

THE PARK BENCH

The magazine of Oak Park Church of Christ | June 2026

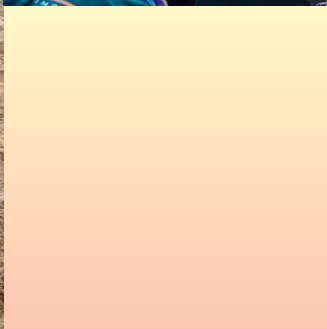
**Judy and Dennis
Shierman,
Helping Hands
Ambassadors**
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● MISSIONS FOCUS

Pine Lake Christian Camp





Jumping into the lake, racing canoes, singing songs at the campfire, late night chats in the cabins, the calm quiet by the water in the morning – these are some of the cherished summer camp experiences.



By Kate Petry

Not only is camp fun and engaging, but it is a place we can unplug, spend time outside, try new activities, and grow in our friendships. Camp is a place where we can step away from the worries of this life and cast our cares on God; a place where life slows down enough to remember how much He cares for us.

Summer Camp also unites us. Kids and students come from different schools, churches, and families. For some, camp is just one of many trips and activities they will experience this summer; for others, camp will be their only chance to get away. There will be students who can easily quote scripture and others who don't even have a Bible in their home. And yet, for one week at camp, they will all be there together for the same purpose: to grow in their faith.

Pine Lake Christian Camp leans into this opportunity to develop the faith of our kids and students. They partner adventurous friendship-building activities with genuine worship and age-appropriate biblical teaching designed to help them know Jesus and become more like him.

The theme this year is Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." My prayer is that during their week at camp, God would do foundational work in the hearts of our kids and students that builds their spiritual strength and confidence, making it easier for them to live this verse out in their day-to-day life at home and at school.

In addition to the regular camps, this summer we've planned an Oak Park Weekend at Pine Lake. This is a great opportunity for some quality time with our Oak Park family, and the perfect way to get to know the place that hosts faith-filled encouragement for the next generation every year, so be sure to register!

What Oak Park Can Do To Help...

Each year, we have a list of kids and students who want to go to camp, but cannot afford it. You can help by sponsoring a child's week at camp. Costs range from \$225 - \$450, and even a partial sponsorship is a huge help. All sponsorships go directly through Oak Park and are organized by Pastor Kate (kate@oakpark.ca).

You can also pray. Pray for the kids and students who will attend camp this summer. Pray for the many leaders who will pour into them. Pray that they will all be built up in their faith, believing both the truth and grace God gives us. Oak Park will have staff, volunteers, and participants at every week of camp this summer.

Sr High Camp (Grade 10-12)	June 28 – July 3
Leaders In Training Camp	July 5 – 10
Jr High Camp (Grade 7-9)	July 12 – 17
Junior Camp (Grade 4-6)	July 19 – 24
Oak Park Camp Weekend	July 24 - 25
Rookie Camp (Grade 1-3)	July 26 – 29



Make Your Summer a Page-Turner.

An invitation to read deeply, not just widely

Summer has a different pace to it. The rhythms shift – vacations, longer evenings, a bit more margin (at least in theory). And with that comes a quiet opportunity: to be shaped in ways that are harder to access in busier, noisier seasons.

What we read matters. It fills the well. It stretches our imagination. It deepens our love for God and sharpens our understanding of the world. My encouragement? Don't just read more this summer – read better. Read things that will stay with you long after the season ends.

Here's a slightly ambitious summer reading list to get you started:

1

What I'm Reading This Summer

A mix of theology, formation, and thoughtful reflection

Classics

Conferences

John Cassian,
Classics of Western Spirituality

Wisdom from the early desert tradition on prayer and the inner life.

Revelations of Divine Love

Julian of Norwich (Barry Windeatt)

A beautiful vision of God's love in the midst of suffering.

Modern

From Genesis to Junia

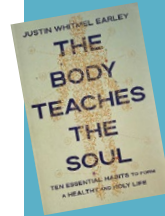
Preston Sprinkle

A fresh and careful look at women in Scripture and ministry leadership.

