

2023 OCC ANNUAL REPORT

Orinda Community Church



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MINUTES OF THE 84th OCC ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 23, 2023

Kathleen Wiegand, Clerk

Forty participants met in the OCC sanctuary for the Annual Meeting (that was also live streamed). Moderator Anne Barr called the meeting to order at 11:15 am. Reverend Elizabeth Robinson provided an opening prayer and Anne reviewed the agenda. Anne mentioned the Annual Report is available on the church website (link already sent out).

The minutes of the 83rd Annual Meeting, January 23, 2022, were moved and approved.

Budget Review and Approval: Lani Shepp reviewed the budget summary handout which included 2022 “actuals.” We came out ahead by \$10,000 over expenses because we didn’t do everything that was budgeted and we used Next 80 funds, where appropriate, in lieu of the B&G budget funds. The 2023 budget now includes a Council recommendation for a 4% increase for our two staff people instead of the 2.5% in recent versions. The \$24,444 in “other (cash)” is a balancing figure; we have this money in the bank. We’ve been very frugal and that’s why we came out ahead. This is a very conservative budget. The congregation unanimously moved and approved to accept the budget for 2023. Anne Barr thanked our financial team (Lani Shepp, Kathi Kling, and Gail Mead) for their hard work.

Moderator’s Comments and Report: Anne Barr reflected on her first year as Moderator. There were a lot of admin changes in 2022 due to legal and environmental issues. AB-506 brought training and finger printing for adults working with youth. Leslie O’Brien left her youth leadership position which affected our youth program. The Boy Scout reorganization caused more changes as we’re no longer their charter organization although we continue to house and support them like we do Holden and TOPS. We piloted and provided support for our pastor and congregation. We looked at what was needed and provided people to help with security, sermons, and grief support. We were able to revitalize a number of our ministries including Worship & Music, LL&S, and M&J. We received lots of thank you notes from those we helped in our community. Anne is inspired by all this support from the congregation and thanked them. During the pandemic we suspended honoring a volunteer each year so we now recognized two, Nancy Thursby and Mike Kersten. Nancy for her work with food banks, creation justice, hand bells and M&J. And doing it all with a smile, deep enthusiasm, commitment, and energy. She really helped moved things forward. Mike for his ushering duties, gardening skills, wisdom, and contributions on several committees. Reverend Elizabeth Robinson added she is grateful for all of the congregants who give so much of their time and expertise.

(2023 Annual Meeting Minutes continued)

Pastor's Comments and Report: Reverend Elizabeth Robinson mentioned we had some transitions. We lost some dear members and recognized the need for our Grief Support Group led by Gillian Murphy-Stephans. Elizabeth commended those working on Vista Verde to get additional community housing. We were also able to use our empty cottage to house Lucina and Lucas. Along with Winter Nights and Common Hope our efforts are comprehensive in helping people in need of housing. All this is ongoing and is a deeply good thing. One of the great joys was having the choir performing again and having our ongoing groups deepen their productivity. We invigorated our Worship and Music Committee. People are finding us via our groups and services; we're opening our doors to others. Elizabeth is optimistic that we are the best us that we can be. We have stabilized the church and we are a perfect size. She feels the love of the congregation and hopes the congregation feels her love, too.

Anne Barr introduced Jeanne Samuelsen, PRC Chair, who relayed that Reverend Elizabeth was recently nominated for a Pushcart prize and won. This is an amazing award honoring stories, poems, and essays from dozens of small presses. PRC is donating a copy of the book "The Pushcart Prize XLVI Best of the Small Presses 2022 Edition" containing Elizabeth's selection.

Approval to Waive Term Limits: Anne Barr reported we have some term limits in our bylaws and our membership is smaller now. If we enforce the current limits we may have trouble in some key spots. During 2023 we'll review the term limits to see what's important. Today, however, we're asking the congregation to waive the term limits so we can nominate/approve the current slate of officers and volunteers. Mike Kersten mentioned there are mainly three positions with term limits in the bylaws: Treasurer, Clerk, and Financial secretary. We've been ignoring term limits for these three positions for years. Per Anne, the Council just wanted the congregation to know about this. We need stability in these three positions and the Governance Committee will take a look at this during 2023. The congregation moved and approved waiving the term limits for these three positions for the year while we work on the bylaws. Mike Kersten volunteered to work on this bylaws issue.

Nomination and Election of Church Leaders: Bill Abriel, as Vice Moderator, has been working through nominations and engagement this year for our ministries and committees. We do want to include those not currently engaged. Bill reviewed the current Council members, and ministry and committee leaders and volunteers for 2023. He indicated there is a vacancy right now on the OSV/OSHF OCC Board which we agreed would be best filled by a church member. Anne Barr explained that during the pandemic, when committee activities were pared back, Council undertook the engagement duties. It has been incredibly taxing for Council to find volunteers.

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(2023 Annual Meeting Minutes continued)

We agreed it would be smart to once again have an Engagement Committee to handle the nominations and divide up the work of engagement and finding volunteers to serve. Karen Norris volunteered to be on the Engagement Committee. The congregation moved and approved the slate of officers. Mike Kersten encouraged everyone to become familiar with the bylaws that are available via the website. Craig Taatjes indicated the Governance Committee would be happy to clarify bylaw issues.

Installation of Church Leaders: Reverend Elizabeth Robinson installed and blessed the church leaders.

The congregation sang a hymn and Reverend Elizabeth Robinson provided a closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

Kathleen Wiegand, Clerk

MODERATOR

Anne Barr

In the last year, I have been particularly energized by the incredible things our church community does. For instance, making our Sunday Service special is the result of our wonderful Pastor Elizabeth and the outpouring of volunteers in the church. Sometimes it is simple things like those who bring goodies and make coffee for Fellowship time. Other ways we build community include Amy Parlett's organizing regular Sunday School and volunteers showing up to teach whether we have children here or not. And then there are those who serve as ushers each Sunday, others create beautiful altar decorations, sing in the choir, ring handbells, sew quilts for needy children, and the creative inspiration of the writers' group who share their works. Some of our talented church members are also skilled at delivering sermons (Kurt, Lee, Mary, Bob, Gail); while Roger has shown that he can adeptly orchestrate the church service. The youth serving as Acolytes who are organized by Karen Norris add to our time of worship.

There are multiple ways that our largely volunteer church performs outreach to the community and supports one another to enrich our community: Winter Nights and programs through Lifelong Learning and Alta Mesa are just a few. Maintaining our large church property is done by a dedicated core of the Building and Grounds group and the Next 80 team.

Elizabeth shares reflections, leads Contemplative Services, writer's group, Theology and Scripture, centering prayer, and the reading group. Since Elizabeth provides so much emotional and spiritual guidance for our church community, Pastoral Relations with guidance from the Council provides support for her in turn.

The past year has been an incredibly gratifying year in terms of Orinda Community Church accomplishing a lot in our local community and continuing to deepen the faith, commitment, and cohesion of our community.

Some highlights of the year are:

- Awarded the competitive nationwide Lilly grant to support Elizabeth's sabbatical and some congregational enrichment while she is away in 2024.
- Updated and revised the Church by-laws to modernize them to include our ways of communicating and virtually meeting as well as to update our term limits.
- Revitalized a small but dedicated children and youth program thanks to the leadership and persistence of Amy Parlett and a group of volunteers.
- Lifelong Learning held programs on Christian Nationalism, transgender perspectives, and immigration.
- Doubled our usual activities for unhoused in our area since we hosted two fortnights of winter nights – including one solely supported by OCC.
- Mercy and Justice under Nancy Thursby's guidance held an Electric car show which was a fun way to be a creation justice church.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Moderator's Report continued)

- Contemplative Services, writer's group, and our grief group continued to be great avenues for supporting the spiritual, creative, and emotional needs of our greater church community.
- Alta Mesa offered many interesting programs and expanded with its partnership with the teaching platform Maker Mentor Muse.
- Worship and Music began to operate as a ministry; our Sunday services came together even when we had last minute changes.
- The Nominating and Engagement committee was reactivated and our nominations for positions this year includes a number of new volunteers.
- The Building and Grounds group put in some energy efficient bulbs and fixed the heat amongst other projects.
- Next 80 capital fund bought solar panels, landscaped the side of the church, made essential sewer repairs, and reviewed the seismic study.
- Endowment funded a new sign for OCC on Orinda Way.
- The Samuelsens ensured that the pride flag was replaced even after it was repeatedly stolen.
- Elizabeth, Council, and the office worked to navigate challenges with parking, dumpster use, campus security, and emergency response. In the process, OCC built stronger relationships with Holden, TOPS, and OSV.
- The office continues to operate effectively with the talents of our trusted office manager Anna.
- Three OSV/OSHF church representatives joined the board, and the five OCC representatives are engaged with planning for Vista Verde construction to start in 2024. We hope to host an update for the church in the spring.
- The Congregation and Council supported Elizabeth during the summer and early fall when her family needed her support.
- Elizabeth introduced important interfaith programs for us including a Passover Seder dinner and arranging a place for Muslim women to pray.
- The quality of the music program has remained strong; choir, the bells, and some Taize music enriched us all.
- The Church held a "fun"draiser auction with Gail's leadership and helped raise needed funds for OCC.
- The church budget, which is the foundation of much of what we do has been managed superbly by the great finance team of Lani, Kathi, and Gail.

