

CELEBRATION NEWS

March, 2011 - Volume 21 - Issue 2

Say *Yes* to God

Many think of self-denial as giving up something during the Lenten season. Others have said that it is to be dead to self, or even to hate self. I disagree with these opinions. When Jesus referred to self-denial (Mark 8:34), he was not talking about denying ourselves some luxury item or denying the reality of self or the needs of self. Rather, he was focusing on the importance of renouncing self as the center of our life and actions.

In other words, self-denial is the decision of each of his followers to give over to God his body, career, money and time. A true disciple is willing to shift the spiritual center of gravity in his life. Self-denial is the sustained willingness to say no to oneself in order to say yes to God. --Bill Hull

Let us sing even when we do not feel like it, for in this way
we give wings to heavy feet and turn weariness into
strength.
--John Henry Jowett



A few of the
Fort Myers' Praise Team

Beginning Lent

Wednesday, March 9th, will begin the 40 day Lenten period before Easter. It is a time of preparation, of examining your life in light of Christ's call and sacrifice, and of preparing spiritually to receive abundant blessings of the Holy Spirit who will help you experience Easter in a new and deeper way.

This year we will be having an **Ash Wednesday Service in the Fellowship Hall on March 9th, at 7:00 PM.** You are more than invited; you are *encouraged* to begin this journey of preparation by sharing with brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you have any questions, please contact **Bob Slasor** (941.756.3678 or rslasor@verizon.net).

We Were Blessed

There was singing, clapping, tears, smiles, and rejoicing at the February 13th Worship Service. The Fort Myers' Praise Team sang and shared their testimonies on the theme, Grow in God. The music lifted us, and the testimonies touched our hearts. Four of the team shared what knowing God has done in their lives. From the first song of calling us to worship to their musical sending forth, we felt the Spirit of God moving among us. We were blessed.

Priesthood Workshop

A **Priesthood Workshop** will be held at the church **March 26th**. Karin Peter, a Seventy from Arkansas and the Southern USA Mission Field Missionary Coordinator, will be the guest minister.

At 8:30 AM there will be a time for gathering, and coffee and rolls will be available. The Workshop will begin with a 9:00 AM class. A lunch will be served at the church, and Karin will continue sharing information and helps until 4:00 PM.

Priesthood members need to mark their calendars now! Please plan to take advantage of this opportunity to share with other priesthood members and to learn from Karin Peter.

Young Adult Retreat

*March 18-20
at Deerhaven Retreat Center*

*Guest Minister: Tony
Chvala-Smith*

*Classes
Recreation, Chats with Tony,
Projects
Hiking
Yoga
Fishing and More*

*Fee: \$90 per couple or
\$50 per individual*

*Children ages 3-12 are
welcome*

*Financial assistance is
available*



Congregational Financial Update for January 2011

Local Operating Tithes (Income)	\$5,217
Local Operating Expenses	(2,940)
Difference	\$2,277

Our Father's Cupboard Update

Income through January	\$ 100
Expenses through January	(150)
Difference	\$ (50)

Let us continue to support our food pantry with food and financial donations. Thank you for your continued support of Local Mission Tithes as well as World Church Tithes.

Deerhaven Pool Project

During our Congregational Conference of December 12, 2010, we approved a motion to give the Deerhaven Pool Project \$20,000.00 from our FMC Opportunity Fund Investment Pooled Monies. I am happy to say that a \$20,000.00 check was mailed to Deerhaven February 13, 2011. This will help to move the Pool Project along as quickly as possible. Anyone who wishes to make a contribution to this wonderful project other than through their regular weekly envelopes, please see Bob Beers, CFO. Thank you for your support of this Pool Project for it will greatly enhance the Deerhaven experience.

Bob Beers, Congregation Financial Officer

Deerhaven Retreat Center Conference

The **Deerhaven Board** has scheduled an important Conference for **Sunday, March 20th at Orlando church at 3:30 PM**. The purpose of this meeting is to get input on the financing of the swimming pool at Deerhaven Retreat Center. The Deerhaven Board has decided upon the pool design and placement and will present this information as well as the current status of funds available.

Please plan to attend so that your vote can be counted and your voice heard in the planning for the Deerhaven swimming pool.

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 9. A special **Ash Wednesday service will be held on that Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM.** Lent is a time of preparation. It is the forty days before Easter, excluding Sundays, to represent the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness before beginning his mission and the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness before they settled on their land.

