



Community United Methodist Church
 1480 Poplar Street - Oakdale, CA 95361
 Office: 209 847-7777

July 2025

Pastor: Mark Buenafe
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CHURCH CHATTER

Newsletter of Events and Information

Pastor Mark's C.O.W.S

I am Pastor Mark Buenafe who begins ministry here at CUMC with and for you beginning on July 1, 2025.

Whenever I have had the ministry blessing of writing for a church newsletter, I customize the 'Pastor's Column' with a catchy name. The imagery of a Pastor's Column is a contribution to a larger whole comprised of other 'columns' holding everything up and together.

With the Pastor's Column is a subtitle in testing the waters: Mark's C.O.W.S. Community Opportunities for Worship and Service. The testing the waters part is that, decades ago, I suggested this as the Newsletter Name for the then Riverdale United Methodist Church in a town known for its dairies. It was promptly changed.

Using Mark's C.O.W.S. for my column in the Church Chatter ties in with Oakdale being the Cowboy Capital of the World. And, as we are the Community United Methodist Church, the bovine imagery came to mind. Can you connect with this acronym?

I conclude every Column with one of my life Bible verses. A verse to also include in worship and encourage you to know by heart as well.

We go forward with God's landmarks guiding us as we take those steppingstones of faith in Christ Jesus.

Now to God who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine according to His power at work in us. To God be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. AMEN. (Ephesians 3:20- 21)

by God's Grace . . .
 Pastor Mark Buenafe

A New Chapter at CUMC . . .

by Frank Remkiewicz, CLM

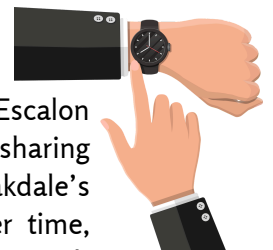
Starting July 1, Escalon UMC and Oakdale Community UMC will embark on an exciting new chapter together—renewing our commitment to God, to each other, and to our communities.

With fresh purpose, we will reach out to welcome the lost, those who do not know us, the weary, the curious, the doubting, and the hopeful—offering Christ's love to all, without exception. Our mission: to make disciples, transform lives, and share God's grace with the world.

We will be welcoming new Pastor Mark Buenafe and family. **Mark your calendars NOW to be in church then and not away on vacation on those first Sundays of July!**

The transition team will continue to meet after July with EUMC members as the "Unification Team". The goal is to coordinate and combine events of both churches.

Don't Be LATE



Starting in July CUMC and Escalon Methodist Church (EUMC) will be sharing NEW PASTOR, Mark Buenafe. Oakdale's service will **CHANGE TO** an earlier time, **9AM, in JULY**. EUMC will continue with their Sunday service at 11am.

July starts - **9AM Sunday Service**

Pianist NEEDED



With Pastor Jeff retiring, we are truly going to miss his talent and enthusiasm on the piano - especially during Sunday services. If you or you know someone who **MIGHT** be interested, please contact:

Nancy Podolsky 209.606.5432.

Meet a Member...

Soon to celebrate her 86th birthday, Carolyn Hallinan is a cherished member of our church family whose life reflects decades of faith, service, and love for her community.



Carolyn was born in Englewood, California, and raised in Stockton alongside her younger sister—who now also lives in Oakdale. After graduating from junior college, Carolyn married her first husband, George Motts, the very next day. Just six months later, the newlyweds settled in Oakdale, where George held many roles at City Hall over the years.

The couple raised two sons: one now lives in Atwater, serving as a pastor of an independent church, and the other lives right here in Oakdale—in the very house he grew up in. Carolyn is the proud grandmother of three and a great-grandmother of ten.

Carolyn became a member of Oakdale Community United Methodist Church nearly 60 years ago and has remained an active and beloved presence ever since. Over the years, she's served joyfully in the church choir, Vacation Bible School, the church kitchen, camp ministry, and even Boy Scouts. In fact, when she brought her oldest son to check out Cub Scouts in the basement of the old church building, she left that same day as the new leader!

While raising her boys, Carolyn took on a variety of jobs—from working in banking when she first arrived in Oakdale, to caregiving, massage therapy, and accounting. She also served her broader community with heart and commitment, volunteering for 20 years with Oakdale Community Sharing.

Carolyn has enjoyed 21 wonderful years of marriage with her late husband, Tom Hallinan, with whom she shared a loving blended family that includes 10 great-grandchildren. Though Tom passed away four years ago, Carolyn continues to live out her faith with grace, humor, and dedication.

We are so grateful for Carolyn's many contributions, and her steady, joyful presence in our church life. When you see her, be sure to say hello—and ask about her adventures as a Cub Scout leader!

