



Community United Methodist Church  
1480 Poplar Street - Oakdale, CA 95361  
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March 2025

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# CHURCH CHATTER

Newsletter of Events and Information

## Taking a Forty Day Retreat with God

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, March 5th, which is only a few days away. I usually would write that Daylight Savings begins the following Sunday, March 9th, and that Lent usually ends forty days after it begins, with the celebration of Easter Sunday, this year on April 20th. So much for the dates. Let's talk about Lent.

The word "Lent" or "Lenten" come from the Latin word for 40, or a period of 40-days. Why 40? If you will remember, after Jesus was baptized, he was sent by God into the wilderness for 40-days to fast. In that weakened condition, he would come toe-to-toe with all temptation, by encountering Satan in the wilderness.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus spent 40-days in this wilderness, and only drank water? No food! Only the angels looked over him. It was lonely out there. After a number of days, Jesus would indeed begin to feel weak, and even vulnerable, but Jesus resisted all the temptations of Satan, even in a weakened and possibly unsteady steady.

Weakness, fatigue, hunger, insects, wild animals, snakes, and a relentless sun would wear any of us down. Once I fasted for three days, and found it one of the most unpleasant choices I ever made. So, imagine what 40-days of fasting would have been like for Jesus. God must have decided that these 40-days would be very important for Jesus, or he would not have directed Jesus to do such a thing.

Of course, the purpose of his being in the wilderness was not to suffer, but to pray, to talk with God through his own soul, to meditate, and to prepare mentally for the ministry that he was to conduct in the next few years until it ended on earth with his death and resurrection. It was a period of time when he surely drew closer to God, surely knew himself better, and surely understood more clearly what his task was, going forward. You could say that Jesus ultimately "cleared his mind, and became purified in the process" while he was there. When he completed his fast returned to his hometown, he was undoubtedly transformed.

What about you and me? What if we spent these 40-days of Lent talking with God, praying, doing without many of the things that distract us? What if we come to see that these distractions keep us from embracing important principles that God wants us to put into action? What if we cleared our minds during this season and became more purified in the process? What if we started reading the bible, even if it's only a chapter a day from one of the gospels?

Yes, it's always time to go out into the world and love others as we love ourselves, but what if we spent this season understanding why pure love is ultimately so important? We need a season in our lives regularly, to step out of the busyness of our lives, and into a period of deep reflection in God. The time is upon us now. Mark your calendars, and keep your promises with God. Oh... and bring plenty of water.

Blessing to you ...  
Pastor Jeffrey Holder



**Don't FORGET to  
SPRING forward  
March 9th**

## Sunday Service Speakers



### Sunday Services - 10am

**March 2nd**  
Pastor Jeff Holder  
**March 9th**  
Pastor Jeff Holder  
**March 16th**  
Jim Austin  
**March 23rd**  
Kalesita Fa'asisila  
**March 30th**  
Pastor Jeff Holder

## Meet a Member. . .

Nancy (Michener) Podolsky is the longest-standing member of CUMC, with her connection to the church dating back to its days at the stone church on F Street. Her cousin, Margie (Keeler) White, follows closely as the second longest-standing member, being just two months younger.



Growing up in Oakdale, Nancy spent much of her childhood in the church, exploring from the bell tower to the basement with her brother while their mother served as the church secretary for 25 years and as the church organist.

After graduating from Modesto Junior College, Nancy married the boy next door, Larry Podolsky. Their journey took them to Fresno, where Larry completed his undergraduate degree. They then packed up a U-Haul truck—towing their Carmen Ghia—and moved across the country to Chicago when Larry was accepted into medical school. Chicago became their home for the next eight years while Larry pursued his medical education and residency. During this time, Nancy worked as an office manager for a prominent physician at Northwestern University. Their first two children, Sara and David, were born while they lived there.

