



The Connection

March 2025

A Monthly Newsletter of Turner Christian Church

Volume 20; Issue 3



Dear Church... from Pastor Matt

Have you ever felt like God was conspiring against you to teach you something? Not “against you” like he’s your enemy, but like he’s coordinating the pieces of your life without your knowledge, so that they all show you the same thing at the same time. This has been happening to me. Currently I am taking a class in school on Spiritual Formation—basically how to have a vibrant relationship with God through prayer and disciplines; I’ve also been working on my presentation for the Unity Project, which was about addressing anxiety. And I’ve been working on this sermon series about learning from Jesus. This last week I found all of these different projects pointing me in the same direction. They were reminding me not to get caught up in my worldly identities, but to ground myself in God. If you’re like me, talk like that doesn’t always make sense. This time, however, it seems to be making sense—and, more importantly, I am learning *how to begin doing that*. I would like to share that journey with you here, through our monthly newsletter. So, for the rest of 2025, we are going to work our way through the Beatitudes—the opening passage of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, in which he declares who he considers to be “blessed” in the world. As we go through each beatitude, we will learn together about what it looks like to ground ourselves in God, which will bring us true blessing.

The Beatitudes #1: “Blessed” (Matthew 5:3)

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: “Blessed...” (Matthew 5:1-3a, NIV)

What does it mean to be “blessed?” I think we mainly use it as an alternative for “lucky.” Basically, it means that you have good things in your life that you can’t take credit for, and you’re giving God the credit (rather than luck). In the Bible, however, the word

“blessed” has a long history and a deep meaning, and Jesus is drawing on that in the Beatitudes. It begins in Genesis 1, in the first words God speaks to humanity:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.... I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” (Gen. 1:28-30)

The blessing of God is his generosity: when he blesses, he is promising to provide for his people. The whole point of God’s blessing is to give his people the assurance that allows them to go out into the world and fulfill their purpose with confidence that they will be cared for. There is only one catch in God’s blessing: God does not give us his abundance, he shares it with us. We are not his employees, we are his children; he doesn’t give us wages, he opens the family pantry to us.

Unfortunately, we humans don’t like to share the family pantry. We want control, we want our own pantries. It didn’t take much convincing from the snake for Adam and Eve to believe that God might be holding out on them, and maybe they should take some of the pantry for themselves. So they took the fruit from the tree, and set out on their own.

God didn’t take back the blessing, however. After the flood, God gives Noah the same blessing: go into the world, and I will provide for you (Gen. 9:1-3). Instead, Noah’s descendants built the City of Babylon to provide for themselves. Even then, God didn’t take back his blessing. Instead, he chose Abraham and his family to go to the Promised Land and found a nation that would prove to the world that God’s blessing could be trusted (Gen. 12:1-3). That nation, Israel, never did quite live out that mission—they kept trying to

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I've been thinking...

From Pastor Rachel

Last month I wrote about "joy." I was not joyful when I wrote that article. I was distressed. I was stressed too-over doctor bills and letting people down, over whether I would be able to sing again, over the fact that I am verbal processor and I could not share my thoughts and feelings. I was lonely. And I was with God.

Today, my voice is almost completely healed and I am extraordinarily grateful for the last two months. That is not some fake Christian-ese speak, I promise. I am sincerely and deeply grateful to God for taking my voice away for two months.

Because everything kind of stopped.

I couldn't work my second job, I had to stop all of my singing groups, I couldn't take on extra things at work, I couldn't spend my free hours in conversation. My world got quiet. There was a lot of attempts to distract myself-way, way too much YouTube, per example. But that only left me lonelier.

So I started spending more time with God, and I faced the fact that I had overfilled my life, that any interruption through me completely off track and I had no time for the people that God was putting in my life and no time to enjoy the things I was doing . . . *even though they were all good things.*

I went over and over and over my schedule trying to find space in it. What could I let go of? The answer kept coming back: nothing. I needed each and every thing. Nothing was dispensable. I had purpose for each activity and commitment and each thing was necessary in its own way.

From the day I was honest with myself that I needed to let go of something, to the day that I let go of something was about 6 weeks. It took some external pressure, and a lot of soul searching to say, yes I need to let go of these things and yes, I want to let go of these things. I don't want to live in this over-crowded, perpetually exhausted place anymore.

I've quit chorus and my octet. I'll still sing, but in my less intensive quartet, which meets only twice a month. The coffee shop realized they didn't need me as much-I'll still work here and there as a sub, and if it's busy. But maybe not even every month.

I've decided to work hard at school through the summer, and then take the Fall off, giving myself a refresh and a financial break before I continue in the winter. A month ago that would have been unthinkable-but I've had a taste of life with Jesus that is more abundant and I find that to be the more indispensable than rushing towards all my goals, or the goals of those around me.