The first Sunday of the month is called Transfiguration Sunday. The scripture found in Matthew is about a mountain top experience filled with light.

Do Not Be Afraid were the words spoken by Jesus to Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration of Jesus. Evangelist **Glenn Day** will bring insight into this scripture on this Communion Sunday. This Sunday is also World Hunger Emphasis Sunday, and all loose offerings will be sent to the World Hunger Fund. Elder **Jim Deering** will preside over this worship experience.

Jesus' journey in the wilderness and the temptations he faced are the focus of the lesson on March 13. Are there temptations you face as a disciple of God? How are you handling them? On the first Sunday of Lent, High Priest **Joyce Keenan** and Deacon **Melinda Creel** will share together around the theme *Led by the Spirit*.

Under the cover of night, Nicodemus asks for a meeting with Jesus. We learn from their encounter that no one can see the kingdom unless they are *Born of the Spirit*. What new life does God have to offer those who accept His invitation? Elder **Jim Brougner** and **Larry Bell** will share their ministry on March 20.

In one of the longest recorded interchanges in the Gospels, Jesus initiates a conversation with a Samaritan woman. There, at the well, Jesus offers her *Living Water*. After much discussion the woman understands that Jesus is a prophet and offers her a life of meaning and joy. On March 27 with Seventy Karin Peter speaking and High Priest **Nanette Dizney** presiding, the church is invited to a new relationship with God and each other through the presence of Christ in our midst.

Remember the season of Lent as you go about your daily tasks. As part of your Lenten preparation, join with other disciples in the celebration of Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 9. Worship with us on all the Sundays and Wednesdays as we approach the Easter celebration.

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Committee



The Giving of a Shawl

The February meeting of the Prayer Shawl group was most productive! Ten women were present, 13 new shawls were received, and eight shawls were blessed to be given to those in need. We received and read several beautiful and appreciative notes from recipients. As a group there is a feeling of gratifying ministry being given and received.

It would be great to have some men added to the group. Some thoughts came to my mind when considering if any men would like to join. I recall my mother and father sitting and crocheting together many evenings during those "depression times." My father made a beautiful bedspread and mother made a lovely tablecloth. I also recall a famous sports hero talking about his needlepoint! So, if there are men in our "community" who would like to join us, they would be most welcome. The only rules we have are: yarns are to be blessed before they are used to make a shawl, no food or drinks in the work area, no shawls or lap robes are to be given until blessed.

The Prayer Shawl group meets the second Saturday of the month at 2:00 PM at the church. Inexperienced knitters are encouraged to come and grow with us. The youngest member of the group, **Sydney Evans**, is 10 years old! There are many 'master' knitters to help. We would love to see you March 12th.

Bona Lee, Coordinator



The three Prayer Shawl knitters shown at a recent meeting are (l-r) Jean Botelho, Sydney Evans, Jo Willetts.



Peace Festival

Come and enjoy the **Peace Festival** at our church on **Saturday, April 9th, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**. The festivities will begin with a prayer for peace followed by live music performances, games, prize drawings, a story time tent, a labyrinth, and more. Hot dogs, chips and drinks will be available at 11:00 AM. There will be no charge for this event. Come together and share the peace of Jesus Christ with our community.

The next meeting for the Peace Festival organizational team will be Sunday, March 13th, after potluck. Ask a committee member about volunteering as your help is needed! Committee members are **Larry Bell, Lynn and Wade Bryant, Dale Morgan, Ginger Robertson, and Charyn Walker**.

Youth Traveling

Our Youth will be hitting the road March 26th to go to the Holy Land Experience in Orlando. They will be seeing the Passion Drama and the Scriptorium. They had an awesome and educational experience when they were there two years ago. Their recommendation is that everyone have this experience at least once. They are planning and looking forward to their experience this year.

Heather Devine, Youth Coordinator

Hide and Seek

Remember when you were young and played Hide and Seek! When I was young, I loved Hide and Seek, especially when I played the game with my cousins from Wisconsin. It was a game that we played for hours. We each had our favorite hiding spots such as the closet, under the bed, behind furniture, and outside where there were lots of places to hide. When you were "It", you were to find those hiding. Thus the cry of "*Where are you?*" The really young kids would simply sit and cover their faces. Their logic was *if I can't see you, then you can't see me*.

