



# Oak Branch FEBRUARY 2024



Oak Hills Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Rachael Huntley

Beloved Family,

With the Super Bowl and Valentine’s Day and a 3-day weekend for Presidents’ Day, February can bring fun and joy. May you find February to be delightful.

With the celebration of Black History Month, February can bring education and awareness. May you find February informative and may your awareness spur you to action.

With the observance of Ash Wednesday, February can bring reflection and growth. May you find February to be a time to go inward and reflect on what the Lenten journey might mean for you this year.

Beginning the Sunday after Ash Wednesday (which is Valentine’s Day this year!), I will be doing a sermon series on God’s everlasting covenant with God’s people. We will spend several Sundays in the Old Testament, listening to God’s promises to Noah, Abram & Sarai, Moses, and Jeremiah. We will also find ourselves in the epistles, reflecting on God’s deeply personal covenant with each one of us. Finally, on Palm Sunday, we will celebrate the way that God’s covenant through Christ defies all our expectations.

What does it mean for you to have a God who loves you enough to make an unshakeable covenant with you? Does it create a sense of security, of obligation, of wonder, or something else entirely? I look forward to examining that question and taking this journey together!

Always with love,  
*Pastor Rachael*

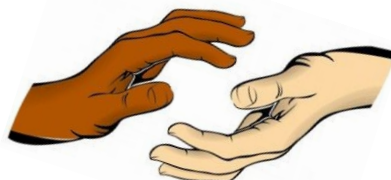


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*Delight*



*Awareness*



*Reflection*

## Morning Worship, 10:30 AM

Ash Wednesday service, February 14 at noon

Bible passages are listed for your reflection each week.

## Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, February 4

Please plan to stay for a short meeting after worship in order to review the annual report.



### February 4

Isaiah 40:21-31  
Psalms 147:1-11, 20c  
1 Corinthians 9:16-23  
Mark 1:29-39

### Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Have you not heard? The Lord strengthens those who are weak. Sing praise to the Lord, who gathers, heals, and feeds us. Paul says: Everything I do is for the sake of proclaiming the gospel. Jesus heals many people; in the morning he steals away to pray.

### February 11

2 Kings 2:1-12  
Psalms 50:1-6  
2 Corinthians 4:3-6  
Mark 9:2-9

### Transfiguration of the Lord

After crossing the Jordan, Elijah ascends to heaven in a chariot. From the storm and fire, God calls: Gather up my faithful ones. We know the glory of God through the face of Jesus Christ. On a high mountain with Moses and Elijah, Jesus is transfigured.



### February 14

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17  
Or Isaiah 58:1-12  
Psalms 51:1-17  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10  
Matthew 6:1-6, 12-21

### Ash Wednesday (Service at noon)

The day of the Lord is coming; return to God with all your heart. The fast God chooses: do justice, release captives, help the poor. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new spirit within me. Be reconciled to God in Christ; now is the day of salvation. Don't flaunt your fasting and prayer; store up treasure in heaven.



*Remember man  
that you are  
dust and into  
dust you shall  
return.*

### February 18

Genesis 9:8-17  
Psalms 25:1-10  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:9-15

### First Sunday in Lent

God's covenant with Noah: I will never again flood the whole earth. Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord; do not remember my sin. The flood of former days refigures the sacrament of baptism. After his baptism, Jesus is tested in the wilderness for forty days.

### February 26

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16  
Psalms 22:23-31  
Romans 4:13-25  
Mark 8:31-38  
Or Mark 9:2-9

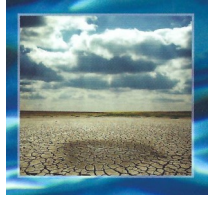
### Second Sunday in Lent

God's covenant with Abraham: I will make of you a great nation. In the great congregation I will praise the Lord, my deliverer. Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness by God. Jesus says: Deny yourselves; take up your cross and follow me. On a high mountain with Moses and Elijah, Jesus is transfigured.



*"The real question of the Lenten season is how will I clear out the junk and garbage in my life so that I can be restored to God in some fresh way? What are the disciplines that will open up space for God to create a clean heart and new spirit in me?"*

*- Ruth Haley Barton*



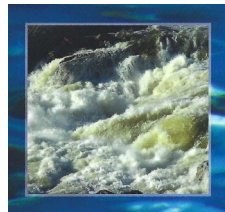
## **BIBLE STUDY!**

February 7 and 21

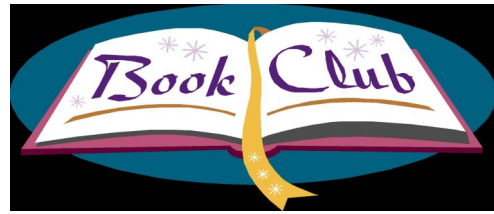
5:30 PM in the library and on Zoom

### **Come to the Waters**

This month we will note the absence of water as we explore physical and spiritual thirst in the Bible and in the dry times of our lives. Then we will face dangerous waters as we consider the ways God saved the Israelites and how God saves us today.