The Body Teaches the Soul

Justin Whitmel Earley

How our habits and embodied lives shape our spiritual formation.



2

Fiction That Shapes You

Stories that quietly form the heart and imagination

Classics

Till We Have Faces

C. S. Lewis

Lewis at his deepest and most searching.

The Brothers Karamazov

Fyodor Dostoevsky,
(Pevear & Volokhonsky)

Big, demanding, and unforgettable.

Modern

Gilead

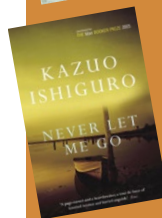
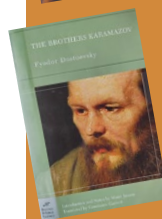
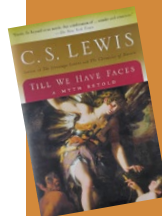
Marilynne Robinson

Gentle, slow, reflective, and deeply theological in all the right ways.

Never Let Me Go

(Kazuo Ishiguro)

Haunting, beautiful, and quietly devastating.





By Pastor
Lane Scruggs

3

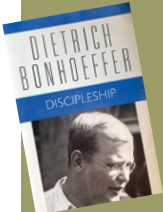
Deep Waters

Theological “weight training” for those ready to go deeper

Classics

The Cost of Discipleship
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

A bracing call to costly grace and real obedience.



On Social Justice
St. Basil the Great

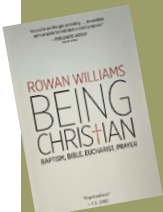
A powerful reminder that theology always has public implications.



Modern

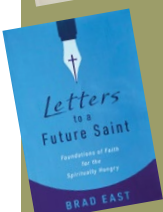
Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer
Rowan Williams

Rich, thoughtful, and deeply rewarding theological reflection.



Letters to a Future Saint
Brad East

Accessible, wise, and especially helpful for younger readers.



4

Practices That Form Us

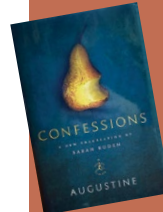
Books that don't just inform — but transform

Classics

Confessions

Augustine (Sarah Ruden)

Honest, searching, and one of the most formative spiritual works ever written.



The Interior Castle

Teresa of Avila, HarperCollins Spiritual Classics abbr. edition

A profound vision of the soul's journey deeper into life with God.

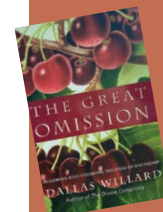


Modern

The Great Omission

Dallas Willard

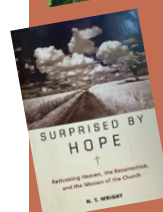
A needed corrective on what discipleship really is.



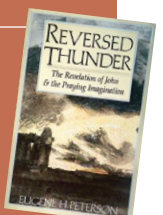
Surprised by Hope

N. T. Wright

A compelling vision of resurrection and the life to come.



If you're tracking with our summer series through Revelation 1–3, you might also consider **Reversed Thunder** (Eugene Peterson) – a rich, pastoral guide to the book as a whole.



A Final Challenge

Pick one category. Start with one book.
Read slowly. Reflect prayerfully.

Or... if you're feeling ambitious –
see how many you can get through by
the end of summer.

Bragging rights are absolutely on the line.

And if you somehow read the most...
coffee's on me!

Helping Hands.

Allow us to introduce ourselves, we are Dennis and Judy Shierman. We have served with Canadian Baptist Ministries in various international ministry roles for most of our careers.

We have lived in the jungles of Borneo in Indonesia and in Cochabamba, Bolivia, for a total of 14 years. We returned to Canada in 2004, one of the hardest places to be a missionary.

Judy retired from full time pastoral ministry last October and Dennis is semi-retired from full-time international ministry. As a result of our retirement, we needed to find a new church home. We have loved the warm welcome we have received at Oak Park. This church provides many of the things that we feel are important in a community of believers, and we are exploring ways to continue to use our gifts to edify the church.

