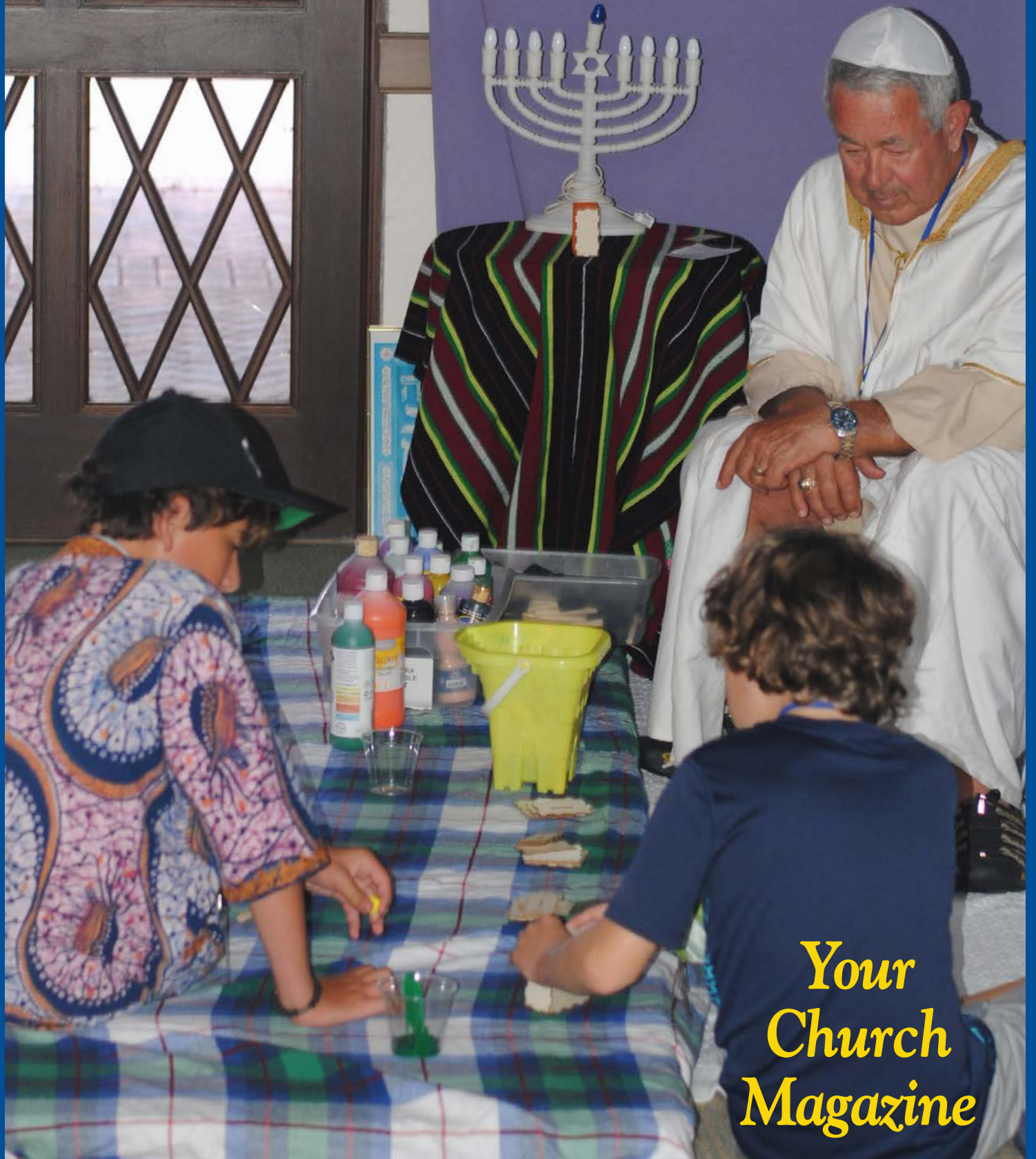


THE SPIRE



*Your
Church
Magazine*

July / August 2024



NURTURE FAITH

by Dr. Doug Hood

Senior Pastor

WHEN IT IS HARD TO PRAY

“Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer.”