**All are welcome to participate!**



**Thursday, February 15**

### **Lessons in Chemistry, by Bonnie Garmus**

When chemist Elizabeth Zott finds herself a single mom and reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show, her unorthodox approach to cooking ("combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride") proves revolutionary. She is not only teaching her followers to cook, but daring them to challenge the status quo. Join us in our discussion of this delightfully humorous book.

#### **Future reads:**

March 21: *The Frozen River*, by Ariel Lawhon

April 18: *The Benevolent Society of Ill-mannered Ladies*, by Alison Goodman

May 16: *Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Annie Barrows and Mary Ann Shaffer

**Join us at 11 AM in the library or on Zoom the third Thursday of each month as we dive into a new book.**

Oh yes! February 11<sup>th</sup> is also "**Super Bowl**" Sunday. (Kickoff is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.) We will follow our recent tradition of filling out your Super Bowl prediction sheet. Watch for the form and show us how much you know about football.

**This is for fun only; no betting allowed.**



## **CHOIR NOTES**

Singing is able to touch and join human beings in ways few other arts can.

Our choir members are wise and joyful thinkers on this truth – and every voice is valued and appreciated. We have lots of fun as we gather **each Wednesday at 4 p.m.**, for an hour. Add your voice to our voices, and enjoy terrific fun and fellowship. You never know who you will meet!

**For more info, see Greg.**



### **Oak Hills has a prayer chain!**

Ginger Jenson maintains a listing of members willing to pray for the needs of our members and friends. When she gets a prayer request, she calls the first member of each of five prayer groups, who in turn each call the next member of their group. The group is always glad for more prayer partners. So, if you would like to be part of this mission or if you have a prayer request, give Ginger a call! Her home number is 210-681-0181 and her cell is 210-854-9205.

**FINANCIAL NEWS**

At the congregational meeting on February 4, the Pastor’s Call will be presented for approval. Also at the meeting, the new budget will be presented. We ended last year with a deficit in income versus expense. Much of the deficit is due to the multiple A/C issues. The deficit was balanced out by using moneys from the garage sale and special donations.

Your contribution statements for 2023 will be provided by time of the congregational meeting. Please contact the church office if you have not received yours by mid-February. If you have questions, please contact me or the church office.

Thank you for your faithful giving and your support of OHPC.

**P. Jack Henson, Treasurer**



**SESSION NOTES**

- Approved the 2024 budget
- Approved the Pastor’s Terms of Call and recommended congregational approval
- Approved payment of the \$9.80 per capita assessment along with a \$200 per month benevolent giving to the Presbytery
- Scheduled the annual congregational meeting for Feb. 4
- Approved the annual statistical report that the Clerk of Session submits to the Presbytery
- Agreed to cancel the March Session meeting; pressing business will be handled by email.

**Donna Amonett,  
Clerk of Session**



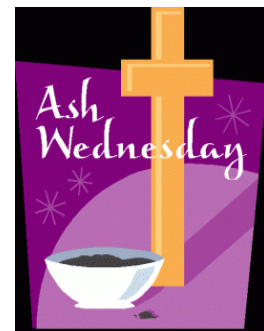
**Thank you!**



In addition to the ladies listed in last month’s Oak Branch, Judy Grant also knitted some hats and scarves for the Under the Bridge ministry. My apologies for omitting her in the article and thank you for your participation, Judy!

**Ash Wednesday Service**

February 14 at noon



Please join us for this special service of music, prayer, reflection, and the imposition of ashes.

*Happy Valentine’s Day*



**Time to Start Building Habitat House!**

The Presbyterian Cluster build begins February 3. Be on the lookout for more information as to how you can help.



## *Souper Bowl Sunday*

The **Souper Bowl of Caring** empowers and unites communities to tackle hunger using the energy of the Big Game. Its vision is to transform the Big Game into a nationwide movement inspiring people to give locally and make a collective impact on hunger. We will be collecting monetary and food donations during the weeks leading up to Super Bowl Sunday. All the money and food collected will be used to restock Cristie's Closet, the OHPC food pantry.

The *Souper Bowl of Caring* began in 1990 with this simple prayer...

