

# REFLECTIONS



## THE ORCHARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

# OUR MISSION

To glorify God by growing  
in faith, hope, and love,  
through the gospel  
of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9, the Apostle Paul says, “a wide door for effective work has opened to me.” As we reflect on another year of ministry, and anticipate the year to come, we can rejoice in the many doors the Lord has opened for us to engage in effective work for the glory of His name.

We are grateful that the Lord opened the door to extend our lease at the Glenview Park Center while we continue searching for a long-term home for our North Shore Campus. We have asked God to provide for this need in small group settings, at campus prayer services, and at our all-church prayer gathering last summer. Thank you for praying! We trust that God will lead us according to His perfect will.



We have also seen the Lord open the door to strengthen our Pastoral Residency through a new relationship with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. We trust that this program will continue to allow us to train and deploy pastors to serve the church locally and around the world. Lord willing, we will welcome two new residents this summer.

In addition to these new ventures, God continues to bless us with ongoing opportunities to proclaim the gospel and build up the body of Christ across all six locations of The Orchard, as well as through our Global Ministry partners. I trust you will be encouraged by the updates in this report.

As you read, please join me in thanking God for the wise oversight of our board, the faithful ministry of our campus pastors and our entire staff, as well as each committed member of our church. God has richly blessed us with a community of believers dedicated to ministry that builds up the body of Christ.

As we continue to serve Him, may we “rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Warmly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Brad Whittell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senior Pastor | The Orchard Evangelical Free Church

AVERAGE  
WEEKLY  
ATTENDANCE  
**2898**



PRAYER SERVICE  
ATTENDANCE  
**339**



NEW MEMBERS  
**164**

# PEOPLE SERVING 2006



We bear **FRUIT** through praying, giving, serving and inviting

BAPTISMS  
34

TOTAL MEMBERS  
2190



## PASTORAL UPDATE

For more than 70 years, The Orchard Arlington Heights has been a church family seeking to know and grow in Christ. From children learning God’s Word through song, to students gathering around Scripture, to seniors serving faithfully in the community, we remain Bible-based, Christ-centered, and gospel-driven in all we do.

Each Sunday, nearly 200 children hear the gospel in Children’s Ministry, with about 275 more meeting in Awana each Tuesday. Our students gather weekly for worship, teaching, and small groups, along with retreats throughout the year. The Young Adult Ministry continues to grow through monthly gatherings and a new weekly study in the Gospel of John. Men’s and Women’s Ministries have provided meaningful spaces

for fellowship and spiritual growth, with Women’s Ministry hosting two large intergenerational events and forming new LIFE Groups. Our seniors meet weekly for Faith for Life and serve together in the community, while care ministries such as Community Care and Celebrate Recovery offer gospel-centered care and support. At the heart of our life together are our weekly Sunday services, where we gather to sing, pray, and be nourished by the preaching of God’s Word. This is only a snapshot of what God is doing among us. As we give thanks for more than seven decades of ministry, we look ahead with hopeful dependence on the Lord to continue shaping us and strengthening our witness for the years to come.

—Michael Porter, Campus Pastor

## PRAISE

Our Thursday evening Young Adult gathering has drawn young adults from a variety of backgrounds, including several who live in the surrounding neighborhood. Two individuals from nearby connected with the group through attending church and learning about it online. Both are new to the faith, and it has been deeply encouraging to see this ministry serve as a welcoming on-ramp to the hope of the gospel and a meaningful expression of our church’s presence in the community.



## PASTORAL UPDATE

*Colossians 3:17 says, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

In that spirit, I'm so grateful for the wide array of ministry activity here at Barrington this past year. We've had large children's ministry outreaches, we've sent high school students to share Christ in Kosovo, we've started a "meal-train" ministry, we've offered a marriage tune-up course, and we've sown the seeds of an evangelism initiative called *Three Ones*. And that's just scratching the surface of all that our staff and members are faithfully doing.

Alongside this, we spent a good portion of the year digging into 1 Kings on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, which proved to be rich with biblical insight and personal applications. And we are experiencing some happy growth in attendance, too. We've even had a few weekends where it feels like we need to pull out a shoehorn to fit everyone into the worship center.

