

Celebration News

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Easter Bravery

Most of us spend a great deal of time reliving or regretting the past. And if that doesn't eat up our time, then dreading or being scared of the future eats up most of what is left. No matter the percentages, our rational selves would argue that this is time *wasted*.

In looking back at the Easter story, we have the benefit of KNOWING what happened. What we often forget, or take for granted is that Jesus **knew** what the future held for him and he did it anyway! Time and again I can't help but be amazed by his *bravery*. I am amazed, shocked, struck with wonder, and just humbled that God would sacrifice His Son for me in such a way.

We have all at times wished we could see into the future. All of us have wanted that advantage to be ours from time to time. But when I look back at the most difficult times in my life, it occurs to me that I would not have wanted to know what was coming. The obvious reason is that I might try my best to avoid the pain and discomfort that would surely accompany the event.

What I would miss is the lessons God meant for me to have. The growth of my soul would be diminished, and I would be somehow, *less*. No. The bravery of our Lord never ceases to astonish me, and I think with wonder about all that He thought, and felt, and endured on my behalf.

As we approach this Easter season, my wish for us all is that we look forward with anticipation and wonder at all that God will teach us! Let us be thankful for the lessons of the past and allow the future to be our friend and our guide as is our brother, **Jesus Christ**. Be at peace and be brave!

Jim Deering, Peacemaking Ministries



Easter Joy

Joy is prayer. Joy is strength. Joy is love. Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. God loves a cheerful giver. One gives most who gives with joy. The best way to show our gratitude to God and people is to accept everything with joy.

A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love. Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the risen Christ. -- Mother Teresa

HOLY WEEK



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

10:55 am Palm Sunday Service

7:00 pm Good Friday Service

Six Biblical characters who saw Jesus on his way to the cross will tell you their stories.

9:00 am Easter Breakfast

9:45 am Children's Easter Activities

10:55 am Easter Worship Service

"Table Talk" - Come As Your Are

Table Talk is held in the church Fellowship Hall on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Wednesdays of each month from **7:00 - 8:00 pm**.

Come as you are! Enjoy a cup of coffee and a snack, or bring your own if you prefer. Table Talk is just that - an opportunity for us to sit together at the table, share our thoughts and concerns, become better acquainted, encourage each other, share the good news of Jesus, and pray for those in need as the Holy Spirit prompts us.



On Ash Wednesday we received a "40 Day Prayer Journal" to help us draw closer to God during our journey to Easter. Table Talk is the perfect time to share our journaling experiences together. If you would like a prayer journal, extra copies of the "40 Day Prayer Journal" are on the table as you enter the sanctuary.

Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV) reads, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Let's put scripture and our faith in action at Table Talk. Come together on Wednesday evenings in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Charyn Walker **for Worship and Invitational Ministries**

Celebrate World Day of Prayer

On **Friday, March 4th** our Bradenton/Sarasota *Community of Christ* will host the **Church Women United Manatee, World Day of Prayer**. World Day of Prayer dates back to the 19th century when women of the United States and Canada organized to form a cooperative effort to become involved in missions around the world. These missions included concern for women and children, the rules of prayer in mission work, and uniting women in Christian visions.

Today, Church Women United celebrates World Day of Prayer by honoring the women of the country who plan the celebration program. This year we are excited to share the ministry contributed by the women of Cuba. The strides we have made to restore the relationship between the United States and Cuba make this celebration even more meaningful.