A long time ago Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. They hid their sins and hid from God. Even when he called *Come to Me* they resisted coming to him. Well, God found them, and history was forever changed. Sin became a huge problem for mankind and his relationship with God. In light of this problem, Jesus came to earth as a man who served, suffered and died on the Cross for the sins of man. His message: *I am the way to the Cross and Salvation*.

Yes, today we are sinners. We hide our sins, cover our faces, pretend to be invisible and oblivious to the eyes of our God. It breaks His heart to see us, who were created in His image, playing Hide and Seek. For some people the game never ends, but life on earth does. This is sad, because through Christ we can become a new creation and have the potential for eternal life. A sin addict hides his sin, and a reformed sin addict should give his testimony.

I do not know about you, but I want to be Found and Saved in the arms of my Savior, Jesus Christ. I want to always respond to his plea to *Come to Me* with the appropriate words *Here I am, Lord*. God assures us that in Christ each of us can become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Are you a Hide and Seek sinner or are you a Found and Saved sinner?

Jim Brougner

Sharing Generously

Since reopening the food pantry, we have been blessed each month with continuing help from our faithful volunteers, and new people to greet and welcome. As our team strives to keep a steady and consistent flow in our ministry, we are always learning new and more efficient ways to make this needed outreach a success. A tremendous "Thank You" to all who give their time and energy to **Our Father's Cupboard**. Many hands make for light work!

Be Still and Wait

*Let patience have her perfect work,
that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James 1:4

There are times of testing for everyone. There are times of WAITING when all the forces of faith are put into practice. God's timing is never late. When we live a life of faith, we come to learn that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His way. We have moments in life where we fall into difficult times, but we must remember that "our times are in His hands."

Watching and waiting are part of life. What we do with the waiting can tell a lot about our character and the depth of our faith. The time can be used for prayers, for introspections, for study, or just for rest. When we use our waiting time wisely, we are better prepared for the answers or the meaning when it comes. As a physical therapist, I often tell my patients what my mother always told me in times of trial. The Bible says, *and it came to pass*; it doesn't say, it came to stay!

Jim and I have faced some challenges in the past months, and because of them, we have realized that we have been rushing through life, hurrying just to get to the next day, the next appointment, the next thing on the agenda, and not really living life. We should be in the moment, enjoying the present, being still, and knowing that He is God and He is in control. What a waste to throw away such precious time just because we are waiting for answers.

Recently in Children's Church we talked about the season of Lent and the meaning of fasting, giving something up for Lent. This year I want to fast, and I choose to give up my impatience. It sounds kind of silly, but it is a hard thing for me to do. I have hurried most of my life. Now is the time to practice what I preach...to let go and let God, to be still and know. It is very hard for me to be still in the truest sense of the word. Jesus knew that he would gain strength in drawing apart, being still and resting in God's presence. I desire to do the same.

Do you remember how your way was blocked at times, and coming to a gate, you knocked and knocked 'till God's time came and then it opened wide to a way your eyes never saw and your feet never tried?

I look forward to the blessings that will come if I honor my commitment to be still and wait upon the Lord. May you be inspired to challenge yourself to your own "fasting" as we approach this sacred time of year is my prayer.

Carolyn Deering

Vacation Bible School Needs You!

It's not too early to plan our summer 2011 **Vacation Bible School**. This year we will be holding our VBS during the first week of August, Monday the 1st through Friday the 5th. We know June and July are busy months with school ending and summer camps and other activities filling the calendar.

We are seeking volunteers to head up this year's VBS program. We will soon be purchasing materials and would like to have input from those who are interested in reaching out to children in our congregation and community. Please make this a matter of prayer. If you have questions, contact Outreach Pastor **Ginger Robertson**.



8 AM - 2 PM on March 5

Help is needed on sale day.

Come and enjoy baked goods and a delicious lunch.



March Happenings

March 4, Friday, 9:30 AM

Church Women United's Annual World Day of Prayer at the Mount Raymond Full Gospel Baptist church at 2401 4th Ave E in Palmetto.