Early in the new year we had some discussions with Alvin and Lane, asking them where they thought we would fit in terms of serving and what was most needed. One of the places they identified was as 'ambassadors' (2 Cor. 5:20) with Helping Hands, which is basically client support at the intake stage. We started in February and are really enjoying this. We get to meet the people



By Dennis and Judy Shierman

of our neighbourhoods coming through the doors of our church, and it's so nice to get to know all the dedicated people on the team.

When asked, "why do you do this?" the best answer we can come up with is, "because it is such a privilege to journey through life with people." Helping Hands is an important ministry to the community around us, particularly those who are facing some struggles. Together with much help from the businesses and individuals in our area, the team provides food, clothing and household items. We are able to be God's hands and feet (Matt. 25:40). However, people also need other things besides the tangibles.

People want to feel known. Simply being able to greet someone by name is a gift to them. Helping them to understand that God knows their name is so significant.

People need touch. Over 50% of Canadians will go days without human contact. Touch is important to our mental health. Just a simple handshake, shoulder touch and, especially a hug, makes a difference. We have heard that it takes seven touches before someone really feels welcome. Together, as a team, we can do that.

People also need to feel seen, and heard. This takes some

time: developing trust, building relationships, listening to people's stories. Language is sometimes an issue here, as many of our friends are recent immigrants or refugees, many from Ukraine. Dennis and I enjoy keeping our Spanish fresh, but we are also grateful for our translation app. As we listen, we can sometimes be a conduit, referring them to other supports available in our city.

More recently, we have been able to give some friends their first Bible. We have also started a prayer box and it is being used. It is such a privilege to be able to listen to someone who is struggling and then be able to pray with them and acknowledge their tears, reminding them that God sees each tear they shed.

Most importantly, people need to know how much God loves them. They may need help remembering that He created them and loves them unconditionally. Reminding them that God is always with them - every moment of the day and during the long nights - helps. People see God's love in action when they see (and feel) God's people caring for them.

Helping Hands is such an important holistic ministry. It is living out our transforming faith in both tangible and intangible ways. It is such an amazing service opportunity to be a part of.





By Mavis Oberding

**A dedicated team
of volunteers meets
twice a week at
Oak Park to run
the Helping Hands
program.**

They share their time, skills, and experience to give others a lift on their journeys by providing essential food, clothing, and household goods. This small “village” has been making a difference in the community each week for many years.

How did I become part of this caring group? Two years ago, I learned that my friend Holly was volunteering at Oak Park Church, so I stopped by to visit. We chatted, and it was clear she was very busy and could use an extra pair of hands. I started by helping on Thursday mornings, when we “sell” (give away) donated items to those in need. I was retired, looking for a purpose, and wanted to give back to society. Before long, I began helping on Wednesday mornings as well, when much of the hands-on work happens.

I volunteer with a vibrant, hardworking team in the clothing and household area, which includes shoes and boots, books, toys, tools, and sometimes small furniture; stuffed animals are



always a welcome sight. It's a bit of a catch-all for whatever our generous donors contribute. Helping Hands depends on the kindness and generosity of people who pass along gently used items they no longer need. What may be no longer useful to one household can become a real treasure to another!

Much of the work happens behind the scenes. Clothing donations are collected and our supervisor, Holly, takes them home in bags and tubs to sort. Some items must be washed and dried, then folded or hung on hangers before they're brought back to share. It's an ongoing job she works on every day. Every Wednesday morning the church lobby becomes a hub of activity as we set up the "store" for Thursday. On Thursdays, I try to help guests find the items and sizes they need (sometimes we have the items, and they just haven't spotted them yet). Seeing someone's face light up when they find something they truly need or like, or when a lady finds a top or blouse that suits them is a joy. Smiles are shared freely, and I'm grateful when they return my smile.

I was raised with the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." I feel

privileged to have the opportunity to serve and make a difference; it feels good to help others. I also value the friendships among the volunteers. We come together with one purpose – to help others – but we often stay afterward for coffee to talk, learn, and share our stories. This work supports my mental health too; it helps me appreciate others and feel grateful for my place in the world. I've learned that volunteering is not only about doing good for others – when you help, you grow in gratitude, belonging, and fellowship.

