



## The Oakletter, March 15, 2026

The last place a Navy reserve chaplain needs to be is a Navy reserve center. Why? Because that's a place for admin, not ministry. Command Navy Region Mid-Atlantic in Norfolk, the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Camp Pendleton, Calif. – these are places for ministry, and at both, I practiced and preached the gold standard.

The gold standard, as explained to me by Chaplain Frank Rupnik [above], calls for reserve chaplains who serve parishes to preach in their pulpits on a Sunday morning, travel [as needed] to their reserve commands Sunday afternoon, drill with those commands for five weekdays, and then go home without missing a Sunday in the pulpit. This way, reservists can knock out a year's worth of reserve drills in four or five trips, which is especially beneficial if you have to travel far to drill, as I did with I MEF.

When Frank explained this standard to me, something like scales fell from my eyes. I adopted it and encouraged reserve chaplains under me to do the same. The gold standard worked well. Our ministry became much more effective as we spent more time with our supported commands. We became better trained as reservists to work with our active-duty counterparts. We established the relationships needed for everyone to be ready when the time comes for reservists to support or even fill in for the active-duty.

What would you say is Oaklette's gold standard? What is the maximal way for us to fulfil our mission of making the Gospel of Jesus Christ real for all people through worship, education, and outreach? Maybe it's a standard you know from the past or maybe it's a model that someone's shared.

What works well for us as the body of Christ? Whatever it is, let's practice and preach it. Let's be ready when the time comes.

*Faithfully,  
Ned*

### **An addition to Sunday's Gospel, John 10:1-21**

"Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good – a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it."

Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. "I'll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good – sheep rustlers, every one of them. But the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for – will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money. The sheep don't matter to him.

"I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They'll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father."

This kind of talk caused another split in the Jewish ranks. A lot of them were saying, "He's crazy, a maniac – out of his head completely. Why bother listening to him?" But others weren't so sure: "These aren't the words of a crazy man. Can a 'maniac' open blind eyes?"

### **This Week at Oaklette:**

Sunday, March 15: Sunday school and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; worship for the Fourth Sunday of Lent and UMCOR Sunday @ 11 a.m.; children's church [K. Hill/N. Helsel]

Monday, March 16: Food pantry [L. Gallop/P. Weifert] @ 10 a.m.; HRM Band @ 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 17: *The Last Supper* study @ 6:30 p.m. at Oaklette

Wednesday, March 18: memorial procession for firefighters @11:30 a.m.; choir practice @ 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 19: HSOBX @ 8:30 a.m.; Bible study @ 10 a.m.

Saturday, March 21: soupline at Salter Street @ 7 a.m.

Sunday, March 22: Sunday school and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; Lenten cantata @ 11 a.m.; children's church [***volunteers needed***]

**Birthdays:** Janice LoBello, March 15; Julian Baker and Joe Kasmak, March 19; Cathy Grubb, March 21

**Our prayer list includes:** Donna Baker; Eileen Balance; Preston Basnight; Sandy Carraway; Megan Carroll; John Tandy; Joyce Gaston; Bill Gilliam; Kay Herndon; Ethel Hickman; Pat Johnson; Wayne Manger; Pat Newbern; ForKids

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