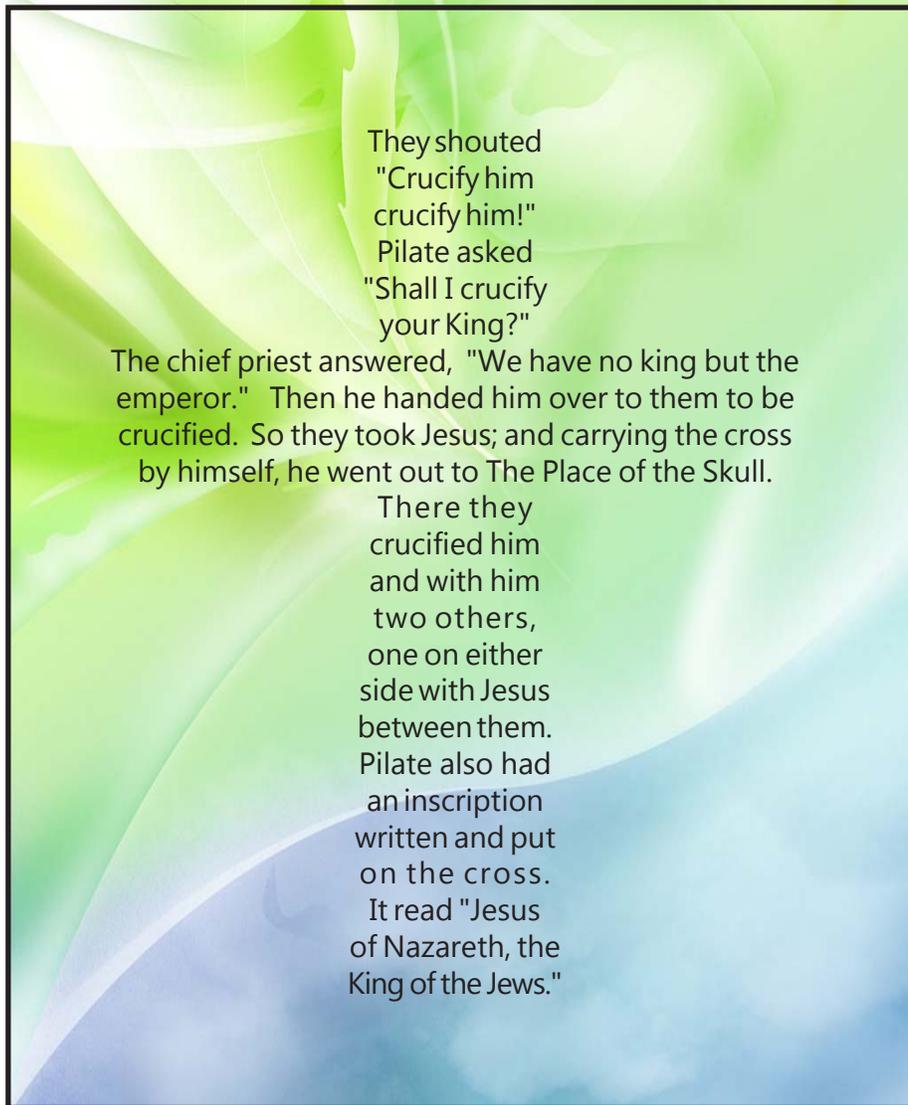
We are calling **all** women in our congregation who are able to join us in welcoming and hosting women from the many church denominations throughout Manatee County who will fellowship and celebrate with us. Currently we have 8-10 women in our congregation who car pool to the Church Women United meetings at various churches on the first Friday of every month. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to meet other Christian women throughout our community whose mission is to promote Peace and Justice Ministries here in our community and around the world. Fellowship begins at **9:30 am**, with the program following at **10:00 am**.

Let's roll out our welcome mat for the event! For more information, contact Ginger Robertson (941.756.8276).

Ginger Robertson



On February 21st **Evangelist Bob Slasor** was Superannuated. Superannuation is an honor in recognition of long and faithful service. A video was shown that showed his love of sharing the message of Jesus Christ with many people throughout his years of service. A certificate was presented to Bob by Pastor Andrea Cooper. Shown in the photo is also his daughter Paula Slasor Watson and his wife Beth.



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you enjoy knitting and/or crocheting? In recent years there has been a strong resurgence in the art of creating beautiful hand knitted and crocheted clothing, linens and accessories. Teens, young adults, older adults, men, women and even a large community of actors and actresses have discovered the meditative benefits of this ancient skill.

A few years ago several women in our congregation, led by **Bona Lee** and **Elaine Gregg** recognized the need for a new emerging phenomenon aptly named "Prayer Shawl Ministry". When yarn is purchased or donated, a prayer of blessing is offered for the intended use as a prayer shawl and for the destiny of its finished product. During the knitting or crocheting process, each participant continues to pray for the comfort their shawl creation will bring to its recipient.

Upon completion, each shawl will be given to people both known and unknown to us who are in need of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual comfort. Some of our shawls have traveled many miles across the country far and wide. They have been wrapped around the shoulders (with prayer, of course) of men, women and children who wear them at home, in hospitals, while traveling; their options are unlimited. One thing they know for sure is that when they wear their shawl, God's love is locked in every stitch. If you would like to join our prayer shawl ministry, please contact **Nancy Peters** (941.756.7370).

Ginger Robertson, a member of our Prayer Shawl Ministry

Abolish Poverty and End Suffering - We Are All Over This!

In Matthew 25:41 we read: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

My dear brothers and sisters, my Bradenton/Sarasota church family, how much joy you bring unto the "least" of these, your brothers and sisters at New Port Richey!

Each of us is invited to come and see the happiness our gifts of food, clothing, tarps, jackets, blankets, hats, scarves, glasses, gloves and much more bring to precious children of God that the world so often ignores.

One of our greatest gifts to the people gathering in New Port Richey has been the pocket prayer cloths. They love them! They know their meaning and cherish them for as they hold their prayer cloths they are reminded that someone loves them and has prayed for them. But as much as they cherish the prayer cloths, they also give them away as a way to invite their friends to come to "their" *Community of Christ* congregation to feel and see the love of Jesus. They invite their friends to come as they are and be accepted; and they do come and they are loved and accepted! Over 60 souls now attend church each Sunday; 30 have been baptized over the last three years! Your prayer cloths work!!