The Church has much to look forward to in 2024,

- Elizabeth's sabbatical and staff planning
- Congregational enrichment programs from the Lilly Grant
- Bill Abriel's leadership as Moderator and the new volunteers in elected positions on Council and in Ministries.
- Construction is beginning on Vista Verde hillside project.

(Moderator's Report continued)

Personal Note about my four years on Council as Moderator and Vice Moderator

It was mid-January 2020 when we were all excited about the new year "2020". I had just joined the OCC Council as Vice Moderator; Jim Bergquist was our Pastor, and none of us knew what COVID-19 meant. Four years later, we have a new Pastor, live stream our services, started new traditions, and shown our resilience as we have also reinvigorated some practices that were dormant during the pandemic. Sadly, we have seen a significant number of our long-term congregants die. Yet our church remains relevant we continue to attract some new members. For me, partnering with Pastor Elizabeth on the church's application for the Lilly Grant has perhaps been the most gratifying of the last four years.

Thank you for the chance to have served on Council this past year with Bill Abriel, Mitch Breitwieser, Gail Mead, Lani Shepp, Kathleen Wiegand, and Bob Winbigler. I am grateful to be part of this wonderful church community.

CLERK'S REPORT

Kathleen Wiegand

Membership as recorded on 1/1/23: 177

Membership as recorded on 1/1/24: 176

Baptisms 0

Additions to Congregation in 2023 0

New Members:

Losses to Congregation in 2023 1

Moved out of Bay Area 0

Transfers 0

Resignations 0

Deaths 1

In Memoriam (Active Members):

John Thursby

TREASURER'S REPORT

Lani Shepp

This report describes the financial operating results for 2023 for Orinda Community Church as of December 31st, 2023.

2023 Financial Results

	<u>2023 Budget</u>	<u>2023 Actual</u>
Revenue:	\$490,000.	\$477,905.
Expenses:	\$514,444.	\$474,282.
Deficit:	-\$24,444.	\$3,623.

Not all pledges were received so income was less than budgeted. However, staffing needs were not as anticipated so the expected deficit did not materialize.

Next 80 Campaign

Expenditures 7/1/2021-12/31/2023:	\$172,118.
Income -- pledges not yet collected:	\$54,033.
Total in BMO, Orinda:	\$171,412.

Funds for Next 80 were moved to a separate bank from our regular accounts to keep things clearly separate and meet insurance needs.

The biggest expense this past year was the purchase of our solar panels located on the Fellowship Hall roof. Other projects this year included planting of the side hill and repair of one very old sewer system.

Financial Outlook for 2024

As we approach 2024, our annual budget must consider the 3-month sabbatical of our Pastor, Elizabeth Robinson. The church has received a very nice grant from the Lily Foundation which will help both the church's expenses and Rev. Robinson's expenses during this time. The OCC Endowment will pay the remaining salary for our interim pastor.

The Church Council recommends a budget for 2024 with a deficit. It includes raises for our 2 staff members and increases the Office Manager to 30 hours per week. This budget is the result of generous pledging and careful review of expenses. There are sufficient funds on hand to meet this deficit.

Financial Staff

Volunteer financial staff includes Gail Mead (Financial Secretary), Lani Shepp (Treasurer-Accounts Payable) and Kathi Kling (Assistant Treasurer-Accountant). Many thanks for the many hours spent by this staff keeping OCC on the right track financially. Realignment of the staff is anticipated to take place in 2024 including hiring some outside bookkeeping help.

ENDOWMENT FUND

Fred Matteson (interim chair)

The Endowment Fund of Orinda Community Church was established in 1984 with initial contributions by members of the church. They had the foresight to create an enduring mechanism to support many non-budgeted items that enhance the activities of the church. Another core mission of the endowment fund is to support our Senior Pastor with her housing needs in our high cost of living community. The goal of the endowment fund is to continue to grow principal through investment returns and new gifts while setting aside a portion of each year's income to fund grant requests.

2023 Grants

In 2023, the Endowment Board made several significant investments to support the future growth and vitality of Orinda Community Church, but there is room for more. We have underspent our allocation to the church for a few years, as our support has not been needed for staffing, and some originally earmarked funds were not needed. The Endowment members are always open to new ideas on how to best deploy our annual allocation. If you have ideas, please reach out to any of us.

This year, grants included the following:

- We provided support for our lecture program including funding the Reading series and various marketing activities associated with that event in January of this year.
- Also, as I'm sure you have all seen, we provided funding for a new sign at the base of the hill to replace our existing marquis. The old sign has suffered from years of weathering and was replaced with a sign early this year that is substantially the same, but with a new cover and new letters that will allow us to resume seasonal messaging and notifications of special events.
- We had allocated additional funds to support the hiring of support for our youth and for additional wireless networking around the church, but since those funds were not spent, they will be rolled over and our needs will be reexamined in 2024.
- Earmarked for 2023, but still in process are adding video streaming capabilities to Fellowship Hall and improving the Audio/Visual Systems there. That will open that room to more opportunities to stream services and activities from there and will likely be a valuable feature for groups that rent the facility from us.
- In support of our outreach mission, we were able to provide a \$3,000 donation to the Hawaii Wildfire Relief Fund and, we were able to provide Elizabeth with a Pastor's Emergency Fund to allow her to help out people in times of crisis. Sometimes, all it takes is a little help in their time of need to turn despair into hope for those going through tough times.
- Additionally, in support of Building and Grounds, we provided some end of year funding essential tree pruning.

Endowment Fund performance and Legacy Circle

There were no new contributions to the endowment, and no new commitments made to our Legacy Circle. The Legacy Circle is an important way you can consider giving to the endowment from your estate. Please see the Legacy Circle Page in the Annual report which lists our current Legacy Circle Members.

The assets of the Endowment Fund are invested in United Church Funds, an organization who invests on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Unlike the painful year of 2022 where all major indexes were down broadly, 2023 was an “up” year. Our United Church Funds balance is just under \$1,000,000. Additionally, we have cash on hand in our checking account of slightly over \$100,000. We also have a loan to Elizabeth for her house from which we collect monthly principal and interest payments. We will continue to manage our portfolio using a conservative mix of value stock funds, and fixed income. Who knows what 2024 will bring in the markets, with wars, recession worries and a presidential election. We believe that the portfolio is well positioned to participate in future market growth as well as weather a downturn as it did in 2022. A copy of the 2023 year-end Endowment Fund financial statement is available from Fund treasurer, Gail Mead if you are interested in more detail.

Endowment Fund Board Members

2023 endowment members were: Tom Beatty, Gail Mead, Andy Weber, Kathi Kling and Fred Matteson, serving as interim chair as Anne Barr took a leave of absence while serving as church moderator. Anne will be returning as chair after her term as Moderator ends, and Fred Matteson will remain as a member. Lani Shepp and Elizabeth Robinson serve as ex-officio members. I appreciate the input and perspectives of each of the members of the Endowment Board.

LEGACY CIRCLE

Fred Matteson

The Legacy Circle of Orinda Community Church was established in 2004. Its members have modified their will or trust to leave a bequest to the Church upon their death. If, in the future, we expect the Church to be able to support its physical plant, to provide affordable housing in the Lamorinda area for its ministerial staff, and to support vibrant Church programs, then we must continue to grow the basic Endowment Fund of the Church. Bequests from past members of the Church have been the primary source of funds for the Endowment during its first 30 years. Similarly, future bequests from current members will determine if the Endowment Fund can continue growing and supporting the type of needs described above.

To join the Legacy Circle, you need to set aside some assets in your estate naming Orinda Community Church as the designee. A simple way to join the Legacy Circle is to put Orinda Community Church as a beneficiary or partial beneficiary of your Individual Retirement Account (IRA or similar retirement account).