We each walk this earth only once, and it's worth meeting others with kindness and a warm heart. Sometimes a smile or a brief conversation is the only human contact someone has all day or week. People may come for food or clothing, but many also come to see familiar faces, share a short chat, and connect with others who understand their situation. Some are simply lonely and need a moment of genuine connection.

Every small act can make a difference in someone's life. How can you make a difference?

Step up, step forward, and take on a new challenge.

Helping Hands in Numbers



*All values are typical but may fluctuate according to donations received and number of clients served



Building Project & Campaign Update.

On June 23, 2024, Oak Park celebrated our \$2.8 million building expansion and renovation with an Open House. This project was 10 years in the making, going through design iterations, community and City of Calgary reviews and approvals, a change in senior pastors and, of course, Covid.



By Doug Walker

The project included:

- Foyer expansion and modernization
- Upgraded and expanded nursery facilities
- Office and meeting rooms relocation and expansion
- Kitchen expansion and upgrade to commercial standards
- Bathroom expansion and modernizations, including private bathrooms with showers

In addition to the official expansion and renovation project, sanctuary upgrades were done in 2020 and 2021 while church services were online.

Project funding included:

- **\$852,000** in congregational pledges (Oak Park's Infinitely More Campaign)
- **\$1,000,000** low interest mortgage from the Church of Christ Development Company (CCDC)
- **\$1,000,000** grant from the Government of Alberta's Community Facilities Enhancement Program (CFEP), in recognition of the many community services Oak Park provides

In 2022, with congregational pledges in hand and a mortgage commitment from the CCDC, construction plans were underway but then suspended when construction costs soared as the economy emerged from Covid lockdowns. Plans were scaled back to reduce costs, but then in early 2023 we

received the \$1 million grant from CFEP. This grant allowed us to proceed essentially along the lines of our original plans.

Construction then occurred during 2023 and early 2024.

The exact timing of the five-year Infinitely More pledge campaign became a bit fuzzy with the 2022 project hiatus. Some pledges continued, others went on hold until the project resumed in 2023. This summer essentially marks the end of this campaign, with funds received pretty much as pledged. While some folks have since moved away, unfilled pledges have been made up by new donors eager to contribute to the costs of our expanded and re-energized facilities.

While the project officially concluded in 2024, the following work remains:

- Some of the items removed to reduce costs in 2022 are still outstanding and will be done in 2026, including replacement of leaking exterior windows throughout the building and air conditioning for the second floor and kitchen.
- Buydown of our mortgage to remove mortgage servicing costs as quickly as we can.

Regarding our mortgage, in addition to the principal portion of our monthly mortgage payments, we made a principal payment of \$20,350 on the mortgage this past March, using funds from the church's 2025 operating surplus. As of March 31, 2026 our \$1,000,000 mortgage has been reduced to \$899,492.

It's encouraging to see capital contributions continuing. Indeed, Q1 2026 capital funds raised were \$28,400. For ways you can contribute to Oak Park – to either its ongoing ministry and community services or to the church's capital fund, please see the article "Ways to Give" on page 10.

Ways to Give at Oak Park.

There are two key things to know when giving financially to Oak Park and its many missions – how funds can be donated and how they can be designated.



By Doug Walker

Ways to give

Funds can be given to Oak Park in the following ways:

- Donations by cash or cheque in the Giving Slot at the Information Desk (by the East entrance). If cash, be sure to put it in an envelope with your name and full address so your gift can be receipted at year end.
- By e-transfer sent to donate@oakpark.ca. No security question is required.
- Online giving through the church's website.
- Through Breeze.
- Through Benevity – some employers provide matching funds to employees' charitable donations, but require a third party like Benevity to facilitate the matching.
- When you give by cash, cheque, or e-transfer, there are no fees incurred by the church and so it maximizes your gift.
- Through gifts of shares – Oak Park now has a securities account for the receipt of such gifts. These gifts are eligible for a tax receipt for their fair market value at the time of donation yet don't incur capital gains, as the sale of shares into the market do.
- Oak Park also accepts and receipts bequests in wills. For more information on gifts of shares or through wills, contact Pastor Lane or our Treasurer, Doug Walker.

