

# The Connection

January 2025

A Monthly Newsletter of Turner Christian Church

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## Dear Church... from Pastor Matt

**“Come, follow me.”** This was Jesus’ standard invitation to the people he met in his ministry. As we discussed in the January 19th sermon, Jesus is not inviting them to “be like him.” That is his ultimate goal, but what Jesus wants them to do first is to follow him—to go where he goes, be with him, learn from him, train with him, so that they know *how* to be like him.

When Jesus invites you to follow him, he is not inviting you to become a missionary or a pastor, or behave more like him in the role you have now. Where Jesus will send you—into the ministry, the mission field, or your own home or work place—is another question. *Some are called to be pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and so on—but all are called to follow Jesus.* When Jesus invites you to follow him, he is inviting you to get to know him—to know about him, sure, but more importantly to know him personally.

There are many ways of spending time with Jesus. Prayer is one essential way of spending time with Jesus. If you’re used to prayer being about lists of topics—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, for instance—then this will be a bit different for you. Those topics are good and important—but you can also use prayer to simply be in the presence of Jesus. Talk to him. Ask him questions. Spend the time like you would over coffee with a friend. I read in a book somewhere that the most basic goal of prayer is to say to God, “I love you,” and to hear him say “I love you” back. Maybe start there.

Another essential way of spending time with Jesus is through meditating on Scripture, especially the gospels. This is essential because the gospels show us who Jesus is—what he is like, what is important to him, what he expects of us. Without the gospels, talking to Jesus can just mean talking to ourselves, or who we want Jesus to be. I would encourage you to spend time reading from the gospels with the goal of watching and learning from Jesus himself (check below for resources to help).

Finally, worshipping with the congregation is an essential way of spending time with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus and your brothers and sisters is important because being together allows us to hear and say things you might not have heard or said on your own. In our songs and confessions we speak words that are not our own—we thank God, confess sins, proclaim God’s forgiveness, whether or not we feel thankful, sinful or forgiven in the moment. In the sermon and meditations we hear from God’s Word in ways that would not have occurred to us in our own devotions. And at the Lord’s Table we encounter the body and blood of Jesus in a way that we cannot do on our own.

This year, my hope is that we will all find fresh ways to respond to the invitation to follow Jesus. We are each in different places. What is the next step for you? How can you spend more time with Jesus? Or focus more intently on being in his presence and learning from him?

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# I've been thinking...

From Pastor Rachel

I've planned for several months to have this month's topic be about joy. As I'm writing this I am wrestling with a diagnosis from a few days ago: a node on a vocal chord.

Now, praise God, this is certainly not a life-threatening diagnosis. But it is a life-threatening diagnosis, as in, how I live my life. My current life requires my voice every single day. I'm a minister—I teach, lead meetings, preach, have one-on-one's. I work part-time as a barista—raising my voice to be heard above the hiss of espresso machines. I sing—I'm in a chorus, an octet and a quartet. And because my family and some close friends live elsewhere, I'm on my cell a lot, conducting my deepest relationships by phone. Day-in and day-out my voice is the key to my relationships, my work and my hobbies.

And now, for at least the next 4-6 weeks, I don't have my voice. When life changes and shifts, even temporarily, what happens to joy?

We might turn to James, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*"

Now, I'm fairly confident that vocal nodes were not on James's radar when he wrote that. I'm not sure that vocal nodes had been discovered yet. I believe many of James' readers were facing much more serious things.

Yet, if joy in trials is true for serious things, it is not also true for less serious things? Everything has the opportunity to draw us closer to Jesus, based on our response. Everything from betrayal, religious persecution, loss of a child, a bad test grade, the end of a relationship, a broken ankle, cancer, food poisoning, job loss . . . everything

that tries us can lead us to greater maturity in Christ. That is a joyful thought.

Let me explain:

In the world, away from the Lord, trials are seen as failure, places of despair and anguish, or an opportunity where you need to show your own strength and "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," or "suck it up." Not so with Jesus. In trials we have the safety and strength of the Lord who is our rock and foundation. We have the encouragement of Christ, the promise that He is at work in our lives, and that we are not alone. In fact, he's even given us a community to lift us up, to pray for us, to serve and support us in our weakest and darkest moments. In a wild world, in a world full of trials, the king of kings takes care of us. Consider it pure joy? Why? When my world shakes (which, oh, it has shook. There have been circumstances in my life that have rattled my very core) my God and my rock stays firm, and I stand on Him. Things crumble away—even our own health, even the lives of those we love, but our soul is safe and can be at peace in Jesus. Joy? Why? Because the worst things of this life can not take Jesus away from me unless I stop clinging to Him. The worst things of this life grow my confidence in Christ. I am more peaceful and more hopeful because of my trials.