***"Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat."***

We are asking for contributions from each of you—food and/or money. Donation bins will be available in the narthex through February 11, donation bins will be available  
Please bring non-perishable food items, such as

Peanut Butter – Rice – Pasta – Canned Goods  
or Money Donations

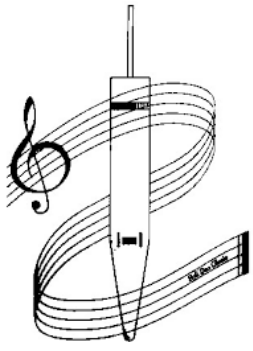


***Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deeds.***

***Proverbs 19:17***



# Music Notes



## WORKING WITH SINGERS

Church musicians will agree that four factors contribute significantly to the satisfaction of being a Music Director and Organist. Those factors include the quality of the facility and organ, the personalities of the clergy and staff, the dynamic of the congregation itself, and the ability of the choir and singers. This essay will focus on the fourth factor, collaborating with the choir and singers.

In more than 50 years of serving as an organist, I have encountered every possible situation with singers, from sublime success to dizzying disaster. In general, the larger and more moneyed congregations will attract the better singers and choir members, while the smaller churches, especially mission churches, often struggle along. There are exceptions, of course.

In the 1970's I played for Roman Catholic congregations in Ohio and Arizona. My worst experiences centered on unqualified singers who served as cantors, leading the singing at Mass. With few priests being musicians, whether a cantor was good or bad, was up for grabs. I remember a husband-and-wife team, where the husband was the organist and the wife was the cantor. The wife was an opera-trained mezzo-soprano, whose warbling voice and gross vibrato was shocking to hear in church. One Sunday she croaked out the familiar Trinitarian hymn, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*. It was just awful, her piercing voice making a mockery of holiness. It was raining outside and upon conclusion of the hymn, a huge thunderclap rocked the church building. "Yikes," remarked a parishioner, "even God disapproves!" Shortly thereafter, the pastor ran her off, but this diva was able to secure a new gig shortly thereafter.

For every bad situation encountered, I had two or more good situations. My Arizona church had a tremendous congregation that loved to sing, encouraged by the colorful Irish-American pastor. He always urge the singing of familiar hymns so everyone would participate. The singing was so good, we did not need a cantor—just a strong organist to lead and lift the people.

By the 1980's I had shifted to mainline Protestant churches as the organist, and the relationships with singers and choirs were mostly positive. The one treacherous situation remained wedding singers. Most pastors generally washed their hands of regulating who could sing, not wanting to offend the bridal party. So, if the bride wanted her favorite sorority sister to sing *Ave Maria*—whether that singer was qualified or not—I was at their mercy behind the console. It was then, and now, always hit or miss. Today, I will try to screen the capabilities of the soloists and offer advice to the wedding party. Some churches fully empower the musician to refuse certain singers, although I have never been able to say politely, "You sing like a wailing cow and are not allowed at our church."



Oak Hills Presbyterian Church has had an excellent choir for more than four decades. Our singers are all musically literate—most read music—and they blend well. We just need more singers to augment our ranks, especially when the regular members are away.

During the 13-month pandemic lockdown, our worship was remote and broadcast live. During the period, three persons were involved with the worship inside the sanctuary—Pastor Rachael, Ann Stull as soloist, and me

as organist. The character of the service changed markedly without the presence of a congregation, but we soldiered on. Ann Stull a gifted and talented first soprano, sang beautifully, Sunday after Sunday, her remarkable voice always on pitch and graded with a natural vibrato. Ann's singing voice, coupled with the good preaching by Pastor Rachael, carried us through the rigors of the pandemic.

So, when a musician encounters a good group of singers, plus the other three factors in church ministry, the result is bountiful music. OPHC is blessed indeed!

Gregory Nussel  
Organist and Music Director  
January 24, 2024



*We celebrate Greg Nussel for his seven years with OHPC—thank you, Greg!*

## The Organist

I wonder how the organist  
Can do so many things;  
He's getting ready long before  
The choir stands up and sings;  
He's pressing buttons, pushing stops,  
He's pulling here and there,  
And testing all the working parts  
While listening to the prayer.

He runs a mighty big machine,  
It's full of funny things;  
A mass of boxes, pipes and tubes  
And sticks and slats and strings;  
There's little whistles for a cent  
In rows and rows and rows;  
I'll bet there's twenty miles of tubes  
As large as garden hose.

There's scores as large as stovepipes and  
There's lots so big and wide  
That several little boys I know  
Could play around inside.  
From little bits of piccolos  
That hardly make a toot  
There's every size up to the great  
Big elevator chute.