Designating your gift

Oak Park's accounts are organized as follows:

- General – for the overall costs of running Oak Park, its ministries and supported missions.
- Capital – for capital projects and principal buy-downs of our mortgage.
- Missions, which include:
 - Graceland Ministries
 - Langham Scholarship
 - Lifeline Christian Mission
 - Pioneer Bible Translators
 - Power to Change
 - Tabuk Refuge of Hope
 - Vision Ministries
- Heart for Home, which includes:
 - Benevolence
 - Eggcellent
 - Good Food Box
 - Helping Hands
 - Raw Carrot (later this year)
- Next Generation, which includes:
 - Alberta Bible College
 - Pine Lake Christian Camp
 - Next Gen Initiatives within Oak Park

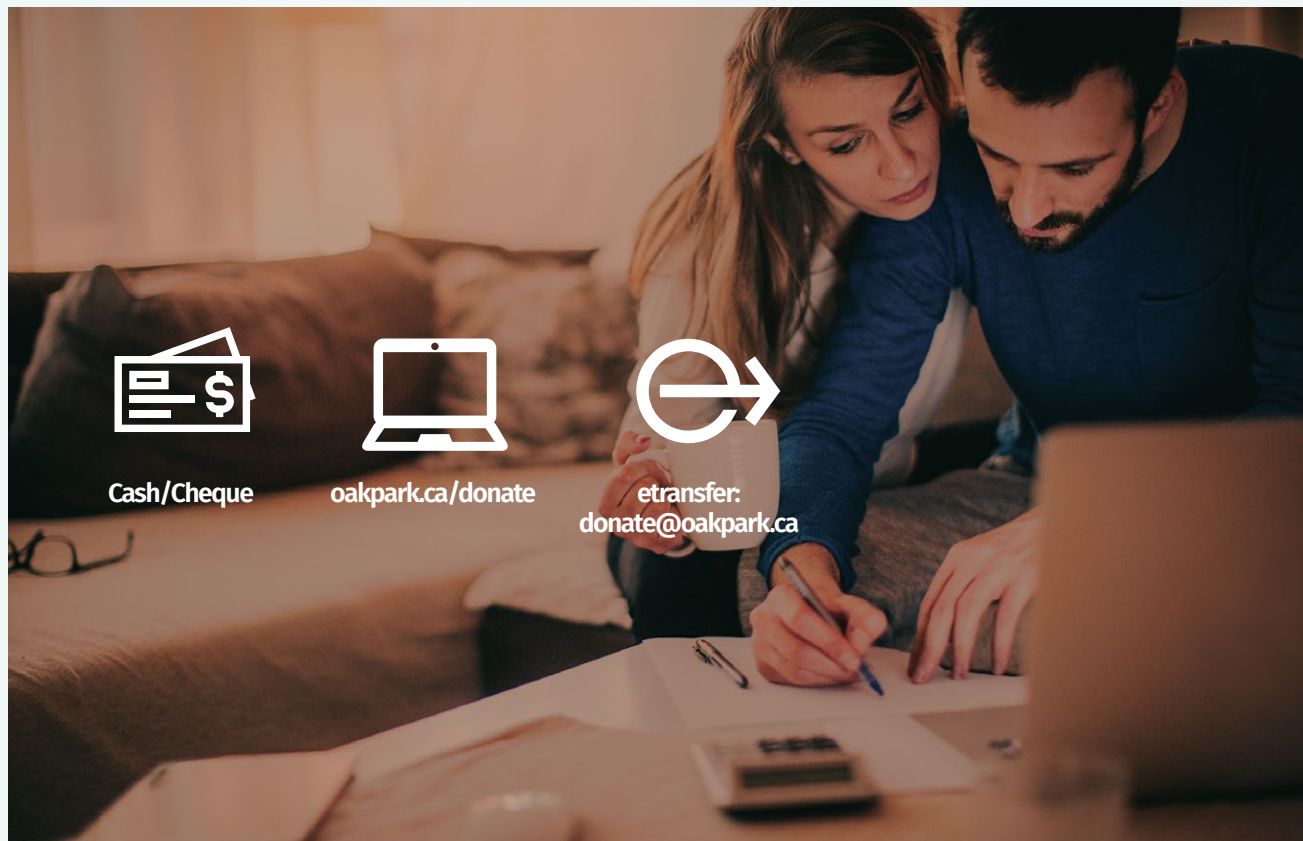
You can designate your gifts to any of these categories or sub-categories. Oak Park also accepts donations to Health Care Plus and the Mustard Seed. If you do not designate your tithes or offerings, then they go into the General Fund. General fund giving is the preferred designation for your tithes and offerings, as it gives the church the most flexibility to meet all the needs of operations, ministries and missions. The church's budget is structured so the General Fund is used to guarantee our minimum commitments each year to all of the missions we support.