We are most thankful for the thoughtfulness and generosity of the following Church members who are already members of the Legacy Circle:

- Bill and Vangie Abriel
- Anne Barr and Fred Matteson
- Tom and Sandra Hill
- Hillary and David Hoppock
- Kathi Kling
- Gail and Chris Mead
- Jeanne Milligan
- Roger and Jeane Samuelsen
- Katrina Staten
- Frank Baldwin
- Bruce and Trudi Garland
- Peter Hartdegen
- Margie Hitzl
- Kay and Dalton James
- Elisabeth and Michael Kersten
- Anne Long
- Elva Rust
- Lani Shepp

If you would like more information about the Legacy Circle, or about various methods for leaving a gift to the Church, you are invited to contact Fred Matteson or a member of the Endowment Fund Board.

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MINISTER'S REPORT

Reverend Elizabeth Robinson

I am grateful to have had another year with you at Orinda Community Church. For me it has been a challenging year, with the deaths of my sister and Randy's mother and Randy's cancer treatment with the unexpected complications of his surgery. Having gotten through that, I can pause and be grateful for your kindness to me and all the ways that people at this church step up to keep our shared life humming with meaning and mutual support. I also want to pause for a moment to mark our losses in this past year, with deep thankfulness for the lives of Bob Orr, Joan Moderes, and John Thursby. And I celebrate that during our Sunday service on January 21, we will welcome four new members.

Though Covid still makes its presence felt, we are clearly stabilizing post-pandemic. Many of the features of the church that you know well, continue: Centering Prayer, Contemplative Services, Theology and Scripture, and Writers' Group. Alta Mesa Center for the Arts continues to welcome eloquent, penetrating writers for conversation and sharing of work. Our Mercy and Justice committee may be small, but they are dynamic. Our focus this year has been on poverty issues and we continue in our relationships with, and support of, Common Hope, Hope Solutions, and Winter Nights.

Lifelong Learning/Spiritual Formation has come together again, and we have enjoyed some very meaningful programming. One notable and enjoyable event for me was the visit from Sie Savage Chambers as he talked about his female to male transition and members of the congregation shared from the journeys of their own beloved trans family members. In addition, our spiritual journey sharing is always powerful for me, and I thank Roger Samuelson for organizing that. Katrina Staten had the idea of starting a book group to read Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* series of books, and that group has gelled so nicely that we have gone on to read other books as well, including the play "Our Town" which we not-so-secretly hope to perform for the church at some point! I can't thank Amy Parlett and our crew of Sunday School teachers enough for bringing that resource back to life for the children of the church.

But I'm telling you of things about which you are already aware, so let me tell you about things that are less evident in the life of the church.

After having some people call the church in crisis, I was surprised to learn that these people would often report having reached out to many social service organizations and churches *without ever getting any response at all*. I am a believer that every human who asks for help deserves a response whether or not we can offer financial aid. So together Anna and I have been making sure that these callers do hear back from us, and on some occasions, we have been able to provide (carefully vetted) financial aid. For example, we paid the dental bill of a woman who had had a dental emergency so that she would be able to pay her rent. I am grateful to the endowment board for its support of this incredibly important ministry. By offering support as we

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(Minister's Report continued)

are able in these emergencies, we are sometimes able to avert far worse outcomes, like eviction. We were also able to make a significant donation to support people trying to recover from the Maui fire. Because Anna tracks phone calls and emails day by day and is most often our first responder, I want to commend her attention and compassion.

Another growing edge at the church is our collaborative work with other congregations. This year, OCC hosted a joint Good Friday service which brought together 7 different UCC churches for a rich worship service. Twice this year, I have collaborated with pastors in 6 Bay Area churches for youth confirmation and advent retreats. We have also made a solid connection with The Good Table as it builds its new site which will itself be a collaboration with Planting Justice, an organization that hires and trains previously incarcerated people to work in its nurseries. During Advent, we hosted a special Taize service with the Good Table. Now on the horizon: working with the Arlington Church and other congregations to redress racism and support the Black Wealth Builders Project which helps Black families move into home ownership. Such collaborative work is inspiring to me and is, I believe, the true future of the church as we share ideas, energies, and resources. Even when we have varying attitudes and goals, we can do more together than we can do alone.

Similarly, OCC is forging important relationships with community partners. I have had visits with the Orinda Women's Club and the Rotary Club this year. For much of the year, we had Lucina and Lukas living in the cottage while Lucina also worked to support local immigrants through the American Friends Service Committee. After the article was published about the theft of our Pride Flag, we connected with the local PFLAG branch and they are now meeting at the church. A Muslim prayer group is using our facility as well. I love the sense of the church as a true sanctuary and meeting place. These new community partners, along with prior partners like AA and Women of Spirit, are creating a larger dialogue that engages us in vital ways with the needs and currents of our community. This too is a manifestation of the church in the 21st century. I am encouraged and excited by it.

How quickly (almost) five years have passed, and through such a tumultuous time! So I am looking forward to my sabbatical and here's a special shout out to **all of you** for coming together to work on that impossibly long and detailed Lilly Clergy Renewal Grant—because it worked! What an honor and what an achievement for our congregation to be awarded a grant. It could not have happened without Lani crunching numbers and Anne Barr organizing meetings, doing research, and writing, writing, writing. While I am away, I will carry all of you in my hearts and look forward to returning.

Turns out a lot has happened this year, and I haven't even addressed all of it. Please know that I feel God's love and grace throughout this congregation and I never will be able to thank each of you adequately for your sustaining contributions to our life together. God keeps calling us to God's healing, liberating adventures. I am deeply heartened that I am called to journey with you.

In faith,
Elizabeth

MUSIC REPORT

David Milnes

The church continues to support our splendid music program, and our gifted musicians are extremely proud to be associated with the work of the church. They have presented inspired and beautiful performances of music of many types, stretching back to the 14th century, through the great classics of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical eras mixed with great hymns of several different dominations and centuries, and including contemporary classics by Ned Rorem and Jake Heggie together with a healthy dose of jazz, spirituals, gospel, Broadway favorites and popular song.

Many thanks to Jesslyn Thomas, Julia Hathaway, Judy McCall, Chris Jackson, Nik Nackley, Fred Matteson, Greg McCall, Trudi Garland, Miles McCall, and Weston Carpenter and, all of whom contributed leadership in the year's success. Special thanks go to Kathi Kling and Rosa Grundig who have served as librarians, catalogers, and conservators of our large music collection.

Extra services on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Winter Solstice provided very special spiritual experiences graced with readings and music, and the Easter and Christmas celebrations designed by Elizabeth were splendidly successful.

The bell choir is thriving (and growing) under the energetic leadership of Maestra Nancy Thursby, and their steady upward trend in polish and sophistication is a great joy for all of us. Bell choir rehearsals are a peaceful and nurturing oasis for the participant ringers.

Music is such an important component of our spiritual practice at OCC, and all the musicians (especially me) are thrilled to be at a place with people who seek and value deep, soulful experiences. We are challenged and inspired to continue our work!

Sincerely,
David Milnes
Director of Music (since 1998)

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Anna Gregory

The church calendar continues to be busy, with recitals, renters, and our own church events. I continue to work in the office, as well as acting as part-time caretaker when the need arises, setting up and breaking down events, helping volunteers with physical work here and there, changing the sign every week, taking out the trash when folks forget, and acting on call for renters on some nights and weekends. Days move by quickly and there is always a lot to do.

New groups that have joined the list of regular and semi-regular renters, including a Muslim prayer group, PFLAG Lamorinda, and Lamorinda Moms.

In 2023, Frog Hollow Farm started using us as a drop off site for their fresh fruit. In exchange for hosting Frog Hollow, we are given a box of fruit each week which we take and share with anyone interested.

As I am halfway into my 3rd year here, I grow more and more appreciative of the kind hearts of the members of OCC. The more I interact with church members, the more I realize what an amazing group of kind-hearted people! The love around here is obvious when you see the volunteers hard at work (and even when you don't see them because they are working in the background.) The sense of community is strong here and it is very appealing.

From time to time, we have folks contact us in urgent situations. We do our best to vet their need, and treat them as compassionately as possible. I have learned that telling people up front, we may help you this once, but we cannot help repeatedly, has been the best practice to follow because it is the most realistic.

We helped Mary, a middle-aged woman who lives in her car. She keeps a very nice appearance and has a job. However, she had been between jobs for a time, and she got behind on her rent at a storage facility and was about to lose all of her possessions. We were able to help her get her things.

We have helped several single moms with rent. While we can't cover the whole rent, we always try to help. Sometimes the help given is just a \$25 Safeway food card, or a shirt, sweater and a bit of food for an unhoused man wandering through the campus. A veteran and single dad received some help with groceries. Another unhoused woman, we paid her cell bill and also gave her a Safeway card.

So, while we can't grant wishes like a genie, we always try to offer something, some type of support, time and kind words. One can hope these small gestures help not just with a financial burden, but gives people a bit of hope that there are people who care.

