



Celebration News

April, 2016 Volume 26 - Issue 3

Believe It or Not?

Scripture John 20:24-25 reads "Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Easter is over and the question now is do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

I am visiting family in Baltimore, and we were downtown at the Inner Harbor and passed by the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum. Robert Ripley enjoyed collecting strange and amazing bits of information which, although they seem unbelievable, were true. Some examples from his book are: Joann Barnes, a 15 year old from California, once swung 68 hula hoops on her body at the same time! Can you believe that? It is hard enough to keep one going; I might have to see that to believe it. A man named James Cook once had a chicken that laid a perfectly square egg. Most people have seen many eggs; white ones, brown ones, and maybe even a spotted egg, but I know that I have never seen a square one; I really need to see that to believe it. In front of the museum, we saw a big round granite ball that the sign reported weighed over 10,000 pounds and yet it floated on 1/8 inch of water! Ripley's finds include many things that are very hard to believe, but you know what? If it's true, it's true, whether I believe it or not.

A week after Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas saw Jesus and was able to touch his hands where the nails had been and placed his hand in the wound in Jesus' side. Then Thomas believed! A lot of people today won't believe that Jesus really rose from the grave because they haven't seen him with their own eyes. But you know what? It is true whether they believe it or not! I have never seen Jesus, I have to accept him by faith. The question is, will you believe it -- or not?"

Carolyn Deering



President's Address

You are encouraged to join with our sisters and brothers around the world for the **President's Address on Sunday, April 3rd at 7:00 pm**, followed by a live Questions and Answers session and the latest financial update. Explore paragraphs 16-18 of the 2013 words of counsel that President Steve Veazey describes as emphasizing "the intrinsic relationships of spirituality, discipleship, and mission." President Veazey will answer as many questions as possible during the live Questions and Answers session.

Invite a
Friend to
Church



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*We Offer Our
Condolences to the
Morgan Family*



at the death of Jayden, son of Luci Gutierrez and Cody Morgan and grandson of Dale and Linda Morgan, on Friday, April 1st. Our prayers and support are needed for the family during this difficult time.

Invite People to Christ

As recorded in Acts 2:42, Peter preached and more than 3,000 people became new believers. They were influenced by the "Good News" about Jesus Christ. The apostle's prayers and the love of Jesus Christ made a major impact on the lives of these new Christian converts. Luke makes a clear connection between personal faith and membership in the Christian community. Jesus Christ taught community and the value of membership in a church. It has been said, "No man is an island", yet today we see many individuals who are clearly an island to themselves. We, as disciples of Christ, have the opportunity to invite the unchurched to the *Community of Christ*. It has been said angels rejoice over each Christian convert.

Eight years ago I joined the *Community of Christ* family. An invitation from my wife, Marcia, got me here, but the love of you all brought me home to Jesus Christ. Each time I introduce people to Christ it is like introducing them to my greatest friend and confidant. I know each of you have friends, family, and life contacts. What a great opportunity you have to increase the family of Christ one person at a time.

Our church offers the love of Christ to all who attend, but you know this. Please join the *Invite People to Christ* team on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 pm in the church's Fellowship Hall. You can make a difference in the lives of those who do not know the love of Jesus Christ.

Jim Brougher

What is Compassionate Ministries Doing Now?

Come and join us! We, *Compassionate Ministries*, meet in the Fellowship Hall on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm.

We have recently decided where the money from our "Reach In-Reach Out" bucket this year will be distributed. Our plan is:

- First Quarter - provide money/items for 18 year olds aging out of Foster Care and moving into their own home. There is an organization in Manatee/Sarasota that provides a housewarming basket with bed and bath linens, dishes, silverware and some cookware. If you would like to donate new or gently used items, please contact **Jo Willetts** via e-mail at jo.dan.us@yahoo.com or call 941.724.4220.
- Second Quarter - donate to an international organization. As we did last year, we will be planning a final fund-raiser dinner in June. The date will be announced next month. We hope to see you there!
- Third Quarter - plans are in the works for a very special donation. We will unveil the recipient organization in June!
- Fourth Quarter - help for those locally who need it - maybe a gift card to a retail supermarket, a gas card, a bus pass for those whose budgets are limited, or a meal for someone who just needs a break. We will be reaching out to the congregation beginning in September for recommendations.

In addition, we are looking into other needs within the community and not just needs for money. Keep up with our *Compassionate Ministries* team by coming to our meetings and reading about us in the *Celebration News*. If you have ideas for mission work within the community, please contact **Jo Willetts**. We welcome all visitors, new members, or just ideas and needs.

"God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare." - Counsel to the Church 163:4a



*Loose Change
for
Reach In - Reach Out*

Jo Willetts, Compassionate Ministries

Jesus' Message is Carried on by Disciples

The stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty. The words "Christ Has Risen" still linger in our minds as we rejoice at the message of the Easter season.