For gifts to other missions not directly supported by Oak Park (like the Calgary Food Bank or the Salvation Army, for example), please make those donations directly to those charities.

Tax receipts are issued annually before February 28 for all gifts received by the church during the previous calendar year. Gifts donated through Benevity are typically receipted by Benevity or your employer.

If there are any questions about how to give to Oak Park, please contact our Treasurer, Doug Walker (treasurer@oakpark.ca).

General fund giving is the preferred designation for your tithes and offerings, as it gives the church the most flexibility to meet all the needs of operations, ministries and missions.



Cash/Cheque



oakpark.ca/donate



etransfer:
donate@oakpark.ca

Learning to be Loved.

I always believed in God, and that Jesus died for my sins. Raised in a family with strong faith and church influence, many of my earliest memories centre around that.

At twelve, I responded to an altar call at a Billy Graham crusade. I had belief, but still lacked the same level of faith as my family and always lived one foot in and one foot out. I craved security, belonging, and worthiness because deep down, I believed I was unlovable. And yet, I wondered if someone ever truly loved me and would not leave, maybe that would prove me wrong... so I kept searching. However, from friendships I no longer have, my marriage and divorce, and every broken relationship since, that belief that I was unlovable just seemed to grow.

A few years ago, I felt drawn back to faith and convicted to go back to church and "get right with God." I found Oak Park. Soon, I started to understand that believing in God and actively following Him are not the same thing. He was not asking me for more belief, He was asking me for trust.

For months, I sensed that God was redirecting my living arrangement to better align with His design toward marriage. I resisted, from fear. I thought, "Is God truly prompting me to do this after all the other disappointments and hurt I've experienced lately? Doesn't He know this would be the hardest thing ever for me?" But the conviction would not let up and became too strong to ignore. The fear I had that this decision would cost me the relationship I was clinging to came true. But still, I don't regret it. I listened. I obeyed. I trusted. And God is working the emotions out in me.

That single act of obedience became a turning point.

I could not have imagined that later (this past February) I would be baptized. I wasn't opposed to it, I just had never thought about it. What surprised me most was not the decision of baptism, but what it showed me. I am learning that Christ's love is not conditional, it's simply given. Christ sees me as more than lovable – as worth dying for! He will not get tired of me, leave me, or find someone better to love. He just delights



By Sherri Tetz

in me, and from nothing I do. I still have a hard time fully accepting that and wrapping my head around it, but I'm grateful for this truth and learning to let His love pour over me.

Attending Oak Park has been a significant part of my healing. God has surrounded me with people who mentor me, support me, and make me feel accepted and understood. Baptism turned belief to faith in a visible and permanent way. It says: I know who I belong to. I know who loves me no matter what, and I can freely love Him without fear of loss.

I have no idea what my future holds, or who will be in it. Surrender is a one day at a time thing for me. But whatever life gives me, it must have God in it, and God first. That is my strength and my comfort.