So I am grateful. I am grateful when I wake up the morning and am not completely overwhelmed by my to-do list. I am grateful that I can sit and be with Jesus without rushing off every morning. I am grateful that I have my finances and goals more firmly into his hands-I have seen him give me wisdom and make a way the last two months, and I know that I can trust for him to continue to do so.

I know two months is not a long time. And I know that it is easy to backslide into bad habits. But I've seen a better, richer life with Jesus, and I don't want to let it go. Would you pray for me as I continue into a better rhythm?

The joy that I talked about last month, that I didn't feel but knew I had access to, materialized as I clung to the Lord. It has overflowed, and gratitude has taken root. God loves and cares for me so much that He doesn't want me to live an exhausted, worn down, overfull life. He has a different way-an abundant way.

If you are currently living an abundant life, spend some time praising Jesus. What a glorious God who gives His children good gifts. Is he inviting you to rest in Him this season, or are there ways you can be using that abundance to bless others?

If you are not experiencing abundance-I feel that! Spend some time in prayer over the coming months. Where might God be inviting you to embrace a different rhythm? Spend some time in John 10:10 and Matthew 11:28-30.

If you could use extra support, or are experiencing debilitating and long-term emotional distress, please reach out to a licensed Christian mental health counselor. In all emergency situations, call 9-1-1.



Little Lamb Christian Preschool

A Note from Our Director, Bethany Robinson

As February comes to a close and we eagerly anticipate the arrival of spring, we find ourselves reflecting on the incredible journey our students have taken this school year. With just a quarter of the school year left, it's a perfect time to celebrate the growth we've witnessed in our little learners.

On the surface, we see tangible milestones—students who began the year not knowing any letters are now confidently identifying most of the alphabet, and those who struggled to count to 20 have made remarkable progress. However, the lessons that truly resonate often go beyond what can be measured on paper. They are the intangible moments that shape our children's character and social skills, and we are just as excited to celebrate them!

Last week we saw a breakthrough in the classroom where one of our students, who has been learning to share, took a significant step. After grappling with the concept of sharing a special toy, he thoughtfully walked through our sharing steps grabbing a timer, flipping it over, and handed the toy to his friend. As he patiently waited for his turn, we

witnessed an important lesson in patience and cooperation unfold.

Another student, during our discussion about things around the town that were built, raised his hand excitedly to share his. "We see the world, and God built the world!" he exclaimed. Moments like these are powerful reminders of the wonder and curiosity that our children possess, and they highlight the connections they are making between their learning, the world, and God.

While these achievements may seem small from the outside, they are monumental in the eyes of our preschool community. Each step forward—whether it's mastering a new letter, counting higher, or developing social skills—represents a foundation for lifelong learning and personal growth. As we move into the last quarter of the school year, we invite you to celebrate these accomplishments with us. We are so proud of each and every one of our students, and we can't wait to see what the rest of the year holds as we embrace the spirit of spring and all the new beginnings it brings.



Seniors Group to Celebrate Belated State of Oregon's Birthday!

March 7th 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, March 7, 14, 2025 at 1:00 pm. Come join us for fun, games and snacks! Let us know if you need a ride to the church! Contact Sharon Teixeira for more information. Register at: <https://subspla.sh/xy5wrtt/> or registration desk/card.

St Patrick's Day Dinner! The Entire Congregation is Invited!

Monday, March 17th

Senior Ministries will be hosting our St Patrick's Day dinner on Monday, March 17th at 5:00 pm. There will be a charge of \$2.00 per person at the door. Come prepared to enjoy Katie's great soda bread and the traditional Corn Beef and Cabbage Irish dinner. The meal will be served in the Fellowship Hall. Please register on the church app <https://subspla.sh/xc6ghxt/> or the registration desk at the church. All registrations must be in by Thursday, March 14th! Everyone is welcome to come! Remember to wear GREEN!

(Dear Church, continued from page 1)

provide for themselves instead of trusting God's blessing—so when Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount, he was calling the people of Israel to return to that mission. The Beatitudes show us what it looks like to live in the blessing of God.

This is the starting point for us: God made a good world, with a full pantry, and the doors to the pantry are still open. If we will trust him as his children, we can share in all the blessings he has to offer. If we insist on our independence and pride, if we insist on having our own homes and our own pantries, we will find ourselves very anxious, impoverished, and uncertain. The rest of the Beatitudes will show us what it looks like to be God's children and trust in his pantry, but for this month the goal is simply to recognize our stubborn independence and accept our place as God's children.

Spring Sunday Classes

March 16th—June 8th

9:00—10:00 am

Bible Study for Everyone—(Carol George)

A chapter-by-chapter study of books of the Bible using an accompanying workbook. This class runs continuously throughout the year.