So please pray for us when you think of Barrington. Pray that our staff and members would be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Pray that we'd have a hospitable spirit as we welcome new faces and wisdom for getting them involved in the life of our church. And pray that we'd have courage and compassion to share the story of what Jesus has done for us with the people in our lives who don't yet know Him.

—Tom Olson, Campus Pastor



## PRAISE

On February 15, two of our college students, Ben O'Shea and Brennen Miller headed to Greece and Kosovo for a six-month mission. Their assignment: pray, disciple, evangelize, encourage, walk with and support the local church and missionaries.

Every year, The Orchard sends small teams to support ministry partners in targeted regions. After participating in multiple short-term trips, Ben and Brennen asked if they could go for an extended period to continue the work of ministry. Paulin and Violetta, missionaries we support in Kosovo, agreed that they would be a big help. Since August, they have been training: discipling 6th grade boys at youth group, meeting weekly with Pastor Josh, attending the Cross Conference with college students and participating in church. Praise the Lord for His work in and through our students.





## PASTORAL UPDATE

**Ephesians 4:12 ...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.**

This year we studied the book of Nehemiah. We learned that we aren't meant to do the Christian life alone. The church is a living body, not consisting of one member, but many, all being held together by the head who is Christ. He has given us the great privilege of working for Him! He has given us gifts and skills that we can use to build up His body. And when a church grasps this mission, a beautiful picture is displayed!

People of different backgrounds, ages, and skill

sets working side by side toward this common goal, to build up the body of Christ.

Together we welcomed nine new members and celebrated six baptisms. Our average Sunday attendance increased 40%, prompting the addition of a second service.

Our Forest View Ministry continues to flourish, with residents and staff eagerly anticipating our quarterly visits. We celebrated the baptism of one resident in September, and several members have begun leading a weekly Bible study at the facility.

Our third annual Trunk or Treat again demonstrated God's faithfulness as we saw about 400 people pass through. The Itasca Police and Fire Departments were there with their cars and trucks, adding a fun element to the day! Our 50+ volunteers worked together to show the love of Christ at this event!

God has blessed us with two new staff: Children's Ministries Coordinator, Kari Alvarado, and Pastoral Resident Ryan Coburn has been hired as our full time Pastor of Worship and Student Ministries. Praise God for these wonderful servants who are using their gifts to serve the Lord and the people of the Itasca campus! —**Ryan Potelicki, Campus Pastor**

## PRAISE

In 2024, I was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive form of the disease. My treatment plan included chemotherapy, immunotherapy, surgery, radiation, and physical rehabilitation. When I shared my diagnosis with our church family and asked for prayer, I was deeply comforted by the outpouring of support, faithful prayers, and encouragement. Those prayers were a clear expression of God's mercy. Throughout my treatment, God's faithfulness was evident: a surgery that seemed likely to be canceled went forward as scheduled, and radiation treatments initially denied by insurance were ultimately approved. Through every step, God's grace sustained me. Praise God for a faithful church family—I am now cancer-free and truly beyond blessed. —**Rose Kliora**





## PASTORAL UPDATE

Our rural campus has many farmers that love to see a bumper crop. They faithfully pray for it and labor for it. That's also true about our ministry leaders. They are led by prayer and reflect often on how God wants us to be faithful. God's word calls us to gather, nourish, encourage, and equip the saints. Marengo has seen an increase in faithfulness in all these areas. We've added new LIFE Groups without any previous ones ceasing. We've seen an increase in our Men's Ministry and added a Women's Ministry. We've launched a monthly class called "Seeds," where people are equipped to wisely contend for the faith. We hosted two new outreach events called "the Hullabaloo" for our Orchard Kids in order to reach our community at strategic times in our ministry year. All those measures of obedience indicate a bumper crop of spiritual growth this year at Marengo. May He find us to be prayerful, faithful, and fruitful in all our efforts "to glorify God as we grow in faith, hope and love through the gospel of Jesus Christ." — **Justin Searles, Campus Pastor**

## PRAISE

This past November, we launched a new monthly ministry called Seeds. Our hope with Seeds is to help Christians fulfill 1 Peter 3:15, which we believe is a command for all Christians to be prepared to explain and defend the faith with gentleness and respect. This is personally meaningful to me, Andy, since I came to faith while attending a group specifically designed to reach unbelievers who have questions about God and Christianity.