The disciples' world has been turned upside down at the death of their best friend and leader. Then Jesus appears to them breathing words of peace. *Peace Be With You*, he says, as he brings comfort to the disciples. On April 3, Elders **Bona Lee** and **Marcia Brougher** will share what these words can mean for us as followers of Christ on this Communion Sunday.

With Jesus no longer with the disciples, the responsibility of continuing Jesus' minister fell on them. Jesus appears to the disciples again and encourages them to let go of old habits and find new ways of engaging in ministry. Jesus asks Peter three times, *Do You Love Me?* To hear Peter's answer, be present on April 10th when Priests **Melinda Creel** and **Heather Devine** remind us that it takes courage and faith to follow Christ in mission.

From Alma 3:68 we read, "Come, listen to the voice of the good shepherd and follow him!" We need to be reminded to take time to listen for God's voice. Evangelist **Bob Slasor** will explore the theme, *Follow Me*, on April 17, with Priest **Nancy Skene** presiding over this service.

Love One Another is a commandment found in several places in the Bible. Jesus shared this commandment after washing the feet of his disciples at the last supper. Jesus tells the disciples that people will recognize them by the way they are in loving relationship with one another. Are you recognized as a disciple of Jesus and a member of the *Community of Christ*? On April 24, Elder **Sam Nichols** and Teacher **Fay Beers** will share in ministry.

Do you enjoy sitting around a table sharing thoughts and ideas, gaining new insights, and praying? Join **Table Talk** on **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm.**

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team



Appreciation of the Good Friday Service

"Moving." "Of the Spirit." These are two expressions that come to mind after having experienced our worship together on Good Friday. Heart felt singing, readings and narrations surrounded and enveloped the six characters from that day. As each person - the man who hosted Jesus and his disciples, a cleaning lady, a criminal, the cross bearer, a soldier, and Mary - shared their confusion, bewilderment, guilt, anguish, and crushing loss that day became real all over again.

Thank you for your meaningful involvement, both the volunteer participants and those who gathered to worship with them.

Ken Colburn



The Black Box of Prayers

This is the season to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Well, I don't compare to Jesus Christ, but the story of the resurrection can apply to many experiences in our lives. I feel that I have experienced my own resurrection in the past few months.

My original surgery was scheduled for December 3, 2015. Within less than a week I became septic and after two more surgeries, the infection was contained. I lost many days in that period of time. I have found out from my children that the way I thought things happened was not necessarily correct. I do remember seeing beautiful tapestries on the walls. One minute they were there, and the next minute gone.

Do you know what it is like to have a nightmare and wake up to find yourself safe and well? For me it was the opposite. I would have a dream that all was okay, and then I would wake up and find it wasn't so. One night I looked up at the wall of the hospital room, and there was a black box up high on the right and the words "you're trapped" kept going through my mind. I could not figure out what that meant.

My first Sunday back to church was the first Sunday in March. I sat in the back of the church as I was not sure I could stay for the whole service. The next Sunday I walked over toward the center of the church. I looked up at the chancel, and there was the black box that I saw at the hospital. It was the speaker. I was startled and realized that the black box held all the prayers, especially from the congregation. You had me "trapped", so to speak, and were lifting me up in prayer. Thank you for those thoughts and prayers.

Nanette Dizney

What's in the Bucket?

A year ago the members of the *Compassionate Ministries* team were sitting at their meeting trying to come up with a way to reach out to the community and provide much needed ministry.

During our conversation, it was mentioned that the congregation **Dick and Vera Kramer** came from used to have a wooden box they placed up front during each service. The box was used to collect the loose change people had in their pockets each Sunday. The money was used toward local missionary practices. What a great idea! The Bradenton/Sarasota's Reach In - Reach Out bucket was born!

Each Sunday members of the congregation drop in their loose change from the week. The money in the bucket is used for mission work by the *Compassionate Ministries* team. The monies we collect are used for our main ideas each year plus some additional projects that pop up. We plan one major donation each quarter to different general areas: international or worldwide, USA, local, and internal.

We sponsored over \$1,200.00 to Outreach International in the first quarter last year. We enjoyed an additional fund-raiser where we served a simple meal of rice and beans with coffee, tea and water. The money we had was split into tables and each group "decided" what to spend the monies on. The youth in our congregation really got involved and helped us to increase the monies we sent to Outreach International.

Our next fund-raiser was to the Greenville congregation in South Carolina. We raised over \$1,500 for JaAna and Rick Schwartz to build a Gaga Pit (similar to a dodge ball field) and update the playground area for their youth mission work.

Next we raised over \$600.00 for Soles for Little Souls. This organization is sponsored by Church Women United and provides shoes for local school children in need three times during the year.

We provided a seed fund for "Manna" bags, our bags to give to the homeless in need. We have donated money to the New Port Richey church outreach to provide food, gas, and other necessities to friends, old and new, in need.