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Some of you may know Frank, a regular visitor at OCC for the past year. Frank grew up in Orinda, and he is disabled and unhoused. He is 65 now and finding it harder and harder to live outside, and we are actively working toward finding him housing, along with some other social services.

And many of you know Sepi, who came to us under rather dire circumstances. I was at a loss at how to help her and reached out to some members who graciously took her in. She has become a wonderful addition to services and social gatherings at OCC and we are so glad she's here and doing well, and thriving in school.

So, to sum up, these small moments of generosity by OCC, are to me, the epitome of Christ's message and God's work and at times, the best part of my job. I feel blessed here at OCC and it is a privilege to meet with these people and hear their stories and help in some small way.

In 2024, we have exciting things happening. There will be a wedding in Fellowship Hall in June. And the construction will begin on Vista Verde this year, which offers all kinds of unwanted prospects of noise, mess, parking woes, and hassle, but it will be so worth it to be able to provide more housing to folks! Elizabeth will take some time for her sabbatical which will be a temporary loss for us, but we will benefit from her well-deserved and much needed opportunity to rejuvenate and refresh.

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Children and Youth Ministry

Amy Parlett

The year 2023 was one of continued slow revival for the OCC Children & Youth. The committee itself still is operating ad hoc style (versus having a functional group meeting from time to time to plan), however, we somehow got things done including bringing back Sunday School.

Thanks to a number of members who took time to complete an online mandated reporter training and live scan, we had enough volunteers to launch Sunday School for April and May, the first time since pre-pandemic! A big thank you goes to Hilly Hoppock, Elisabeth Kersten, Leslie Schonborn, Carrie and Bill Carpenter, Daniel Grundig, Karen Norris, Janet Schwartz, Joyce Crawford, and Anne Barr for teaching thus far!! Sunday School took the summer months off and then the weekly lessons resumed from September to December. We are getting attendees most weeks...anywhere from one to six kids. I view this as a great time of connection and enrichment for the children and also a benefit for the parents so the intent is to keep it going (and we are always looking for more people to join the teaching team!).

Karen Norris continues to head our acolyte program so wonderfully. Reaching out to kids (4th grade and older) each week and prepping them to light the candles and ring the bowl takes a commitment and I am amazed at Karen's dedication for years and years to this program.

In December we also hosted the annual Advent Celebration. Roughly 25 people enjoyed making several Christmas crafts, caroling together (thank you, David), and sharing a meal. It was festive and fun! Once again, thank you to the many, many people who pitched in to help set up, man craft stations, coordinate the kitchen, clean up, and also attend. I am so glad that we have continued to carry this tradition forward every year.

Looking ahead, we will continue to offer programming to our children and hope to add even more points of connection, especially some for the youth (middle and high school group). I see 2024 as an even more robust year the kids!

CARE AND FELLOWSHIP

Vangie Abriel, Chair

Committee members: Vangie Abriel, Karen Norris, Leslie Schonborn, Nancy Peterson.

Several years ago, the Care and Fellowship committee came up with the attached vision statement: To provide events and opportunities for communication that advance faith, peace, love, hope, spiritual formation, adventure, care, connection with others, and fun.

The committee has organized some events in 2023, but we need to be doing more. Here is a list of what we've done this year.

April 2023	Easter Sunday April 2023	Provided hot cross buns after church.
Sept. 17, 2023	Homecoming Sunday	Provided lunch after church, with activities
Oct. 2023	Annual auction	Organized potluck lunch
Dec. 2023	Advent Celebration	Most of the committee were out of town, but Karen Norris represented us ably in helping with the event.

Throughout the year

Karen Norris does a wonderful job of managing Rudi's Boutique. She collects and displays donations, collects and deposits income from sales, and makes the boutique items available through displaying them at church functions. The boutique is a true enrichment to the church's activities.

After-church snacks

These tasks have been successfully delegated to the church members, through signup sheets. This allows more people to participate in service to the church and it has worked out very well.

(Care & Fellowship continued)

Committee goals for 2024:

- Provide more events for church members, such as more potlucks, group dinners, perhaps a movie night, a story-telling evening, a dance class, or a talent-no talent show.
- Be of more service for events presented by other committees, such as the Advent Celebration.
- Perhaps reinstitute the Blessing of the Animals, if Elizabeth approves.
- As needed, be a resource for memorial services.
- We plan on Dinners for 8 restarting in the Spring. It was a good introduction for new participants this past year. Thank you to all the group leaders.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Tom Norris, Chair

Buildings and Grounds maintains our beautiful campus; both visible and hidden components. Karen Sanford has completed many projects that mostly involve pipes. In addition to the project work listed, we are grateful for the counsel of Bob Winbigler and Pete Hartdegen, who worked on projects many more years than I know of. We also welcome Bill Abriel who has invaluable help with the overwhelming organizational challenges. Karen Sanford manages uncounted plumbing repairs and replacements. Mike Kersten of B & G and Lani Shepp keep our landscaping beautiful. Les Simmonds provides counsel on electrical systems, many of which he engineered over many years. We are pleased to welcome Brent Goetzl as a new committee member and Mark Nichols who is returning.

Most Memorable projects in 2023:

Lighting: In general, we continued changing to newer LED lamps: compared to the older LED lamps most are brighter, have longer life, and/or use less energy. The long life reduces labor for replacements. We have 720 light bulbs to watch over. Some specifics:

Put in brighter LED bulbs in seven outdoor pole lamps, with 25K hour life. Expected lives are five years. Two sockets required grinding away corrosion. Thank you, Les Simmonds and Kier DeAnda.

Installed four pole lamp “corn cob style” extra-bright LED bulbs in entrance to main parking lot from Fellowship Hall. These are 50k hour long life types but definitely not as pleasing to the eye as we would like. We also found that these lamp sockets are badly corroded after 65 years of dampness, so sockets had become loose. New outdoor sockets and lamps will be needed in about ten years or, if OCC would prefer, sooner.

We are working on getting bids for possible replacement of Sanctuary high windows, which have wood frames and with at least incipient rot. Pete Hartdegen is weighing the options as this is likely to need special funding. Thank you, Pete!

Installed new drainage system serving north-facing roof downspouts around Mayflower and Agape. Thank you, Karen Sanford!

Replaced commercial disposal in Fellowship Hall kitchen. Thank you, Karen Sanford!

Manage replacement of two clay tile sewer pipe junctions with tree root problems, seven feet under lawn. Thank you, Lani Shepp! Funding was Next 80. Thank you, Next 80 committee!

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Buildings & Grounds continued)

In process: Investigate intermittent cool water mystery in Fellowship Hall kitchen. Thank you, Karen Sanford!

Replaced most toilets in both Fellowship Hall restrooms. Big job. Thank you, Karen S!

Maintain irrigation timers and systems. Thank you again, K.S.

Trace leak in abandoned irrigation pipes that had caused structural rot issues and widespread mud under Washington-Mayflower Building. Thank you again, (You guessed right!)

Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

In process: Insulate ceiling in Washington-Mayflower Building. Thank you, Lani Shepp!

Disassemble and repair/rebuild two furnaces, one in Holden under Music Room and the other serving the Fellowship Hall Library. All thirteen campus furnaces now work well. Thank you, Kier DeAnda! Still needed are duct insulation, air leak checking, and installing a few modern air filter housings to enable anti-virus filtration.

Install programmable thermostat in Agape, and adjust duct dampers for better heat distribution. Thank you, Kier DeAnda!

Measure air flow and adjust duct dampers to better distribute heat into Fireside Room in Fellowship Hall, and in the Chapel next to Music Room Thank you, Kier Deanda!

In process: To control summer heat and cooling costs, install two solar powered attic ventilation fans in Washington-Mayflower Building. Thank you, Greg Hartdegen!

Reprogram most existing thermostats campus-wide to save energy and reduce utility costs. Thank you, Kier DeAnda!

Grounds

Prune and clean grounds most Saturdays. Thank you, Mike Kersten!

We are undoubtedly looking forward to a busy 2024.

MERCY & JUSTICE MINISTRY

Nancy Thursby

The Mission of the Mercy & Justice Ministry:

- To promote Mercy and Justice according to the tenets of the United Church of Christ.
- To provide current, reputable information about organizations doing mercy and justice work so the church may donate funds wisely.
- To provide ongoing information to the congregation about local service opportunities.
- To provide church sponsored service trips locally, nationally, and internationally.