In 1980, after Larry completed his OB/GYN residency, they returned to Oakdale, where their daughter, Laura, was born a year later. While raising three children, Nancy also pursued her passion for quilting, co-owning a quilting and craft store, *Oakdale Stitching Post*, for nine years. She even authored a quilting book, *Bargello Hearts*, which can still be found online.

Nancy's strong interest in quality medical care, lead her to run for the Oak Valley Hospital Board in 1984, serving for 13 years. She also volunteered at the hospital for over 30 years, including 12 years as the volunteer manager of the hospital gift shop. After her tenure with OVHD, she continued her service on the Memorial Hospital Board for another nine years. When asked where his mother worked, Nancy's young son once replied, "She is a professional volunteer."

In addition to her active role in CUMC, Nancy is involved in the Oakdale Garden Club, where she serves as treasurer and helps maintain their community garden. Her love for art led her to co-found OakdaleARTS, a nonprofit organization dedicated to curating high-quality murals and enriching the community through art.

Married for 54 years to a wonderful husband, Nancy cherishes time spent as a grandmother to three grandsons and one granddaughter. She also enjoys traveling, reading, and now learning to paint.

## Season of Lent begins this month!



March 5th - 5pm

Pastor Jeff will hold a short service to receive ashes either on the forehead or back of your hand.

## Maundy Thursday

April 17th - 6pm  
Escalon

Join with the Escalon UMC at 6pm in their social hall on Maundy Thursday. It is a service to remember the last supper in the upper room. A simple meal will be served to commemorate that meal Jesus and the disciples had together. There will also be a telling of that story and communion with the breaking of bread.



Easter  
April 20th

## Church Family . . . . .

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

March

14th Denny Nikkel  
19th Jeanne Holman  
26th Ann Butler

## How are you Feeling?

by Frank Remkiewicz

Jesus was always deeply concerned about the people that followed him. I take that as no surprise to everyone. This is the exchange between Jesus and Peter found in John 21:15-25

"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

I can do no less than keep each of you in my prayers and in my heart. We are moving into an unknown time when each step we take raises some concern about our direction. The question I have for each of you is, "How are you feeling?" As your Certified Lay Minister and a bit of a bridge between us and Escalon United Methodist Church, I want to be certain that with each step, you are as informed as possible. To this end, please call me at 209-996-8887 or email me at [fremkiewicz@gmail.com](mailto:fremkiewicz@gmail.com) with any questions, thoughts, ideas, or just to talk. I may not have the answer to your question immediately, but I will find it and get back to you as soon as I can.

We started a great and joyful journey. I would like everyone to enjoy it to the fullest extent. We are two very spiritual communities coming together for the greater glory of God. I am here to serve you.

## Accounting Software Update

Lisa Woodhams, our church treasurer, and Frank are working to bring a new complete church software package online. It was hoped to have the financial portion of the application fully functional in February. As with all software implementations, quirks lurk around every corner. It is now looking to March to have the system fully installed and running. Please pray for us as we continue to install and learn the new software system.

## Verse for the Month

*"Return to the Lord your God, for  
He is gracious and  
compassionate, slow to anger  
and abounding in love."*

Joel 2:13

## Changes in July . . . .

On February 8th, the District Superintendent, Rev. Mary Maaga, announced a new pastor, Rev. Mark Buenafe, to lead our church and the Escalon Methodist Church. Both Pastor Jeff and Pastor Peggy will be retiring then. Under one pastor, services will continue at both locations.

Rev Mark and his wife, Norma, and son Mahal, come to us from the Methodist Church in Mariposa. Sadly they recently lost their other son, Marick, this past June. We look forward to welcoming the Buenafe family. More information to come in the following months.



## Work Day - Sat - March 8th

The Scouts and their families (and maybe some Garden Club members) will be here to do an annual clean up, sweeping, pruning, raking, etc on the church grounds and at the parsonage. Everyone is welcome to come help in whatever capacity they are able starting at 8am. Chef Lee will be cooking up lunch for all the helpers.