Each time we meet, we tackle a difficult question in the Christian faith. We've had an amazing response from the congregation, seeing around 30 attending every month. We hear personal testimony from those who attend monthly that learning to defend the faith is becoming increasingly important to them. It can be intimidating when we don't feel equipped when someone asks about our faith. The goal of Seeds is to help us all grow more confident when engaging in spiritual conversations. There truly are good answers to life's big questions. It is a remarkable honor to help someone on their path in believing Jesus really is who He claimed to be. —**Andy and Fara Martin**

## PASTORAL UPDATE

**“Nothing can be needful that God withholds.” John Newton**

This past August, we celebrated two years worshipping at the Glenview Park Center. Which means that for another year, God has withheld from us a long-term home. But what we’ve discovered is that we don’t need a home to be the recipients of His rich blessings.

In 2025, God has taught us what it means to worship and carry on in ministry for His name’s sake. He has shown us what He can do despite less-than-ideal circumstances. He has revealed to us areas where we would otherwise have trusted in ourselves. And the Lord has therefore become so much greater in our eyes. In not yet receiving what we have prayed for, we have come to better understand that Christ is (and has always been) our all.

Though we look forward to what God has in store for the North Shore Campus, He has dotted the landscape of this year with all kinds of monuments to His faithfulness. We see them. We rejoice in them. And we’re asking Him to help us hold onto them as we march on in the work He’s given us to do.

A building of our own has not been needful to recognize the obvious proofs of God’s favor. Which is why for North Shore, hanging over 2025 is the banner of Psalm 16:6: “The lines have fallen for me [for us!] in pleasant places.” —**Josh Parsons, Campus Pastor**



## PRAISE

When we moved to Glenview in late 2019, we left behind our church of 15 years. The pandemic made finding a new church especially difficult, leaving us spiritually adrift. As our daughter approached middle school, we felt an urgent need for a Bible-centered church where she could grow in faith alongside peers.

Our prayers were answered at a classmate’s birthday party hosted by the wonderful Schluchter family. Bible-verse artwork in their home sparked a conversation that led to an invitation to The Orchard North Shore.

From our first service, we felt at home with the Bible-centered preaching from Pastor Josh, Scripture reading and prayer, and Pastor Jeremy’s exceptional youth ministry. When our daughter shared that they actually read and discussed the Bible, we knew we had found our church. We are deeply grateful for this faithful leadership and the gift it has been to our family. — **H and Jen Patel**

## PASTORAL UPDATE AND PRAISE

We are so grateful for what God has done at The Orchard Vernon Hills this past year. It has been encouraging to see our LIFE Groups welcome guests with warmth and hospitality. The Bible says, *“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares”* (Hebrews 13:2). This past year, we have seen our congregation live this out. We’ve watched friendships form. We’ve seen brothers and sisters in Christ love, serve, and care for one another. It has been a joy to witness the selflessness and compassion of our church family.

At our congregational meeting, one brother shared how much his men’s group meant to him. He spoke about how they welcomed him, prayed for him, created space for honesty, and helped him grow in his walk with Christ. At a recent men’s event, another brother shared how his group surrounded him during a difficult season at home. They laid hands on him and prayed for him. He shared how he felt his brothers truly bear his burdens with him.

We were also thankful to welcome Dan Chung as our worship leader, and Greg Lawrence as our associate pastor. Both have been tremendous blessings to our staff and congregation. This year, we also hosted our first women’s retreat with more than 70 women in attendance. We’ve also seen God blessing our women’s ministry. In 2021, 21 women attended our first women’s event. This past year, more than 150 women joined our Christmas gathering. We’ve also seen the highest numbers of people coming to our prayer services this past year. We are grateful for April Matter and Kathy Faber, who have faithfully volunteered their time while we search for a new administrative assistant.

As we reflect on all of this, one truth is clear: God has been at work in our midst. When we serve in our own strength, we grow tired. But when we rest in Christ and draw near to Him, He sustains us. As we look to this next year, our prayer is simple: that we would serve not with our strength, but with the strength that comes from Christ. —Tom Yoon, Campus Pastor



**MINISTRY UPDATE**

*Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing... COLOSSIANS 1:5B-6A*

**Praise God** – The Orchard general fund financially supports 73 full-time partners and 7 organizations made up of many more workers. A vast majority of those partners focus on evangelism, church planting, and leadership development in the 10/40 window where most inhabitants have yet to hear the gospel. As a result, our partnerships are bearing fruit, and numbers of churches are increasing in our focus areas: Central, South, and Southeast Asia, and the Balkan region of Europe.