Local Events and Service Opportunities:

- ✓ Winter Nights, chaired by Lani Shepp, was held at our church twice during 2023, February 20th to March 6th and May 1st to 15th.
- ✓ The Knitting Circle, begun by Nancy Thursby in September 2022, continued to work on service projects – shawls and prayer squares for shut-ins and chemo-caps for the John Muir Oncology Center. Members of the circle are Eartha Newsong, Lani Shepp, Catharine Tomlins, Joni Upshaw, and Nancy Thursby.
- ✓ On June 4th, Mary Volmer's former student, Sie Chambers, a transgender man, spoke in recognition of Pride Month.
- ✓ OCC again participated in the Hope Solutions Backpack Project during June. Members and friends were able to donate backpacks and supplies online.
- ✓ Barry Cammer visited on July 9th and gave the sermon during worship and conducted a second hour discussion on whether the church needs to update its Open & Affirming Statement.
- ✓ Ava Skidgel participated in a mission trip with Amigos de Americas in June and presented a Moment for Mission on August 27th.
- ✓ A *Poverty by America* book study was suggested by Gail Mead. A discussion of this book was held on October 8th.
- ✓ Members of The Good Table Church visited OCC for worship and the EV car show on October 15th. Rev. Dr. Melinda McLain spoke about the church's project.
- ✓ Luciano Kovacs, Presbyterian Coordinator for the Middle East and Europe, spoke on October 20th about the situation in the Middle East.
- ✓ Roger Samuelsen presented a second hour on Common Hope again this year on October 22nd culminating the annual Common Hope Fundraiser.
- ✓ OCC again participated in the Hope Solutions Christmas gift program, helping 5 families to have a Merry Christmas.

(Mercy and Justice continued)

Mission Trips: Mercy & Justice has developed a three-year rotation for mission trips: international, national, and local. These plans had to be abandoned due to the pandemic. Mercy & Justice hoped to sponsor a mission trip to Back Bay Mission in June 2023, but due to lack of interest, plans needed to be postponed until 2024.

www.thebackbaymission.org

Creation Justice:

- ✓ OCC participated in the Interfaith Power & Light Climate Action Week (April 14-23). The theme this year was “Living the Golden Rule: Just Transition to a Clean Energy Economy.” Activities during this time were:
 - Elizabeth preached on the theme.
 - Second hours were held on April 16th and 23rd including the showing and discussion of the film, “Current Revolutions,” which “tackles the challenge of how the utility, auto, tech and defense industries can modernize our aging power grid to make it more secure and environmentally friendly. With a focus on national security, economic prosperity, and environmental justice, the film delivers a strategic narrative for transforming the grid and accelerating our transition to an electric vehicle infrastructure.” Quote from the Youtube trailer.
 - M&J supported the reading of the National Earth Day Climate Prayer on April 22nd at noon. The prayer was used in worship by Rev. Elizabeth.
- ✓ OCC’s first ever Electric Vehicle Show was held on October 15th as a celebration of the fact that so many members and friends are climate conscious and have gone electric. Several makes and models of cars were parked in the plaza between the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. Also included was an electric bike and an electric scooter. The owners enjoyed talking about their vehicles and members enjoyed hearing about them.
- ✓ CA Climate bills promoted during 2023:
 - **AB 9 & SB 12** CA Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: Reduce 55% below 1990 no later than Dec. 31, 2030.
 - **SB 233** EV charging attachment capable of bi-direction
 - **AB 674** Refinery Fence line Air Quality Bill
 - **SB 252** Fossil Fuel Divestment Act (CalPERS and CalSTRS)
 - **SB 253** Corporate Accountability
 - **SB 556** Oil & Gas Pollution Accountability

All-Church Offerings:

- The Good Friday Offering of \$1,051,25 was sent to the UCC Turkey/Syria Fund.
- The Endowment Committee made possible a donation of \$3,000 for aid for the Maui, Hawaii wildfire.
- The Easter offering made possible a donation of \$1,550 to The Black Wealth Builders Fund.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Mercy and Justice continued)

- At a joint service with The Good Table Church, \$370 was donated for their work. Mercy & Justice added \$300 to this, donating to them \$670.
- Again, this year, the Christmas offering of \$3,462.00 benefited Winter Nights.
- During 2023, donations for Common Hope totaled \$1,785. A donation of \$1,800 was sent. Also, \$985 made possible needed surgery for the Mead's adopted Common Hope child.
- Also, during the year, donations for Hope Solutions totaled \$1,420, in addition to Backpack and Christmas project donations mentioned in Local Service Opportunities.

Mission Giving:

Our Church's Wider Mission Fair Share: Our church made a donation of \$10,000 to support the Northern California/Nevada Conference of the UCC.

Gift Recipient Organizations in 2023:

➤ UCC Disaster Relief	\$4,051.25
➤ Common Hope	\$2,785.00
➤ Hope Solutions	\$2,000.00
➤ The Black Wealth-Builders Fund	\$1,550.00
➤ Holden High School	\$1,500.00
➤ Winter Nights	\$1,500.00
➤ Trinity Center	\$1,067.00
➤ Alameda Food Bank	\$ 948.00
➤ Contra Costa/Solano Food Bank	\$ 948.00
➤ Good Table UCC	\$ 670.00
➤ St. Mary's Center	\$ 500.00
➤ Back Bay Mission	\$ 335.00
➤ Honor the Earth	\$ 335.00
➤ Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County	\$ 335.00
➤ The Rainbow Center	\$ 335.00
➤ San Francisco Night Ministry	\$ 335.00
➤ Restore the Delta	\$ 335.00
➤ Common Humanity Collective (Air Purifier Project)	\$ 300.00
➤ Sister Carmen Community Center (Colorado Fire Recovery)	\$ 250.00
➤ Rest in Peace (RIP) Medical Dept	\$ 250.00
➤ John Muir Land Trust	\$ 200.00
➤ UCC Ukraine Relief Fund	\$ 200.00
➤ Donation for Tonga Relief (Care Australia)	\$ 180.50

Financial Assistance: Our church continues to assist anonymously those in our community who are in need.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Mercy and Justice continued)

Thank You! The Mercy and Justice Ministry is grateful for everyone who donated and participated in its programs during 2023.

M & J Ministry Members: Tre Frane; Michael Kersten; Eartha Newsong; Gail Mead, Church Council Member at Large for Outreach; Karen Sanford, Co-Chair; and Nancy Thursby, Co-Chair and Creation Justice and Knitting Circle Chairs, with much support from Rev. Elizabeth.

PASTORAL RELATIONS

Jeane Samuelsen

The purpose of the PRC is to facilitate, build and maintain relationships and communication between clergy and lay leadership and members of the church, and to evaluate the performance of ministers and communicate its evaluations to the Council.

This was a year of emotional challenge with much loss. Each meeting seemed to bring news of another death, another Memorial, including the death of Elizabeth's sister in Sweden. So, in addition to all the usual ways that Elizabeth so beautifully and creatively cares for us she was carrying grief and travel challenges of her own. It became clear she is ready for some leave time.

In early Spring, Elizabeth applied for a Lilly Grant to cover a 3-month study leave. Lilly Grants are meant to provide a "Season of Sabbath" for a prolonged rest. They are intended for congregations and pastors who have strong relationships with one another, a high degree of mutual trust and support and are eager to see their relationship strengthened and renewed. This felt like a great fit, and Elizabeth and congregational leaders worked hard on the application which was accepted and granted! Elizabeth will be on retreat in May, June and July, and our congregation will design our own Season of Sabbath for renewal and reflection. PRC is represented on a committee that will be supporting both Elizabeth and the Congregation as Sabbath renewals are planned.

In the months ahead, we will hear more from Elizabeth about her plans. May will be an "active retreat", travelling with Randy to New Zealand to listen for the voice of God in the beauty of sacred sites and bird life, a special shared interest. Upon her return in June, Elizabeth will practice self-care and creativity away from the congregation. She plans to spend some time every week at the UC Berkeley Library, reading and writing and assembling a booklet of her sacred writing. She also envisions retreat time and exploring areas of creative work.

PRC will be supporting the visiting pastor(s) during that time. This is a wonderful honor for Elizabeth and for OCC.

In early December we lost our dear John Thursby. He was a blessing, bringing his deeply pastoral presence, his listening skills, his humor and his opening prayers, sometimes offered musically, singing a favorite hymn. We miss him.

We are delighted to welcome Mitch Breitwieser to PRC.

We hope you will always feel free to contact any one of us with your comments or questions.

Mitch Breitwieser, Chris Mead, Jeane Samuelsen, Chair, Craig Taatjes, Joan Upshaw

FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

Bill Abriel (Stewardship Chair)

Gail Mead (Financial Secretary)

Lani Shepp (Treasurer) (Ex Officio)

Kathi Kling (Asst. Treasurer) (Ex Officio)

The Finance and Stewardship Committee works to maintain the financial operations of the church through development of the annual budget, administration of licensing or leasing agreements for the use of Church property, design and management of stewardship and fundraising campaigns. The Finance and Stewardship Committee also works closely with the Staffing and Personnel Committee on budgetary aspects of church staffing. During the year the Committee watches the flow of funds from income to reserves to operations, as offerings and pledge fulfillment bring money in to balance ongoing expenditures.