Mark 1:35 (Common English Bible)

One evening a member of the church came to see me on the matter of prayer. I had just finished a teaching about prayer, and she questioned a claim I made about the early church reformer, Martin Luther. Luther was known to rise early on days when he had much to do and spend extra time in prayer. The young woman found this practice counterintuitive. “How,” she asked, “Is it possible to spend more time in prayer when the day before you already demanded much?” I shared that this was not unique to Luther; many church leaders before Luther and many following him followed the same practice. Despite exceedingly busy lives, Luther and others realized that their own power to meet the challenges of the day was insufficient. Prayer infuses each life with uncommon strength, encouragement, and inspiration for facing every claim and every responsibility placed upon us.

The question of the young woman is a common one. Her question is not to be confused with doubts about prayer or technique. Those are important questions, of course. But her question was simply the struggle of time. How does a busy life find the time for regular, meaningful time with God in prayer? Some who have been Christians for years have a faith that remains in its infancy because they have failed to take this question seriously—the question of making time for prayer. They are the ones who admit that they only pray occasionally and then only when they feel particularly troubled about something. Their prayer is utterly listless, repeating a few familiar words they may have been taught as a child. What these people fail to understand is that God cannot provide strength, power, and encouragement when we don’t make room for God in our lives.

When we find it hard to pray, Jesus speaks to us, here in Mark’s Gospel, of two common obstacles: the obstacle of time and the obstacle of place. Though the difficulties with prayer may be numerous, none can be properly addressed without first identifying a sacred place and time to be alone with God. Often, people tell me that their busy lives give them no time for regular prayer, though they clearly have made time to check their phones for the score of their favorite team, read the headline news, or simply play a video game. Additionally, no one who cares

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CHURCH STAFF

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Associate Pastor

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Organist / Director of Music

Birgit Djupedal Fioravante, B.M., M.A.
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THE SPIRE MAGAZINE

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If you or a family member are hospitalized, please notify the church office.

Even if you give the name of the church upon admission, the hospital will NOT notify us.

deeply for someone neglects to spend time with them. Time is found for the things that matter. Jesus found time by rising early in the morning, well before sunrise. Even five minutes with a brief devotional followed by five minutes of prayer prepares us to receive the things God most wants to provide us.

Jesus then addresses the obstacle of place. Rising early in the morning, Jesus went to a deserted place where he could be alone. Though quick moments of prayer between demands of loved ones, children, or work colleagues are better than not praying at all, such moments will not nurture the quality of faith that comes with praying consistently in a more disciplined fashion. That discipline begins with identifying a place where there are no distractions, a place where the mind might experience quiet, and a place to simply be alone with God. There is wisdom in the teaching of the Psalms: “Be still, and know that I am God!” (Psalm 46:10 NRSVue) It is astonishing how real God becomes when we consistently consecrate a particular place that is for God alone as we pray. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus teaches that effective prayer begins with time and place. ●

by Glenn Barton

The Welcome Team

THE WELCOMING MINISTRY AT FIRST DELRAY

“And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God’s diverse gifts.” 1 Peter 4:10 (Common English Bible)

The WELCOME TEAM began serving in May 2021. From Day 1, it has filled a special purpose—***greeting members and visitors at the Lobby doors***. Schedules are offered one to two months in advance, hoping the frequency to serve is one Sunday monthly or every other month. The commitment is flexible; a substitute is available when needed.

Those serving on the WELCOME TEAM have the unique opportunity to perhaps be the **FIRST** person to greet a member or visitor when they arrive; ***the greeter’s smile might just be what was needed for that individual***.

The First Delray campus is as beautiful and welcoming as the congregation is. Although the church was founded in 1925, the Sanctuary we worship in today was built in 1976. The defining element of our Sanctuary is the spectacular stained glass windows that are not only the focal point in the Sanctuary, but also greet all who come into the church through the entrance doors. Jesus towers magnificently over the Gleason Street entrance, reassuring all who enter that this is a place where all are welcome. Each panel also has a symbolic meaning; the first one in the top left depicts a handshake, denoting friendship.

This is an invitation for you to contact Carolyn Kettle (recruiting/scheduling for the Welcome Team) to indicate that you would like to be a part of this ministry to welcome people warmly and sincerely into this place of worship. Please reach out to Carolyn (561-504-9550 or carolynskettle@gmail.com) as soon as possible. She is eager to give you more details.