The Orchard is equipping its own and sending out workers to do the works of ministry alongside our partners, for building up the body of Christ. Members of The Orchard are being placed long-term, and short-term workers go for a week or up to several months in response to our partners' requests. Short-term ministry teams were deployed again this past year to strategic focus areas.

God is at work among us and through us taking the message of the gospel into some of the most difficult areas on the planet. Please join me in praying for more workers from The Orchard to join our partners in advancing the gospel around the world.

– **Brad Mullet, Director of Global Ministries**

**PRAISE**

**73 full-time partners and 7 organizations** annually supported globally

**76** servants from The Orchard sent on short-term mission teams to Albania, Hungary, Turkey, Kosovo, Greece, South and Southeast Asia.

**11** individuals sent short-term: 1 for two weeks to Turkey, 2 for one week to Turkey, 1 for seven weeks to 3 focus areas, 2 for 11 months to Albania, 1 for 7 weeks to Albania and North Macedonia, 2 for six weeks to Taiwan, 2 for 6 months to Greece and Kosovo.

**PRAY**

Pray for more people to go on short- and longer-term mission trips to encourage our partners in the Balkans and Southeast Asia and build Christ's church.

Pray for boldness, courage, and perseverance of our global partners committed to serving Christ despite extremely challenging cultural pressures.



2025 | Turkey

In 2021, we launched The Orchard School of Ministry to train the next generation of preachers. Our goal was to offer pastoral residents both theological training and mentored-ministry experience in a church-based setting. In 2026, our final four residents graduated from the School of Ministry:

**KOSTAS TRIGKAS • SAM WENNER • RYAN COBURN • MARC KRASTIN**

Though The Orchard School of Ministry has concluded, we are launching an updated pastoral residency with the same purpose, but with one key addition: a new relationship with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, also known as TEDS. Over the course of three years, our residents will complete a Master of Divinity Degree from TEDS while learning from and serving alongside our pastors. We will call this The Orchard Pastoral Residency because TEDS is now our school.

**This program has meant so much to my family and me.** It has served as a foundation on which I can continually grow and build. As a resident, I have served the church and worked alongside the other pastors, which has been influential in my personal development as both a pastor and a follower of Christ. I have been so grateful and truly blessed to do the work I love and to be intentionally poured into and invested in by the leaders of the church. **–Sam Wenner**

**From preaching to premarital counseling and even putting babies to sleep in the nursery, this pastoral residency had it all.** My wife and I believe this program was exactly what I needed to grow and learn the rhythms of ministry, and we praise God for that. I will especially cherish the times I was able to meet with each pastor—every one of them was approachable, supportive, and eager to help. Moving from Greece to Chicago and switching professions after ten years in dentistry was a big step, but in the end, it was completely worth it. **–Kostas Trigkas**

**Being part of this program has been a real blessing.** I have found the classes so beneficial in the application of ministry. What we have read and discussed in class has wonderfully supplemented my ministry at The Orchard. Secondly, I have learned much from my lecturers on their experience of pastoral ministry and sharing their reflections with us. Lastly, my time and connections at The Orchard have been used by God in such a transformative way that I feel confident in my calling to minister the Word to God's Church. **–Marc Krastin**

**God has used The Orchard School of Ministry to prepare and equip me for pastoring like no other season before.** I am incredibly grateful that our pastors shared their time, wisdom, and experience to train me up to love the Word of God, teach it with reverence and excellence, and live His commands as we love and serve His people. I truly would not be in such a blessed place if God hadn't used the School of Ministry to put me here, and I thank Him for that constantly. **–Ryan Coburn**



## Orchard Ministry Development

### *Toward faithfulness, legacy, and worship through giving.*

It has been a great year of work within the mission of Orchard Ministry Development: cultivating long term funding for The Orchard and Open the Bible by inspiring and educating both current and future donors in the areas of impact and legacy giving.

Our Wills and Trusts seminars continue to be a cornerstone of our ministry. Last year, more than 100 people attended our three offerings, and many households moved forward in the process of creating estate plans. We regularly hear the joy that comes from knowing their affairs are in order and their future generosity is purposeful.