In 2023, the Finance and Stewardship committee has continued to respond to the changes in our church and our world. Having Elizabeth Robinson as our senior pastor has been a great blessing for all of us and she has nurtured many new channels of ministry and care. Pledges make up about 70% of our revenue. The 2023 stewardship drive for 2024 funds was carried out and the congregation responded as usual with tremendous generosity. Pledges to date have very nearly reached our goals. This response is a reminder of how deeply we are tied by God's love and our commitment to doing God's work.

During 2023 it was not necessary to draw on the backing of our Endowment Board due to sufficient funding and the steadfast support of our members to maintain operations. Our OCC community has held each other in care and fellowship. Thank you to all of you for helping support OCC's mission.

NEXT 80 CAMPAIGN

Fred Matteson

Background:

To ensure our place as Orinda's Community Church, Church Council and our Endowment Board sponsored a new capital campaign in June of 2021 to fund important and urgent church campus improvements. Because of favorable market returns in the endowment fund over the previous year, the Endowment Board generously committed to a matching fund grant of up to \$100,000 to jump start this effort. Every donation made by the congregation was matched by the Endowment Board, up to a total of \$100,000. At that time, we estimated the cost for these improvements at \$300,000, and we hoped to raise an additional \$200,000 over the Endowment Board's contribution from church members through pledges paid out over three years. Through your efforts, we have raised a total of over \$399,000.

Status:

Through the first two years of the campaign, we spent \$112,924 on various projects detailed in previous annual meeting reports. In 2023, we were able to fund the following:

- Completed Engineering and Seismic studies for Mayflower building
- Provided tear out and replacement of the junipers on the side of the church (required for fire safety reasons. The new landscaping looks great and will continue to look even better as the new plants fill in.
- We purchased our solar panels that were coming off lease. Solar provides a most (over 90%) of our electricity needs, and by purchasing the existing system, we will be able to benefit for years to come.
- We funded significant sewer repairs around the church – some of the sewer lines are original from the late 30's! Let's hope these repairs last another 90 years!

2023 projects totaled just over \$59,000 leaving roughly \$227,000 in a combination of cash on hand (\$171,000) and pledges still owed (approximately \$54,000). Note: numbers don't completely add to totals because of rounding and estimates).

The committee will continue to evaluate opportunities to improve the physical plant through 2024 and will keep the congregation updated on our progress.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Next 80 continued)

Thanks again to all of the generous donors to the campaign and to the hardworking committee comprised of Fred Matteson, Chair and members Gail Mead, Lani Shepp, Andy Weber, Bob Winbigler, Karen Sanford, Pete Hartdegen, Mike Kersten, and Tom Norris. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions for the committee, please reach out to any of us.

SEWING CIRCLE

Melody Ferreira

We were very busy this past year:

- We donated 30 quilts to CEID (Center for Early Intervention on Deafness) in Berkeley. Each December Santa distributes our quilts to the children at their annual Christmas party. CEID is very appreciative and often sends us pictures of the children with their quilts. It is a remarkable place doing wonderful things for the children in their care.
- We sold children's quilts, artisan quilts, bottle bags, and table runners, raising \$1135 for the year. We donated \$500 of that to the church as part of the auction proceeds and \$100 to help Common Hope finance a home for a family in Guatemala. The remainder will help fund our ongoing sewing projects and other OCC mission projects that serve those in need.
- Karen Norris once again donated a decorated Christmas tree to the Orinda Women's Club for their annual Festival of Trees fundraiser.

A big "thank you" to all of you for supporting the Sewing Circle. Your quilt purchases and sponsorship donations help the Sewing Circle buy essential quilt supplies so we can continue making the quilts. You are welcome to visit us in the sewing room!

Melody Ferreira, Karen Norris, Barbara Beck, and Kathleen Wiegand

THE CHANCEL RINGERS

Nancy Thursby, Director

The Chancel Ringers Handbell Choir play during worship several times during 2023:

- ❖ January 22nd: *Canto Amoroza (Song of Peace)* an original piece for handbells by Fred A. Merrett.
- ❖ February 26th: *What Wonderful Love is This* from a reproducible book, *All Praise to Thee Vol 1* (for 6 ringers) arranged by Jason W. Krug. The melody, “Wonderous Love,” is the melody of hymn #223 in the New Century Hymnal.

From the hymnal:

“This anonymous folk hymn, with its modal (Dorian) tune, has appeared in many versions. William Walker, compiler of *Southern Harmony*, (1843) one of the most important nineteenth-century tune books in the United States, lived and died in Spartanburg, South Carolina.”

The Dorian mode is one of the modern modal diatonic scales (7 tones) corresponding to the piano keyboard’s white notes from D to D.

- ❖ Palm Sunday, April 2nd: *Hosanna Loud Hosanna, Hail to the Lord’s Anointed*, also from *All Praise to Thee Vol. 1* arranged by Jason W. Krug. This hymn is #213 in the New Century Hymnal. The lyrics, based on Mark 11:8-10 and Matthew 21:15, were written by Jennette Threlfall in 1783.

From the hymnal:

“Jennette Threlfall of England, who was disabled by two accidents, wrote hymns that inspired hope and courage in others. This text was published in her collection “Sunshine and Shadow.” The tune is Ellacombe, 1784.

- ❖ Homecoming, September 17th: *Processional*, a bell tree peal, played as a quartet by Kathi Kling, Robin Holmes, Nancy Thursby, and Kathleen Weigand.
- ❖ October 8: *Festival Fanfare*, a bold, original tune (2023) by Jason W. Krug.
- ❖ November 29th: *Come Ye Thankful People Come*, from *Porta-Hymn Supplement I* arranged by Lula R. Ramsdell and Robert G. Groth for Handbell Quartet and played by Robin Holmes, Kathi Kling, Gail Mead, and Nancy Thursby. The lyrics were written by Henry Alford in 1844. The tune is St. George’s Windsor by George J. Elvey, 1858. It is hymn # 422 in the New Century Hymnal.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(The Chancel Ringers continued)

- ❖ December 10: *Advent Hope* by Derek K. Hakes. The melodies used in this piece are two Advent hymns, *Savior of the Nations Come* (Lutheran) and *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* (Methodist), written by Charles Wesley and published in his "Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord," 1744.

Choir members this year were Kelly Connolly, Robin Holmes, Kathi Kling, Sharon Kurk, Gail Mead, Natasha Ovsyannikova, Ellen Prater, and Kathleen Wiegand.

Anyone interested in joining us, should contact Nancy Thursby at: nlthursby@comcast.net

ACOLYTES

Karen Norris

So many people made the program happen this year, and we extend gratitude to all of them. However, our acolyte program would not have been possible without *Ava Skidgel*, *Prudence* and *Robert Hurley*, *Madeline Bernard*, and *Sepi Kiazal* and their dedication and talent. Thanks to their families and drivers, too!

Our two Seniors, Nicole Parlett and Mimi McCall, were most welcome “old” pros, and made many special Sundays feel seamless. We will miss them a lot next Fall but are happy for their bright futures. We hope to see Hannah and Maya Hoppock as often as possible, and thank Isaac and Laurel Taatjes, Amarise Gonzalez and Elvyre Kersten for their “guest” appearances. We did not take a summer break, as we did before the pandemic, and the following trained (adult) ringers filled in, and we appreciate them: Kathleen Wiegand, Jeane Samuelsen, Nancy Thursby, Kathy Kling and Adam Parlett (with an assist from his mother Amy.) Leslie Dickson has a loving connection with the youth and subbed as their director-even ringing the singing bowl once. Rev. Robinson is a constant source of support and encouragement for our participants.

Interested young people need to be entering Fourth Grade. As simple as carrying a torch and striking a bowl seems, acolyting offers confidence-building challenges almost every week, it seems. And, in front of an audience, no less. They become a valued part of the worship service. We are happy to train the youth you know and bring to us.

RUDI'S BIZARRE BAZAAR BOUTIQUE

Karen Norris

The Boutique hangs on by a thread—bad pun! But we do have clothing and the Thread Rack at OSV closed some years ago. Rudi Thomas and her friends would be happy to know their little shop is still serving various functions. This winter our pastor and others have used it to provide homeless persons with some decent clothing to get by. Used men's jackets would be welcome. When possible, we open up for the Winter Nights visitors, though their staff is sometimes more interested, since the residents travel light. When possible, we let the children chose an item. Our overflow little toys and school implements are given to a Concord teacher as rewards for her students and also to the "Snug As A Bug in A Rug" program.