Joy? How? First, do not give up on gathering with God's people when you are in trial. Seriously. However much you are dreading it, or not feeling it, you need the rituals of faith—the practice of communion, the praises to God, and His Word spoken over you. Second, spend time with him alone. If you have no ambition for personal devotion buy a guide or go through a Bible reading program. Spend time in silence, helping your body be calm before the Lord. Pray, and breath and read small sections of His word. And it might take some time—but watch for the joy to grow. He is always faithful. Consider that joyfully, too.



## Little Lamb Christian Preschool

### A Note from Our Director, Bethany Robinson

As I reflect on the past few months, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and love for each of you. November and December were particularly challenging for me as I underwent surgery and began my journey of recovery. During this time, I experienced not only the physical challenges of healing but also the emotional weight that often accompanies such life events. Yet, in the midst of it all, I was blessed beyond measure by the unwavering support and love from our congregation.

The peace I felt knowing that our preschool was in such capable hands made all the difference. It was a true blessing to witness how our community stepped up to ensure that everything continued to run smoothly in my absence. I am so grateful for Miss Maritza and volunteers who rallied around our preschool, providing care, compassion, and continuity for our children. Your commitment to nurturing our little ones during this time was a testament to the strength and unity of our church family.

In what could have been a frightening and isolating experience, I found solace in the knowledge that my family and I were surrounded by a loving community. The prayers, meals, kind messages, and offers of help made a daunting situation feel so much lighter.

Your support truly exemplified God's love in action, reminding me of the beautiful truth that we are never alone, even in our toughest moments.

As I have come through this season of recovery and rejoined our preschool family, the joy of being back together is immeasurable. It has been such a blessing to reunite with the children and their families, to see their smiling faces and hear their laughter once again. In this new year, as we move into February, we will focus on a theme that resonates deeply with my experience: how God loves us and how we should love others.

I can think of no better example of loving others like Jesus than what I have experienced in recent months. Every act of kindness and every prayer lifted on our behalf reminded me of the love of Christ that binds us together as a community. It is this love that we are called to share with one another and with the world around us.

I will carry the lessons of love, compassion, and unity from this experience with me always. Thank you for being the incredible congregation that you are. Your love and support have been a beacon of light in my life, and I am excited to continue this year together.

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*(Dear Church, continued from front page)*

There is a new page on our website ([www.turnerchristianchurch.com/discipleship](http://www.turnerchristianchurch.com/discipleship)) and a new section in the church app (under the "resources" tab on the bottom right) called "Discipleship Resources" where we will be posting resources to help you spend time with Jesus, including a gospel reading plan and book recommendations. Check back from time to time as we add more. I hope they help!

May God bless you and all our brothers and sisters as we learn together how to follow Jesus more closely.



Unshakable Hope is a steadfast, unwavering confidence regardless of our circumstances. We all experience feelings of doubt, fear, insecurity and chaos throughout our lives.

Perhaps you are living through such a time as this. Come and Worship.

Maybe you are filled with the unshakable hope of Jesus. Come and Worship.

Every character trait of our Savior (faithfulness, unconditional love, promise keeper) builds our foundation of hope in Jesus. Come and Worship Jesus—the only source of unshakable hope!



**VBS Bible Study**  
**Mondays, February 3rd—March 3rd**  
**6:00 to 7:00 pm**

VBS is a whole-church commitment! This five-week study, led by Casey Holmes, will take you through each Bible passage for our 2025 VBS. You'll leave this studying knowing what will be taught at this year's VBS and how to pray for it. And whatever your role ends up being for this year's VBS—praying for the event, being a volunteer, chauffeuring your kids back and forth—you'll be better prepared for God's invitation. Please register at: <https://subspa.sh/dvqmrz5/>



This event is for preschoolers-high schoolers that are interested in learning about baptism. This brunch is accessible to all—from kids that are just curious about the decision they might make one day, to kids who are ready to take that step.

The brunch includes time as a big group, and also an age-divided portion. Younger children will be led by Kris Jakubowski and older kids will be with Pastor Rachel. Each child is required to attend with a parent/guardian/or another adult that is a primary spiritual presence in their life.