Last summer's workshop on tax advantaged giving through Individual Retirement Accounts drew strong engagement, with attendees arriving with questions for our speaker and looking for practical guidance to make giving plans for the year. What a joy to support people in their desire to give to The Orchard, Open the Bible, and other ministries God has placed on their heart.

OMD researched and secured a biblically grounded, financial literacy course that we look forward to offering across the campuses. More to come!

Beyond our programs, it has been a great privilege to meet with individuals across all six campuses and donors to Open the Bible to discuss their personal circumstances, questions, and giving opportunities. Some of these conversations have included OMD assisting with gifts of stock, agricultural crops, IRA distributions, and more—each one a testimony to how God is moving in people's hearts.

After more than a decade with a previous logo that served the ministry well, a new visual identity that reflects the legacy minded nature of our work was created. The design speaks to the family and generational conversations that often accompany estate and planned giving, and it symbolizes an investment in Kingdom work that will bless the next generation. Our core statements are *Fostering Lasting Impact and Joyous Generosity* and *Toward Faithfulness, Legacy, and Worship Through Giving*. Our tagline, *Growing Legacy*, captures the heart of what we aim to do.



Orchard Ministry Development often returns to Acts 17:24-25, which reminds us that the God who made all things “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” May our generosity reflect His.

– **Holly Schambach, OMD Executive Director**



**We are thrilled at *Open the Bible* to share all that God has been doing through this ministry!**

In 2025, we released five brand new publications from Pastor Colin! Each had their own unique pathways to grow in one's faith - from personal transformation and understanding the Bible story, to reflective prayer and experiencing the story of Christ's birth through five different biblical characters.

In the fall we partnered with local churches and radio stations to host live FLY Through the Bible events! We went to four Midwest cities, and over 3,000 individuals joined us as Pastor Colin took audiences through the entire Bible story in less than two hours.

---

**“We were able to attend the FLY Through the Bible event in Minnesota. When we left, I said to my husband, ‘This is something we should have heard 60 years ago!’ . . .It really pulls everything together and allows us to listen differently, rightly, and to be able to grow.”**

---

Our Spanish ministry, *Abre la Biblia*, expanded its reach from airing a new podcast once a week, to five days a week where it is widely distributed around the world! Not only did we reach more Spanish speakers in 2025, we reached people in more than 27 different languages.

This past Easter season we were in awe of God's generosity as the *Heaven, How I Got Here* International Project kept growing, and growing. . . and growing! This gospel film was translated into over 27 languages and reached millions around the globe with more than 500,000 views online and 2 million on television, and the reach didn't stop there. More than 9,300 people attended in-person events around the world. Praise God!

---

**“It reminded me a lot of myself and the way in which the Lord saved me.” - Viewer in Mexico**

**“This film taught me to read the Bible by making the characters feel real and showing me more than just the words on the page. This film shows that God is with you even when it seems like it's over.” - Viewer in Ukraine**

---

Through God's generosity to *Open the Bible* and His promise that His Word will accomplish the purpose for which He sends it (Isaiah 55:11), we estimate that we reached nearly 20 million people with the gospel in 2025.

**\$12.1 MILLION**

Given to General Fund



**FULLY FUNDED**

All six campuses and Global Ministries

**OPERATING EXPENSES**

Ended 8% below budget

**DEBT REDUCTION**

Reduced debt balance to \$0

Fully repaid: Vernon Hills Mortgage  
(\$2.49M since February 2022)

**INVESTMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

\$1.2M directed toward Global Ministries initiatives

We thank God for all He has done this year!

**THANK YOU!**

---

**ARLINGTON HEIGHTS** 1330 N. DOUGLAS AVE., ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL 60004

**BARRINGTON** 1301 S. GROVE AVE., BARRINGTON, IL 60010

**ITASCA** 716 E. GEORGE ST., ITASCA, IL 60143

**MARENGO** 20911 RATFIELD RD., MARENGO, IL 60152

**NORTH SHORE** 2400 CHESTNUT AVE., GLENVIEW, IL 60026

**VERNON HILLS** 870 WEST END CT., VERNON HILLS, IL 60061



**THE ORCHARD**

[theorchard.church](http://theorchard.church)