Please join us in filling our Reach In - Reach Out bucket on Sundays so we can continue our mission work.

Jo Willetts, Compassionate Ministries



Yard Sale a Success!

Thanks to all who contributed to the success of our Yard Sale! Whether it was items contributed, time invested or effort rendered, it made a great time to share and fellowship with each other and with our community.

After covering submitted expenses, our net total receipts for the Yard Sale this year were \$1,430.66.

Even the weather cooperated. The only thing in short supply was probably sun tan lotion!

Many have shared ideas for an even more successful Yard Sale next year. Have a wonderful, safe and healthy (less pollen, perhaps) spring.

Stu Skene, Fund-Raising Committee



Why Go to Church?

A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me. I can't remember; a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals, but, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals.

But I do know this...they all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

When you are DOWN to nothing...God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical AND spiritual nourishment!

Budget Update

Through March 27, our contributions toward the budget totalled \$12,957.26. To be on schedule to meet our budget for 2016 of \$62,394.00, we should have contributed \$15,598.50. We have expended \$10,122.01 on budgeted expenses. Therefore, contributions exceed expenditures by \$2,835.25.

Dick Kramer,
Congregation Financial Officer

Attention!

Prayer Shawl Group
at 2:00 pm
Saturday, April 9

Come and learn to use
a loom to make hats.

and

Priesthood Meeting
will be held after
Potluck Dinner,
Sunday, April 10th



- 3 *Jim Deering*
- 5 *Hailie Rodriguez*
- 6 *Meah Rodriguez*
- 7 *Jo Fenn-Martin*
- 8 *Lillian Wade*
- 12 *Patty Day*
- 23 *Corbin Roehl*
- 25 *Denise Chlebina Roehl*
- 26 *Randi Primose*
- 30 *David Robertson*

Our Only Job

Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy. -----Thomas Merton

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Lessons Learned from a Brownie Crumb

So there I was, walking out of the kitchen after helping clean out the freezer at church. One minute I was walking; the next I was on the floor. My right foot slipped on something, and my legs went in different directions. As I sat on the floor, I looked behind me and identified the culprit. It was a frosted brownie crumb.

After a trip to the Emergency Room where fractures on each side of my tibia and a severe sprain were identified, I found myself at home with instructions not to put any weight on that ankle. What a challenge! My daughter, Karla, and son-in-law, Jason, began rearranging my house to fit my needs. Jason gave me driving lessons for my new vehicle, a borrowed wheelchair. After scraped knuckles and paint-chipped doorjambs, I believe I could pass a wheelchair driver's test.



1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "Give thanks in all circumstances..." I put that to the test, and these are some of the things I learned to be thankful for:

- ◆ Two professionals were at my side in seconds to help get me upright again. However, it took three trained personnel to hold down the chair they lifted me into;
- ◆ I could be administered to by elders before I left for the hospital;
- ◆ The congregation was praying for me as I left for the hospital;
- ◆ My grandson, Cole, with a concerned look on his face, flashed me an "I love you" sign as I was being wheeled out of the sanctuary;
- ◆ After three days my ankle was put in a boot, and I was allowed to bear weight on it;
- ◆ My kitchen is large enough to allow me to wheel around the island like a race track;
- ◆ I was still able to participate in the Good Friday service and sing in the choir for the Easter services thanks to a choir director who accepted no excuses;
- ◆ A friend brought me my favorite sandwich for lunch one day;
- ◆ My family shared and continues to share their time, expertise, and physical help.
- ◆ The members of my congregation have continued to keep me in their prayers. What a humbling and blessed feeling that is.

This list goes on. I soon will be walking again, but I plan to avoid brownie crumbs. But meanwhile, "I give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!"

Jo Fenn-Martin

Pictures from happenings in March.



A Birthday Party for all was enjoyed by many at potluck.



Views of the children's activities Easter morning photographed by Jim Deering.

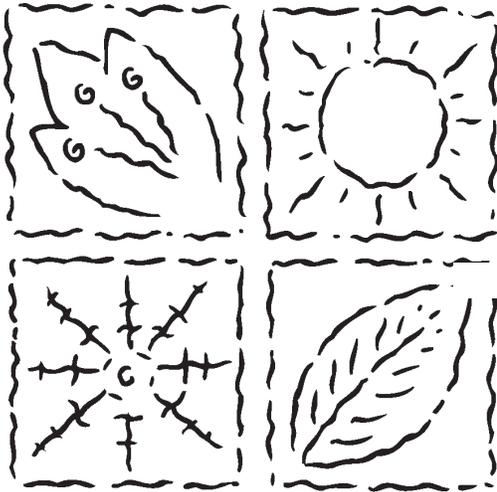


Congregation at the Easter Service photographed by Lee Peters.

Community of Christ
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Address Correction Requested

Welcome to Worship



*He is your praise;
he is your God,
who performed for you those
great and awesome wonders....*

Deuteronomy 10:21