Our Heritage—(Frank Loyd)

An introduction to the spiritual roots and vision of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ as we struggle to be Christians Only amidst the plethora of groups adherent to Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Reflection Through Water Coloring (Debbie Loyd)

This class will involve some simple water-color teaching combined with meditations based upon certain aspects of painting (such as light, reflections, etc.). No prior experience or skill is necessary, just a desire to use painting as a way of connecting with God.

News From TCC Food Bank

January Stats

Volunteer Hours –143

Households Served—157 Individuals Served—587

If you are like me at all, you probably read any food bank stats you see as just that, stats. I would like to challenge us all to view them as more than just statistics.

For instance, let's look at those 143 volunteer hours. That number represents about 15 people spending time ministering to our community by unloading cases of food from pallets and loading up our shelves and refrigerators and freezers in our five shopping rooms. It represents a friendly face to greet them each Monday morning and it represents our volunteers guiding members of our community through those five shopping rooms so that they can experience the dignity and respect of choosing the foods their families enjoy. It represents our volunteers who help load food into trunks and trucks and even some who walk with nearby residents to unload into their kitchens. It represents the smiles and hugs and sometimes even tears of our friends and neighbors as we spend time with them and build relationships with them. Those hours include early morning trips on both Saturday and Sunday each week to Salem to pick up donations from two local stores. Is it worth it? Read on.

The "157 households and 587 individuals" represent real people. Those numbers represent our community members who may not have adequate food and nutrition if it weren't for those 143 volunteer hours. Friends, this is a BIG ministry to our community and we are so very grateful that God can use the Food Bank for His good here in Turner and the surrounding area.

Thank you for your financial and prayer support of this vital TCC ministry. You are making a difference.

If you or someone you know could use a helping hand in obtaining adequate food for a healthier life, please come visit us on Monday mornings between 9:00 and 11:30. All we ask for is your name, zip code, and number of household members.

If you are unsure if you qualify, you can check out the income guidelines online, in the church office, or at the Food Bank itself.

Another exciting service that we now offer to our clients and anyone interested is easy access to local DHS workers. These helpful caseworkers set up in our Food Bank building on the first and third Monday of the month and can assist those who wish to apply for benefits and can answer questions regarding current benefits. This is a very convenient and informal way to receive this guidance.

News From Operation Christmas Child

The Big Picture ---

88% of the WORLD ... That's the scope of Shoebox gifts! Out of the 193 recognized United Nations, we praise God for the opportunity to have engaged in 171 of them.

And a Little More Personal ---

A group of children in Kenya started a soccer club though they didn't have any sports gear. Their families couldn't afford to buy soccer balls, so they used whatever they could find to kick around the field. They prayed that God would provide soccer balls. During an outreach event, shouts of joy were heard, as nearly every child received a ball in their shoebox.

And Even More Personal ---

Dedun is 8 years old and lives with his grandmother, who has trouble walking because of pain in her legs and feet. Dedun was excited to find a pair of sandals in his shoebox and ran home to give them to his grandmother. The sandals were the perfect fit, and Dedun and his grandmother were delighted. Now that she has shoes, walking is easier, and she's doing it more often - even strolling to church with her grandson.

THANK YOU for doing what you do to make these stories happen. We know it's God who makes all things happen, but we're grateful that you allow Him to use you and work through you in this **HUGE** missionary endeavor. It is all making a difference out there in this big world.

—Ann Stoker



2025 PACIFIC NORTHWEST SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING EVENT



**Sunday, March 16
4:00 pm**

Turner Christian Church
Turner, OR

**Speaker:
Dr. Stephen Waers**
President, Milligan University

Dinner:
Virginia's Famous
Salad & Baked Potato Bar
\$8.00 per person
(Payable at the Door)

RSVP: Church App or David Moore (503-507-9833)

Wheels of Change

**2nd Wednesday Every Month
March -- November
Noon - 1:00 pm**

FREE to the Public
Light Lunch will be provided

Topics Include:

- Nutrition
- Diabetes
- Physical Activity
- Financial Wellness
- Hypertension
- Normal Aging

Registration

Email: CHW@santiamhospital.org

Phone: 503-769-9319

Visit: Scan below QR code



Santiam Hospital & Clinics
embrace HEALTH
503.769.2175
1401 N 10th Ave., Stayton, OR 97383
santiamhospital.org

Turner Community Garden Flower Bouquet

Subscriptions 2025

OPEN MARCH THRU SEPTEMBER

\$

Flower Bouquet Subscription Form:

What You Get :

1 bouquet each May and September
2 bouquets per month June-August
(total 8 bouquets thru season)



Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Select:

Regular size. (9-10 blooms) Large size. (13-15 blooms)
bi-weekly @ \$90 total bi-weekly @ \$120 total

Please note which subscription you prefer

and return with payment to :

Turner Community Garden
7877 Mill Creek Ct
Turner, Oregon 97392



5th Sunday Potluck

March 30, 2025

After the Worship Service

A-H: Desserts,
I-P: Main Dish,
Q-Z: Sides/Salads

