

**Brother Archie Miller  
Orcutt Christian Church  
204 Patterson Rd.  
Orcutt, CA 93455**

**Orcutt Christian Church's Response to COVID-19  
1<sup>st</sup> Meditation**

**“A frightened world needs a fearless church.”**

These are extraordinary times! How shall we who declare that we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ respond? Read the following two scriptures:

***Daniel 12:3 (NJB)***

*3 Those who are wise will shine as brightly as the expanse of the heavens, and those who have instructed many in uprightness, as bright as stars for all eternity.*

***Romans 5:3-5 (NASB)***

*3 we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

Read them over three times. Now take time to reflect on what God that wrote them is saying to you. How is God speaking to you in this crisis (tribulation)? What stands out that you find encouraging? What do you find challenging?

As one of the shepherds of our congregation, I was struggling with the need to protect the congregation by social distancing, on one hand, and on the other, to continue gathering to worship and share in the Lord's Supper. On March 1<sup>st</sup> we implemented new policies to help protect our flock. Our Faith

Community Nurse, Ben Colon, gave a presentation on how the disease spreads, and how to protect each other. Hand sanitizing was implemented. Face masks were made available. Pre-packaged, individual, sealed, Communion elements were ordered. Each congregant was given a written statement of our stance. In short, I was prepared to continue gathering for worship as usual.

Then the situation changed when a 60 year old male here in Orcutt was diagnosed positive. Then in two days a woman in her 50's tested positive. The congregations level of risk immediately went into the "RED" zone, in which medical doctor and minister, Dr. Daniel Chin, urged "Church closure." The decision was painful, but done with much prayer, and with consultation of the Elders and Board.

There was a time in my life I would have welcomed the church's closure, thinking, "Ah, this weekend I can backpack over the Cuyamaca's, or hit the Pacific Crest trail." But where is my Lord in that decision? He bled for me! He died for me! He forgave my sins!

This is where our faith needs to kick in. Faith is a decision. We need to accept that our congregational worship just changed, and we need to HOLD on to that which is sacred. That would be our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ, and our commitment to each of us who belong to Orcutt Christian Church.

### **Our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ**

You and I need to hold on to God's immanence. He is with you right now, even if you can't see or touch Him. He knows your thinking, He hears the words you speak in your head, He knows your fears and anxieties. He's not going anywhere. If anyone moves, it will be you and I.

Reread Daniel 12:3. As a committed follower of our Lord, we must choose to remain calm. Panic causes tunnel vision, which is terrible for decision-making. You can remind people that God is in control of every situation and there is never a reason to panic. Keep in mind that your friends who are not Christian's are watching to see how you respond.

We need to process our fears before God and let our actions be inspired by faith and guided by sound theology. Let not disease, or earthly decree, but doctrine guide our decisions. We find our doctrine in the Bible. Use this

time wisely to stay connected to The Word. You can download from the website a daily chronological way to read and study the Living Oracles.

Use this time to change your prayer life. I wish I could implement what Saint Andrew's Cathedral, the Anglican cathedral in Singapore just did. It's a "high tech" congregation, and at noon the bells chime, and are heard completely over the civic center; simultaneously all congregant's cell phones give an alarm to remind all to take time to pray. Perhaps we could just agree that at noon, we will all go into prayer, and seek God's will for our lives, our community, our congregation. Daniel speaks of "*those who have instructed many in uprightness.*" Jesus declares that **Matthew 5:13-14 (NASB)** <sup>13</sup> "*You are the salt of the earth; ...* <sup>14</sup> "*You are the light of the world.*

We, the church, as **salt** and **light**, need to stand strong in the Lord Jesus Christ so that others can see the hope we profess.

### **Our commitment to Orcutt Christian Church**

It has been an obsession with me for our congregation to do activities which bond us together. Greeting time on the Lord's Day during worship. Coffee, tea, donuts, boiled eggs, string cheese - to hold us longer after worship in a time of joyful fellowship. I feel saddened that temporarily we can't do that.

High Tech companies are scrambling to create ways to hold congregations together in this present tribulation. I've looked at several. Two are rather exciting. "MissionHub" is an online app to keep those with cell phones connected. "Zoom" is an online app for face to face communication. I'd like to hear what you think of these possibilities. But, what about those in our congregation who do not use computers, or have smart phones?

Maybe it's time to become "adaptive!" You know: **Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome!** I just don't see how some of the new apps will help our diverse congregation. But I do see a way to keep us connected.

Here's how you can stay connected with the best, most loving, congregation in Santa Maria:

1. A list of our attendees is provided. Go down that list daily, and visualize each person. Reflect on past conversations and moments of joyful fellowship. Hold that person in prayer.
2. The also has phone numbers and email addresses. Keep in frequent

contact utilizing this amazing technology.

It would be fun to have the phone system which we used when I was a young lad. Our phone number was RJ2. My sister, Marie, was the phone company supervisor. When someone called the Miller residence, the Switchboard Operator, took her cable, and physically plugged it into Row R, Column J, and sent a 2 beep ring. Everybody on the common line could listen in on each other.

Pray for and plan your conversation. If we respond to this crisis correctly, it can turn out to be a defining moment of discipleship. In the face of imminent dangers, our priorities are rearranged. This is a great opportunity to have deep conversations about what we are living for. Are we merely existing, or are we truly living? Are we living for the right stuff? Are we marching to the right drumbeat? Are we governed by biblical or worldly values? Are we living for what really matters?

### **How Can I Support Orcutt Christian Church in this Tribulation**

As one of the shepherds here at Orcutt Christian Church, I plan on emailing very frequently a note of encouragement to all our attendees.

It's fascinating how crisis brings out the true character. I am grateful for the immediate response of Sandra Ortiz-Gummerman. Sandra called and volunteered to be of help to anyone in the congregation who needed assistance. When you are calling those on your call list, see how you may be of help and assistance.

I've had several inquires how we could still receive our needed offerings to keep the "bill-bugs" away. The reality is we do need to keep the offerings up. The Bible contains 2,350 verses about money and possessions—15% of everything Jesus said related to issues of money. The more you look at how the Bible addresses money, the more you discover very practical advice about stewardship, devotion, and discipline. One Scripture to meditate on is 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

Paul opens this with these words:

#### **2 Corinthians 8:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of

*their liberality.<sup>3</sup> For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,*

The Disciples of Christ, and The United Methodist have implemented commercial programs to receive contributions. We will not utilize those companies. But, it might be possible to set up a “billpay” with your bank to have your offering transmitted to Orcutt Christian Church. Our Treasurer, Ben Colon, can assist with this. I plan to email to our attendees Saturday a note of encouragement, to remind people that the need for their giving and support to continue.

**You can mail your personal check to**

**Orcutt Christian Church**

**P.O. Box 3199**

**Orcutt, CA 93457**

***Romans 15:13 (NASB)***

*<sup>13</sup> Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*