We sold most of the remaining, lovely holiday items Pete Hartdegen donated from his and Grace's estate at the FUNdraiser. Thanks also to the contribution by the daughter of an OSV resident of paintings, lamps and other larger items, the Boutique corner raised over \$400 at the event. We were able to keep our tables open until the following Wednesday for TOPS families and teachers to stop by. We have not yet lured the Holden folk! One discerning shopper completed her Christmas shopping on a budget there.

As the Boutique is upstairs near Fellowship Hall, and Coffee Hour is often outside or in the Narthex, we have less of a captive audience than in years past. However, any time we are upstairs, or if you have a special need—like for box games or a gift--you can locate Tré Frane, Karen Norris, Melody Ferreira or Vangie Abriel for assistance. Or text Karen at 925 360-4704. There will be envelopes near the door to put in a few dollars (and push under the door) for the clothes sometimes hanging outside. Let us know if you would like to volunteer, youth included, even once or twice.

Thank you also to our most generous donors, including Vangie and Melody, and so many anonymous ones. We are happy to give you a receipt if you let us know.

~ Karen and Vangie

WORSHIP & MUSIC

Kurt Sunderbruch

Members

- Kurt Sunderbruch – Chair
- Bill Abriel
- Kathi Kling
- Mike Kersten
- Fred Matteson
- Elizabeth Robinson – *ex officio*
- David Milnes – *ex officio*

The purpose of the Worship and Music committee is to support Elizabeth and David in the creation and execution of the worship experience at OCC, as well as to represent the congregation in getting its needs met through OCC's practices of worship and execution. We reconstituted the committee in late 2022, and met in January 2023 to discuss how best to fulfill that role.

Since then, our engagement has been primarily through email, assisting Elizabeth in her planning for Lent and Easter. Going forward in 2024, we are making ourselves available to Elizabeth and the church for planning and supporting Elizabeth's sabbatical this year, which we continue to discuss via email. We will meet as a committee as circumstances require.

Our other role is to support and represent the congregation in assuring that our practices in worship and music are meeting the needs of the congregation. If you have thoughts or concerns regarding our worship, and ideas to improve it, please contact a member of the committee. If you are interested in serving on the committee, please contact me or Bill Abriel to see how you can become a member of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Sunderbruch - Chair

ALTA MESA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Mary Volmer



Endowment Report

In 2021 the Endowment gave a \$10,000 grant in seed money to found the Alta Mesa Center for the Arts. Half of these funds were directed toward administrative costs and development, and half were directed toward instructor fees, promotion, marketing, and materials. I received half of these funds in the fall of 2021 and the other half in the fall of 2023. The majority money has been spent to support the ongoing AMCA Reading Series (see below).

We hope new partnerships, such as the one forged with Maker, Mentor, Muse, will, in the future, help make AMCA financially self-sufficient. This is not yet a reality, however. Any further financial support from the endowment board would be quite helpful, but I call on the wisdom of the board to determine if such a thing is feasible.

Ongoing and completed initiatives funded by the seed money

- Developed the AMCA [mission/vision statement](#).
 - Completed in 2021
- Attend arts business workshops and procure learning materials at Intersection for the Arts (SF).
 - Ongoing: It was in part these workshops and conversations with arts business professionals, like Sheri Lukas, that have led me to believe that partnerships will be essential if we hope to achieve financial self-sufficiency.
- Creation and maintenance of the [AMCA website](#); providing Brian Shepp information to update the [OCC website](#) monthly.
 - Ongoing
- Create and maintain Lamorinda Arts Council Membership to promote AMCA and OCC's arts ministry.
 - Ongoing.
- Created (with Elizabeth Robinson) the [AMCA Reading Series](#).
 - To date, we have hosted over 60 writers and poets including many prize winners like Pulitzer Prize winning poet Rae Armantrout.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Alta Mesa continued)

- We average upwards of 25 registrants for each reading.
- Nearly 400 people have signed up for the AMCA mailing list.
- Through the reading series we support and promoted numerous community organizations including the Sogorea Te Land Trust, and Lamorinda Arts Council, and Feet Forward, the Hawaii Community Foundation, and Mutual Aid Myanmar.
- Upcoming readers include: A quartet of AAPI poets, including Grace Loh Prasad (January), journalist Katya Cengal (February), award winning novelist Cristina Gracia (March), A “Poetry for Peace” reading with Muslim American poet Sara Farooqi (April), and a reading by Jewish American poet Merle Bachman (May).
- Duties involved in sustaining the [Reading Series](#) can be roughly broken down as follows:
 - Each month, recruit writers and poets to participate (we’re moving this year to the last Sunday of the month to avoid conflicts with holidays like Mother’s day.)
 - Create and distribute promotional and registration materials for each event.
 - Make sure books for each author are in stock at Orinda Books.
 - Create and maintain registration pages and electronic platforms for each event
 - We’ve shifted to evite in 2024
 - Manage social media accounts and outreach ([Twitter/Instagram/Facebook](#)) for each event.
 - Meet with each reader on zoom to plan and script the event.
 - MC each event.
 - Create and maintain [AMCA youtube](#) channel

New in 2023: Development of a partnership with Maker Mentor Muse

In collaboration with Maw Shein Win and Dawn Angelicca Barcelona, I created Maker, Mentor, Muse, a teaching platform that will partner with AMCA and OCC and allow us to offer courses and to pay instructors directly from fees collected from students. This partnership was established a) to prevent any conflict of interest that might threaten OCC’s non-profit status and b) to improve the visibility of our course offerings c) to increase the visibility of both AMCA Reading Series, MMM workshops and OCC’s Arts Ministry.

In 2023, I had hoped to begin developing a Contemplative Writing Conference that might serve UCC churches in the SF Bay Area. I still hope to move forward on those plans. Such a goal has become more reasonable with the development of our partnership with Maker, Mentor, Muse which diffuses the labor such an undertaking would require.

(Alta Mesa continued)

Appendix:

AMCA Mission Statement

We believe that art is a spiritual act and a human right. Contained within that sentence are our two primary goals: a) to provide a place for artists to engage in the spiritual aspects of their art and for spiritual seekers to use art to deepen and discover new avenues of spiritual experience; b) to provide a place where people from diverse traditions, artistic practices, and economic realities come together in community.

From experience we know that art can bridge the divisions, substantive and arbitrary, that divide us. We come together not only to practice and teach the arts, but to celebrate and learn from our differences and to foster lively and respectful interdisciplinary dialogues. We seek unity in diversity. We welcome professional artists, writers and musicians, experienced amateurs, hobbyists, mystics and seekers young and old. Wherever you are on your artistic and spiritual journey, whoever you are, we welcome you.



Maker, Mentor, Muse was founded in 2022 by Mary Volmer, Maw Shein Win, and Dawn Angelicca Barcelona. Hailing from three distinct backgrounds, generations, and spiritual traditions we believe community is essential to building a satisfying and sustainable literary life and that true success requires balancing all three artistic roles: maker, mentor, muse. In collaboration with Alta Mesa Center for the Arts, sponsored by Orinda Community Church, we are building a place where artists embrace practices that honor process, spiritual growth, connection, and ongoing community with other writers.

ORINDA SENIOR VILLAGE BOARD

ORINDA SENIOR HOUSING FOUNDATION

Gwen McNeilus

Orinda Senior Village (OSV) is one of OCC's oldest and historically longest lasting mission partner. OSV is a subsidized housing project begun in 1983* when members of the Orinda Community Church congregation and other Orinda residents combined to support the establishment of subsidized senior housing to be built on land donated by the Church. The Bylaws of OSV require that a majority of the members of OSV's board be members of OCC.

The following OCC members served on the OSV Board for all or part of 2023. Great appreciation is felt for those willing to serve on the Board, OCC's membership and staff for their support of this mission partner. Of special note is the contribution of John Thursby. "John always had a quiet voice with big impact. He had the utmost care and loving suggestions for the residents of OSV." Victoria Smith OSV President.