The organist knows every one  
And how they ought to go;  
He makes them rumble like a storm,  
Or plays them sweet and low;  
At times you think them very near;  
At times they're soaring high,  
Like angel voices, singing far  
Off, somewhere in the sky.

For he can take this structure, that's  
As big as any house,  
And make it squeak as softly as  
A tiny little mouse;  
And then he'll jerk out something with  
A movement of the hand,  
And make you think you're listening to  
A military band.



He plays it with his fingers and  
He plays it with his toes,  
And if he really wanted to  
He'd play it with his nose;  
He's sliding up and down the bench,  
He's working with his knees;  
He's dancing round with both his feet  
As lively as you please.

I always like to take a seat  
Where I can see him go;  
He's better than a sermon, and  
He does me good, I know;  
I like the life and movement and  
I like to hear him play;  
He is the most exciting thing  
In town on Sabbath day.

George W. Stevens



*This month the Membership Committee is highlighting Jan Hamill.*

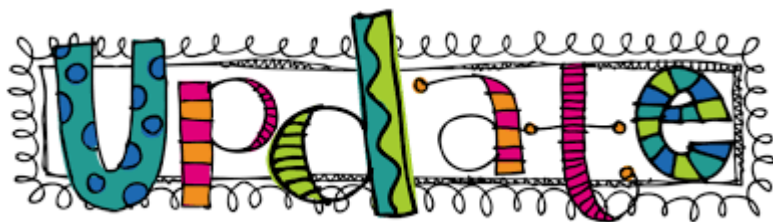
Jan has been worshipping at OHPC since she was a young child. She was born in Colorado, but her family moved to San Antonio after her father was medically discharged from the Air Force when she was five years old. She is one of four children. Both of her parents were at home when she was growing up. Her father continued to have medical challenges and her mother, Roberta Betts, was his primary caregiver. After graduating from Jefferson High School, Jan worked for AT&T. Her job necessitated a move to the Houston area for about ten years, but the family returned to San Antonio to help out when one of her granddaughters was diagnosed with a terminal illness in 2010.



Jan has been married to her husband Barry for 40 years. She has one daughter and a stepdaughter. She and Barry have seven grandchildren, ages 8-23.

Jan says her grandchildren keep her pretty busy. She has been a member of our OHPC choir for many years, first joining around 1990. She loves music and sings in a community chorus as well. Jan recently learned to quilt and belongs to a quilting group that she really enjoys.

Oak Hills has been blessed by Jan's musical talents which have enriched the worship experience for all of us.









The membership committee will be updating our church directory this spring. Please check the accuracy of your information in the current directory. Call Angie in the church office (210-342-0271) to update your address, email, and/or phone number(s). If you would like to change your photo, send a new one to Angie (oakhills@oakhillspresbyterian.com) or see Dick Elliot after services in February for a new shot. Those pictures really help new members learn who we are!

And while you're at it, please give Angie your date of birth (including the year) so we can recognize your birthday! (It will not be published in the directory.)





# February 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 2-4 PM Girl Scouts
4 10:30 AM Worship 11:30 AM Congregational Meeting 11:45 Membership mtg 4-6 PM Guide Dogs	5	6	7 4 PM Choir 5:30 PM Bible study  7 PM AA	8	9	10
11 10:30 AM Worship 11.30 AM Session 	12	13	14 12 noon Ash Wednesday Service  4 PM Choir 7 PM AA	15 11 AM Book Club 	16	17 2-4 PM Girl Scouts
18 10:30 AM Worship 4-6 PM Guide Dogs	19 	20	21 4 PM Choir 5:30 PM Bible study  7 PM AA	22	23	24
25 10:30 AM Worship	26	27	28 4 PM Choir 7 PM AA	29		

## Birthday blessings to:

2/3 C.A. Aranda  
2/5 Lori Vickers  
2/6 Anthony Santos  
2/7 Clara Brown  
2/7 Janis Williams  
2/9 Charlie Redd  
2/10 Michael Jenson  
2/11 Barry Stevens  
2/12 Jan Hamill

2/13 Tom Oei

2/14 Elinor James

2/22 Ro Amonett

2/23 Hayward James

2/25 Julie Schneider

2/25 Dick Elliott

2/28 Heather Ebert



*All you need is love.  
But a little chocolate  
now and then doesn't hurt.*



## Happy Anniversary!



2/14 Asoh Mabo & Jonas Njifouta

2/17 Terri & Patarick Slonaker

2/20 Geraldine & Marshall Besecker

**Oak Hills Presbyterian Church**

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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

Return Service Requested

*Oak Branch February 2024*