Please register at: <https://subspa.sh/qv2d47q/>

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**Seniors Group to Celebrate  
The State of Oregon's Birthday!**

**February 14th at 1:00 pm**

Oregon became the 33rd State on February 14, 1859! All Seniors are invited to celebrate Oregon's 166th Birthday on Friday, February 14, 2025 at 1:00 pm. Come join us for fun, games and snacks! Register at: <https://subspa.sh/xy5wrtt/> or contact Sharon Teixeira for more information.

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**Turner Community Garden Meeting Again  
On the 3rd Monday of the Month—6pm**

The group provides gardening spaces to local families, collaborate with our local school groups in bringing gardening to the classroom, as well as providing produce donations from the Garden's Community Food Plots to our neighbors in need.



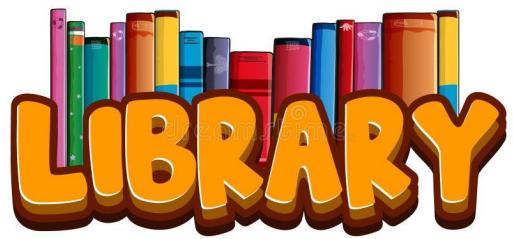
## We Invite You To Help Us Make A New Church Photo Directory!

We are starting by taking pictures that will be used in the new church directory. We believe that having access to a photo of individuals and families in the congregation will help us to know one another better and make communication with one another easier. All church members and regular attenders are invited to participate—if you consider this your church home, we'd love to include you!

Bethany Robinson is taking photos for the directory and we had a good start last Sunday. Bethany will be taking photos in the Church Fellowship Hall on these dates and times:

**Sundays, After Church —1:00 pm**  
**February 2nd; February 9th; February 23rd**  
**Wednesday, February 5th 9:30—10:30 am**  
**Thursday, February 6th 2:45—3:30 pm**

The new directory will be accessible online and in print. Photos and data will only be visible to members of the directory. Our church directory will not be complete without you. Join us to celebrate faith and family with our new church family directory.



The church library is an ever-growing resource for anyone in our church, not just members. We have the usual materials for spiritual growth, Bible study, and church history, but we also have some of the best and most recent publications on how Christians can handle grief, finances, leadership, and parenting. We have an excellent freshly updated kids corner and we also have DVDs available for checkout.



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### **Winter Sunday School Schedule**

**December 8 – March 2**

**9:00 – 10:00 am**

**Bible Study For Everyone - Carol George**  
**Prayer: Talking With God – Frank Musgrave**  
**Restoring Spiritual Passion – Frank Loyd**  
**Ministry With Children – Rachel White**

**Childcare and Children's Classes  
are available.**



I think it's been awhile since I've given you an update on the Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry. That is, in part, due to the fact that we have been super busy doing the work to fulfill this ministry.

During the third week of November last year, our Salem Area Team of year round OCC volunteers collected, counted, and put over 10,000 Shoeboxes in cartons. We then counted, logged, and loaded those cartons into semi truck trailers that were trucked to Denver to be processed. From there, those Shoeboxes were sent to various countries such as Mexico, Benin, and Guatemala to be distributed with the Good News of God's love.

Meanwhile, back in Turner, our Team began focusing on preparations for Shoeboxes in 2025. We are still meeting each Tuesday afternoon to begin preparing inventory for our 5th Annual Community Packing Party which will take place on the third weekend in August.

We have already processed over 1,000 PetSmart stuffed animal donations, filled 300 pencil pouches with needed school supplies, counted and sorted out toothbrushes, removed around 500 Hot-wheels from their packaging, added filler paper to folders, etc., all in preparation for filling 1,800 Shoeboxes in August. Whew!

We do all of this with great anticipation and joy as God continues to supply items and bless our time at the Shoebox Work Shoppe on the campus of Turner Homes.

If you are looking for ways to help us share God's great love with His children near and far, there are many ways you can plug in to this ministry. We always appreciate the prayers offered for the health and safety of all volunteers here and abroad, for inventory to be filled, and for the kids and their families and friends who will be eternally changed through these gifts.

We also appreciate all of your support in collecting both items for the Shoeboxes and the financial gifts that help us obtain needed items. We're again hoping to be able to include a soccer ball in about 600 of these Shoeboxes and our supplier for these offers us a great deal on bulk orders. We're always collecting school supplies, washcloths, filler paper, combs and other hair supplies, baby and Barbie dolls with accessories, and the list goes on.

If you're interested in getting involved in any way, please feel free to contact me for more information.

—Ann Stoker