Convention were discusses and will be selected at the March meeting.

Possible future special programs to be held quarterly were discussed.

Next meeting is March 17 at 11:30 am.



Come support PROSTHETIC PROMISES IN HIS NAME!

HAMBURGER FUNDRAISER LUNCH FOLLOWING WORSHIP SUNDAY MARCH 8.

All proceeds will go directly to P.P.I.H.N. and their work in Zambia to provide prosthetics to those in need.

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE DIRECTLY TO P.P.I.H.N.

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KEEP PRAYING!

ALASKA MISSION TRIP MAY 24 – MAY 31.

Ocker Brethren Church
17454 State Hwy 53
Temple, TX 76501

MAILING ADDRESS:
P.O. Box 806
Rogers, TX 76569

Phone 254.985.2240
E-mail
ockerbrethrenchurch
@gmail.com

PASTOR:
Dr. Brad Herridge
Phone:
254.716.2578
Email:
bradherridge@gmail.com

Board of Elders President
John Brinkley
Phone: 254.721.3196
Email:
wphalia@yahoo.com

Youth Director:
Jennifer Chervenka
Phone:
254.913.1244
Email:
jennchervenka@gmail.com

Sunday School Supt.
Tracie Malovets
Phone:
254.760.8969
Email:
tmalovets@gmail.com

Church Secretary:
Stacie Sebek
Phone:
254.718.5608
ockerbrethrenchurch@
gmail.com

**Christian Sisters
Hospitality Coordinator:**
Deanna Naivar
Phone: 254.931.5720
Email:
busybaker10@gmail.com

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 4 – Jaxon Sebek
- 6 – Joanna Chervenka
- 7 – John Dillard
- Ed Klinkovsky
- 8 – Sharon Jungmann
- 10 – Kash Stephens
Rosie Martin
- 12 – Randy Lesikar
Bernard Koenig
- 20 – Joseph Doney
Carsyn Sebek
- 21 – Ronald Jungmann
- 24 – Tatum Dillard
Brookelyn Harper
- 25 – Karen Tomlin
Taryn Tucker
- 26 – Anijah Cates
- 28 – Mariah Malovets
- 31 – Brittney Harper

March Anniversaries

- 5 – Leland & Sharon Jungmann
- 7 – Johnny & Tina Adams



The next Board of Elders
meeting is
Wednesday,
March 11, 2026
at 6:30 pm in the
Conference Room.
Meetings are open and ALL
are invited to attend.

DINNER


BIRTHDAY CARDS

GIRLFRIENDS & GOD
MARCH 25TH
OCKER'S FAMILY
GAMENIGHT
6:00

CHILD CARE

FELLOWSHIP GAMES

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

1 First Sunday Fellowship 8:30 am <i>Noisy offering</i> Worship 10:15	2	3	4 Youth Bible Study 6 - 8 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	5 Senior Adult Fellowship 9 am - 1 pm	6	7
8 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am PPIHN HAMBURGER FUNDRAISER	9	10	11 Youth Bible Study 6 - 8 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm Board of Elders Meeting 6:30 pm CHOIR 6:30 pm	12	13	14
15 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am	16	17  Christian Sisters 11:30 am	18 Youth Bible Study 6 - 8 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm	19 Senior Adult Fellowship 9 am - 1 pm	20	21
22 Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am	23	24	25 Youth Bible Study 6 - 8 pm Adult Bible Study 6:30 pm FAMILY GAME NIGHT 6 PM CHOIR 6:30 pm	26	27	28
29 PALM SUNDAY Sunday School 9 am Worship 10:15 am	30	31				

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