This past Valentine's Saturday we, the Bradenton/Sarasota Congregation, along with seven other congregations, gave the New Port Richey people a Valentine's Day Roast Beef Dinner. The meal was exquisite and the tables were decorated to the tee; the food was perfectly prepared and served as a sit down dinner. Many of the members could not remember when they were last served a meal. The Spirit of our Loving Creator was felt in great power as we shared in fellowship. All were blessed, both the servers and the served. Ask **Andrea Cooper, Dick and Vera Kramer, and Leah Jones** who represented us!

On Sunday after the Valentine's dinner, there was a special dedication service for New Port Richey's new sanctuary. Because of the increase in attendance, the existing two storefronts have been filled to overflowing; some members had to eat outside in heat, cold and rain, while some had to stand during worship services or worse get tired and leave. In answer to prayer, the storefront next door became available and is now the new sanctuary with seating for everyone while leaving plenty of room in the other two storefronts to prepare and serve breakfast with tables and chairs for all.

Following the Valentine's Dinner and the Dedication Service, the New Port Richey Funding Team shared with us, along with others from seven congregations, the financial needs of New Port Richey. We were made aware that the operating cost for New Port Richey is \$3,500.00 per month. That meant that the only way this ministry of reaching out to the poor, abused, diseased and hard living can exist is through the continued love and support of us here in Bradenton/Sarasota and our sister congregations.

We were asked if we, as congregations, could find ways to help fund and keep alive this special outreach ministry. Some suggestions were to hold fund raisers, have special offerings, have a special collection bucket, perhaps tie in with another congregation or include New Port Richey in our congregational budget. Broken down, if 30 people gave \$2.25 per week for a year it would equal \$3,510.00, a months worth of operating costs. Most important, every dollar is needed and appreciated!

In section 63:4a of Counsel to the Church, we read: "God, the eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated and diseased of the world....do not turn away from them for in their welfare resides your (our) welfare." We, the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation, are NOT turning away; we ARE turning TOWARD these precious children of God with the loving hands of Jesus.

On behalf of our New Port Richey Congregation, I thank each of you, my loving church family, for all that has been done and will continue to be done for the least of these.

Your brother and servant in Christ, **Al Mount**



Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 1 Charyn & Charlie Walker, anniversary
- 3 Sandra Rater
- 4 Fay Beers
- 7 Megan & Santiago Gonzalez, anniversary
- 8 Joan Wooderson
- 12 Fay and Bob Beers, anniversary
- 15 Karen MacDonald
- 16 Jason Van Beek
- 19 Steve Farris



2016 Directory

Bradenton/Sarasota Congregation's Directories for 2016 have been distributed.

Please make the following corrections:

- page 7 - Steve Farris
phone#941.564.8552
- page 18 - Jeanette Harris
phone#941.552.6884
- page 20 - Calvin Long,
e-mail beacpuppy7@aol.com
- page 21 - Jackie & Paul Prevey
phone#941.257.5112
- page 23 - Kayla Smeralda
phone#941.962.8450



★ A big thanks to **Wade and Lynn Bryant** for taking the responsibility of keeping our outside church sign up to date. Check out what is going on at church by giving the sign a good look over.

★ We, as a congregation, would like to say thank you to our many active "snowbirds" who come south to enjoy the winter but who are willing to participate in the activities of the congregation while they are here. They are often found working in the kitchen, unloading food from the pantry truck, sharing from behind the pulpit, playing the piano and singing, and cleaning the church on work days We greatly appreciate their willingness to share their skills and giftedness with us even if it is for a short time. We always look forward to their return.

Share God's Love

This past weekend I had a wonderful opportunity to sit and talk with a few priests during our Priesthood Meeting. We were discussing our purposes as a priest and what we could do to build upon our calling.

This got me to thinking of our congregation. We have been told that all are called and in Romans 8:28-30 we find "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called."

Sometimes I forget we all have a purpose and can take some part in sharing God's love. I know all of our giftedness is unique to the individual, but sharing God's love can be done by all of us and, if you think about it, with just a little effort.

Things we could all do to share God's Love:

- Simply share a smile
- Use a simple text to express we are thinking of the other person
- Open a door for someone
- Share a meal
- Wave hello

This week my daughter Rebecca has been learning how to be a good Daisy (a Girl Scout classification), which has some of the above on their list. I think Rebecca and I will focus on these skills and try to be creative in adding to the list.

Our congregation has been a great inspiration to me on my journey with Christ. I am looking forward to my journey, and I am hopeful that I will be able to inspire you also on your journey. If you think of more creative ways of sharing God's love, please reach out to me and I will be sure to add it to my list.

Melinda Creel



The time capsule protected our memories for 20 years!

Extra food was prepared so that 20 meals could be packed up and distributed to our neighbors behind the church.



**A
Quick
Look
at Our
20 Year
Celebration**

The children waved flags to music during the opening of Sunday's worship.



The centerpiece at the desert table at the Saturday night dinner.



A tabloid of people helping each other as they participate in present day activities.



Congregation sings their praises during the Sunday Service.