Welcome Pastor Mark & Family Sunday- July 6th - 9am

Made in the USA, Pastor Mark was born in New Jersey to Filipino parents and spent his early childhood in New York before the family moved to the Philippines, where he attended high school and college. It was during his high school years that he became a Christian and felt called to the ministry. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology while preparing for seminary—and during this time, met his future wife, Norms.

Mark returned to the U.S. to pursue his theological training, graduating from Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky in 1988. The following year, he returned to the Philippines to marry Norms, and the couple lived there briefly before settling back in the U.S. to begin the process toward his ordination in the Methodist Church.

Pastor Mark began his pastoral career in 1993 in Riverdale, California, and has faithfully served churches throughout the Central Valley in the Fresno District ever since.

Mark and Norms were blessed with two sons: Marick, who they tragically lost just a year ago, and Mahal, who is currently finishing his degree in linguistics at UC Irvine with hopes of becoming a teacher.

Norms is a passionate teacher herself, currently teaching third grade in La Grange. She also has a deep love for plants—so much so that when the family moved to Oakdale, it took an entire carload just to transport her cherished collection!

Pastor Mark has a love for woven patches, is a proud Star Trek fan, and enjoys traveling with a goal of visiting every U.S. national park. He also enjoys being involved in civic organizations and contributing to the broader community.

The Buenafes are a musical family. Pastor Mark and Mahal enjoy listening to movie soundtracks and identifying the composers. Mark plays guitar, and Norms—who also plays guitar and sings—often incorporates music into her classroom. Mahal is a multi-instrumentalist who plays piano, guitar, ukulele, mandolin, cello, and drums, and enjoys performing with Mariachi bands.

Fun Fact: Pastor Mark's sister, a nurse in Santa Clara, has a special tradition—she always attends his first Sunday service at each new church he is appointed to.

Church Family JULY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

11th Carolyn Hallinan
17th Becky Williams

29th Kathy Remkiewicz
31st Larry Podolsky



Come to Sunday services with Pastor Mark who will be celebrating “Grace” this month.

Grace is the unearned, undeserved love and favor of God freely given to us. It meets us where we are—in our weakness, our failures, and our need—and lifts us into new life. Grace is not something we can earn through good deeds or perfect faith; it is a gift that transforms, forgives, and restores. At the heart of grace is God’s boundless mercy and deep desire to be in relationship with us, no matter our past or present.

Celebrating Graduates

On behalf of CUMC, Judy Bradley gave Bibles to Connor McCurdy and Jaydon Pennell to celebrate their graduation from high school.



Help CUMC with Your Input . . .

If you haven’t already, please answer a few questions to better serve our congregation and OUR COMMUNITY. Your input will help Pastor Mark and CUMC bring people back together in church. (Only 8 responses so far!)

Use the camera on your phone to scan this QR code to go directly to the questionnaire or copy & use this link: <https://forms.gle/uiFnpWVQ8iq3Ctm06>



Holy Communion: Part III

Could We Share this Gift More Often?

by Frank Remkiewicz, CLM

One of the most powerful ways we receive God’s grace is through Holy Communion. While God can reach us in countless ways—through prayer, scripture, worship, or quiet moments alone—Communion offers a special, direct experience of Divine presence and love.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, understood this deeply. He took Communion four or five times a week, believing that regular participation strengthened his relationship with God. In the General Rules, Wesley listed Holy Communion alongside worship, scripture reading, prayer, and fasting as essential ways to receive grace.

So why do most Methodist churches—including ours—offer Communion only once a month?

The answer stretches back to our history. Before the Revolutionary War, early Methodists worshiped with the Anglican Church to receive Communion, since Methodist clergy were scarce. After the war, when British clergy returned to England, Methodist circuit riders took on the task—traveling long distances to serve scattered congregations. Most churches only saw these ministers once a month, and that pattern simply became tradition.

But times have changed.

What if we offered Holy Communion more often—every other week or even weekly? Wouldn’t more frequent encounters with God’s grace deepen our faith and draw us closer to Him? Yes, our service might run five or ten minutes longer—but isn’t a fuller measure of God’s grace worth that small extra time?

I invite you to pray about this possibility. Could this simple change bring new spiritual richness to our worship life? I’d love to hear your thoughts.

May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

Summer Guests Yellow Cottage on Poplar

If you know of guests or travelers needing a cozy & comfortable place to stay in Oakdale, Margie White has an AirBnB place right down the street. Search for the “Yellow Cottage” in Oakdale, CA at <https://airbnb.com> for the description and calendar of availability.