Orinda Community Church 2023 OSV Board Members: (partial year)

- Fred Matteson
- John Thursby
- Lee Cruise

Orinda Community Church 2023 OSV Board Members:

- Gwen McNeilus - OSV Officer, Secretary
- Chris Mead - OSV Officer, Treasurer
- Kurt Sunderbruch
- Bob Winbigler
- Leslie Dickson

A few highlights from OSV in 2023 included:

- Continued collaborative effort between OSV/OCC and Tops to positively address the parking concerns
- Increased resident services with the resumption of in-house events and scheduled outings for residents
- Significant Facility maintenance projects completed:
 - Elevator Modernization
 - HVAC: Modernization complete
 - Roof: Replacement is complete
- An on-site OSV Garden has been designed, approved and is in the budget for 2024.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Orinda Senior Village continued)

Orinda Senior Housing Foundation (OSHF):

- Vista Verde Community Housing fulfills OCC's mission of providing affordable housing while helping meet the church's income needs through a long-term lease providing for annual payments to OCC
- Orinda City Council approval was granted in August 2022 for the project planned for 8 very-low income units, 30 low-income units, and 13 moderate-income units and 1 unit allocated for the OCC Caretaker. The total of 52 units will consist of 33 one-bedroom units and 19 two-bedroom apartments.
- 2023 Award Winner for Best On-the-Boards Affordable Housing Community (Pacific Coast Builders Conference)
- Grading and soils studies complete with anticipated work to begin in the first half of 2024
- Vista Verde website: <https://vistaverdeorinda.com/>

In closing, Orinda Senior Village management and residents appreciate OCC for their partnership with other concerned Orinda residents establishing OSV and OCC's continued involvement and commitment to affordable senior housing.

*Contract of intention signed in 1983.

ENGAGEMENTS AND NOMINATIONS

Bill Abriel, Vice Moderator

This committee shall nominate one Church member to serve in each elected office the term for which is expiring according to these Bylaws or as notified by the current office holder. Elected offices which require nomination and election by a vote of the congregation include Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, at-large Council members, chairs and members of Ministries, and members of the Endowment Board. The Engagement Committee is also responsible for planning and administering a program to help each member find a useful place in the life of the Church and in this regard maintain information on opportunities for service and records of members' capabilities, interests, gifts, and past service.

The engagement committee unanimously puts forward to the congregation the following nominations **for consideration and election to Council:**

Moderator	Bill Abriel
Vice Moderator	Amy Parlett
Treasurer	Lani Shepp
Clerk	Robin Holmes
Financial Secretary	Gail Mead
At large member	Mike Kersten
At large member	Bob Winbigler
At large member	Gail Mead

The engagement committee unanimously puts forward to the congregation the following nominations **for consideration and election to the Endowment Board:**

Anne Barr, (Chair)
Gail Mead (Treasurer)
Tom Beatty
Kathy Kling
Fred Matteson
Andy Weber
Elizabeth Robinson
Lani Shepp

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Engagements and Nominations continued)

The engagement committee unanimously puts forward to the congregation the following nominations **for consideration and election to the following ministries:**

Justice and Mercy

Karen Sanford (co-chair)

Nancy Thursby (co-chair)

Tré Frane

Mike Kersten

Eartha Newsong

Gail Mead

Elizabeth Robinson

Children Youth and Families

Amy Parlett (chair)

Hilly Hoppock

Elisabeth Kersten

Karen Norris

Leslie O'Brien

Robin Weber

Lifelong Learning and Spiritual Formation

Mitch Breitwieser (chair)

In Suk Kim-Anderson

Gary Nye

Roger Samuleson

Katrina Staten

Mary Volmer

Elizabeth Robinson

Care and Fellowship

Vangie Abriel (co-chair)

Karen Norris (co-chair)

Nancy Peterson

Leslie Schonborn

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Engagement and Nominations continued)

Worship and Music

Kurt Sunderbruch (chair)

Kathi Kling (asst chair)

Mike Kersten

Fred Matteson

David Milnes

The engagement committee also recommends to the Council, nominations for the committees of the Council. The Orinda Community Church membership is not requested to vote in favor of the selections for these committees, but should be advised of who has been nominated. The engagement committee unanimously nominated and **Council unanimously voted in favor of the following Council committee selections:**

Finance

Lani Shepp (Chair)

Gail Mead

Laurie Goetzi

Kathi Kling

Greg McCall (Chair of staffing)

Elizabeth Robinson

Pastoral Relations

Jeanne Samuelsen (chair)

Mitch Breitwieser

Chris Mead

Craig Taatjes

Joan Upshaw

Engagement

Amy Parlett (chair, vice moderator)

Mitch Breitwieser

Mike Kersten

Karen Norris

Bill Abriel (moderator)

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

(Engagements and Nominations continued)

Staffing

Greg McCall (Chair)

Dave Hoppock

Chris Mead

Building and Grounds

Tom Norris (chair)

Brent Goetzl

Pete Hartdegen

Mike Kersten

Mark Nichols

Karen Sanford

Les Simmons

Andy Weber

Governance

Amy Parlett (chair, vice moderator)

Mike Kersten

Gail Mead

Roger Samuelsen

Kurt Sunderbruch

Craig Taatjes

The engagement committee thanks all those who have served OCC in their roles during 2023, and thanks in advance those who have volunteered for positions in 2024. It is through their countless hours and boundless energy that OCC thrives.

Bill Abriel (chair)

Mitch Breitwieser

Mike Kersten

Karen Norris

Anne Barr (ex officio)

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Bill Abriel (chair)
Mike Kersten
Gail Mead
Roger Samuelsen
Kurt Sunderbruch
Craig Taatjes

This committee is responsible for reviewing and maintaining the governing documents of the Church, including but not limited to these Bylaws and any written policies of the Church and providing leadership, training and mentoring for those assuming leadership roles.

During 2023, the Governance Committee reviewed and revised by-laws of the Orinda Community Church primarily to update procedures to better fit the electronic age, and to provide greater flexibility for responsibilities and term limits of the elected and appointed officers, committees and ministries. These changes were approved by the membership and adopted. Highlights of the modifications are:

- Updated congregational notifications to fit the electronic age
- For elected officers and council members:
 - Clarified that all members are eligible for office
 - Specified terms of office (2 years)
 - Clarified that officers may be re-elected in place (with the exception of Moderators)
 - Clarified ex officio roles
- For standing council committees, clarified some committee duties and makeup of the committees.
- Updated the language regarding Orinda Senior Village (OSV) to also include Orinda Senior Housing Foundation (OSHF)

HOLDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Abby Tuttle

Holden is a private, non-profit, WASC-accredited high school that has been addressing the needs of teenagers since 1969. Our student body comprises a max of 40 students in grades nine through twelve with a student-teacher ratio of 5:1 or smaller. Students graduate from Holden with academic confidence and intellectual curiosity, the ability to advocate for themselves, a strong sense of community, a passion for learning, and solid plans for their futures. Students come from all over the Bay Area and reflect its diversity. 2023 marks our 53rd year in the lower level of the Orinda Community Church, and our 54th year in existence!

Five students graduated from Holden last year (four in June and one in December). Two of them went off to college (Cal Poly Humboldt and Colorado State University). Others went on to community college and jobs.

Our work against racism and for equity continues. We continued our monthly Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) meetings open to all staff and a small cohort of Holden staff continued to participate in Equity Teams (a small professional learning community cohort). We are continuing to share a land acknowledgement at our gatherings to honor the Ohlone and Bay Miwok peoples and have more to do to develop that work.

Throughout the year students presented grade level projects. 9th and 10th graders completed community service projects including volunteering at animal shelters, libraries, food banks, Winter Nights, the Oakland Zoo, the Tilden Steam Train, summer camps, and by reading banned books. We held all-school service field trips to the Alameda County Food Bank and with Save the Bay. 10th graders completed passion projects involving a variety of student interests such as cooking, 3-D modeling, writing screenplays and manuscripts, and driving. 11th graders completed jobs and internships. 12th graders completed transition projects exploring post high school options including jobs, internships, creative and independent living skills, vocational schools, colleges, and scholarships. Many of our students took concurrent community college classes as well.

As always, we are working hard to recruit families who would be a good fit for our small nurturing program. If you know of a young person whose needs would be met by our unique and innovative school, please refer them to us.

Holden is eternally grateful for the generosity of the Orinda Community Church in supporting our mission. We would like to thank the Rev. Elizabeth Robinson, members and volunteers Tom Norris, Anne Barr, Pete Hartdegen, Dalton and Kay James, Les Simmonds, Andy Weber, Tom Norris, Chris Mead, Leslie O'Brien, The OCC Sewing Circle, Mission and Outreach, and, last but certainly not least, members of the OCC who serve (or have served) on our board: Lani Shepp, Gail Mead, Lee Cruise, Elisabeth Kersten, Kay Norman, and Joyce Crawford. We could not be the school we are today without you!

LIFE LONG LEARNING & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Mitch Breitwieser

Members: Roger Samuelsen, In-Suk Kim, Mary Volmer, Gary Nye, Katrina Staten, Elizabeth Robinson (Ex officio).

We organized several second hour events:

A spiritual journey presentation by Bill Abriel.

A discussion of Christian nationalism led by Mike Kersten and Gary Nye.

A talk by Sie Savage Chambers on Trans experience.

A talk by Lucina Lopez on her work with immigrants.

I was out of the country in August and September. Roger subbed for me during that time.