March 13, Sunday

NO Potluck

March 25, Friday

Open House to meet Karin Peter

March 26, Saturday

Priesthood Workshop

March 27, Sunday

NO Pancake Breakfast
Potluck Dinner

Directory Corrections/Updates:

Title page:

Outreach Ministry:

Elder Ginger Robertson

Pastoral Ministry:

Elder Marcia Brougher

Page 4:

Worship: Fay Beers, Jo Fenn-Martin,
Carolyn Deering

Page 12:

Delete Outside phone for Deerhaven

Page 15:

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Page 23:

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Dan and Jo Willetts

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Called to Community -

Facing Challenges through Unity

Security. We all need it, crave it and strive to find it. For some families in our community, security has come in the form of new, "green" housing provided by Volunteers of America. This housing program, funded through grant money is providing affordable housing to low income families and individuals. One of their current developments of two and three bedroom garden units located in the Bayshore/Pride Park area is exemplary of visionary planning. Those who have been fortunate to move there have new energy efficient kitchens, hurricane sturdy windows, and other energy star rated amenities including the bathrooms! This complex is surrounded by privacy fences. I received a picture text one morning from one of the tenants, a woman who is now my sister and friend in Christ. To her dismay, the fences had been painted with gang graffiti in the night. After calling the Sheriff's Department and Volunteers of America, reports were filed and pictures taken. What now? What next?

We all have been given choices in this life, right or wrong, good or bad. We all have living hearts that pump life giving blood; brains that control impulses and process loads of information; and spiritual souls that enable us to experience love, anger, kindness, hurt, joy and sadness. It is up to us to make it all work to the good of humanity. We can draw a line (or spray graffiti) and dare someone to cross, or we can unite and say "No, we are community, this is where we choose to be." Although our story has not yet ended, (in fact, it has just begun), the process of an organized neighborhood watch will soon get under way, and with the care and enthusiasm of my dear friend, a community will breath the spirit of hope into a challenging problem. May God continue to work within her to bring unity and harmony into the life of her neighborhood.

Ginger Robertson, Outreach Pastor

March 13th



Time to Spring Ahead

Jo Willetts, Hailie Rodriguez and Sydney Evans learn about Priesthood offices with Ginger Robertson. Below they identify the Sacrament with the correct picture.



Learning About Our Commitment to Christ

What do we have to do to become a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can we become a member of *Community of Christ*. These and many other

questions were answered during our Pre-Baptism classes that were held for three Saturdays in February. **Sydney Evans, Hailie Rodriguez and Jo Willetts** studied the many aspects of discipleship and shared "hands on" activities that prepare us to make our commitment to Jesus Christ through Baptism, and to receive membership into *Community of Christ* through Confirmation. Although Jo is a member who wanted to gain more knowledge through "new eyes", she was a wonderful support for our new candidates, Sydney and Hailie. We look forward to sharing the witness of their upcoming baptisms in the near future.

Celebration News is a publication of the

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST

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- 01 Charyn & Charlie Walker (anniv)
- 04 Fay Beers
- 08 Brittney Morgan
- 08 Joan Wooderson
- 12 Fay & Bob Beers (anniv)
- 15 Karen MacDonald
- 16 Jason Van Beek
- 17 Beulah Wilkins
- 20 Lil Caudle
- 20 Marilyn Wonsitler
- 26 Sydney Evans

The following poem was written by Scott Cramer. Scott recently moved to Michigan with his wife, Penny, and is experiencing the magic of snow for the first time in many years.

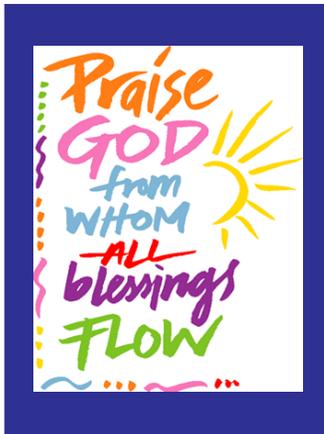
The snow is swirling all around,
It gently gathers on the ground.
I hear God's voice,
That still, small, sound, as the snow is swirling round.

He says my child, come rest with me,
Just rest right here and simply be.
You are my child, I love you so,
And I will never let you go.

The moment fades, my day is calling,
And still the snow is gently falling.
I watch it gather on the ground,
And strain to hear that still, small, sound,
To feel His touch, to know His love,
As it falls gently from above.

Community of Christ
% Elaine Gregg
8075 36th Street Cir E
Sarasota FL 34243-6309
Address Correction Requested

We give praise for:



"Do not be **anxious**
about **anything**,
but in **everything**
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.

And the
Peace of God,
which transcends
all understanding,
will guard your hearts
& your minds in Christ Jesus."

Phil. 4:6-7