We hope you will join us! ●

WE HAVE TWO “DR.’S” AND ARE APPROVED TO CALL THEM TO CO-PASTORING!

While the “off-season” here in Florida might seem like a very slow time from some perspectives, when it comes to our pastoral leadership, some very exciting things have been happening here at First Presbyterian.

First, in mid-May, the Presbytery approved our request to call Dr. Hood and Rev. Rapier as co-pastors. This was the penultimate step in the process leading to our shift to the co-pastoring model (the last is their Installation — see below). The Presbytery Assembly’s approval of this change says much about how they see our pastors and our congregation: they, like us, are convinced that our two pastors are uniquely talented and sensitive individuals who have the skills and flexibility to make co-pastoring work — supported by First Delray’s strong and dedicated lay leaders and congregants.

Second, as Greg Rapier made his way along the Camino de Santiago, a world away from his life as a doctoral student at Pittsburgh Theological

Seminary, he was officially granted his Doctor of Ministry degree. As mentioned at our second Town Hall this spring, Greg began his studies toward a doctorate as soon after receiving his Master of Divinity degree as the rules of the denomination allowed him to do so. His hard work, along with our support as a congregation, enabled him to achieve this educational milestone at the age of 32 — all while also serving as our Associate Pastor, and a husband and father. We are all very proud of his commitment and this achievement and welcome the chance to call him “Dr. Rapier”— even though to many of us, he will still be just “Greg.”

Coming back to the topic of co-pastoring, as we move toward the fall, Dr. Hood, Dr. Rapier, and a committee from the Presbytery will be working out the details for an Installation Service for our co-pastors. The service is tentatively slated for some time in October, and all First Delray members and friends will be invited! The pastors, with the Co-Pastoring team and Trustee approval, will also be deciding upon and contracting with a coach who

will work with the pastors throughout the years of their co-pastoring arrangement. Stay tuned for the date and more information on the Service of Installation.

The Co-Pastoring Team members are truly grateful for all the support we have received from the congregation as we have moved through this process. Your participation in the Town Halls and the thoughtful questions you asked, as well as your supportive comments in these meetings and individual conversations, have been much appreciated. We ask that you continue to pray for the success of the co-pastoring endeavor and that you offer your support to our pastors at every opportunity as we move into this new adventure in pastoral. ●



FAITHFUL ACTIONS

*“What good is it if people say they have faith but do nothing to show it?
...his faith was made complete by his faithful actions.”*

James 2:14, 22a (Common English Bible)

Your support of First Delray over the years has established this congregation as a leader in our community for our support of local missions. We have been fortunate to be able to assist a number of community organizations, to help our brothers and sisters in need, and the agencies addressing many of the issues facing our community.

Part of our mission is to not only provide financial support to these organizations but also to stay connected to them: what they are doing, what challenges they are facing, and what new needs they have.

We invite you to learn more about these organizations through the mission statements below, and to **consider becoming our connection, our liaison**, to any of the organizations identified with an asterisk (*):

Achievement Centers for Children & Families, ACCF (Delray Beach): to nurture a collaborative community where children are inspired to reach their full potential and their families serve as the foundation of their growth.

Adopt-A-Family (Lake Worth): to strengthen families with children in their efforts to achieve stability and self-sufficiency by providing access to all-encompassing services.

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Inc., AVDA (Delray Beach): to promote violence-free relationships and social change by offering alternative choices to end violence and domestic abuse.

***Back to Basics Angel Program (Wellington):** to provide children throughout Palm Beach County with the basics: new sneakers, socks, underwear, and a toy during the Christmas Holidays.

Boynton Beach Faith-Based Community Development Center/The ELDER CARE Program (Boynton Beach): to assist seniors to “AGE IN PLACE” rather than enter institutional care by providing basic essential services.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Delray Beach (Delray Beach): to help youth of all backgrounds develop the qualities needed to become responsible citizens and leaders.

***Campo Alegre/Farmworkers Children Center Inc.** (Delray Beach): to offer a safe place for children after school while their parents are working the fields.

***Caridad Center** (Boynton Beach): to upgrade the health, education, and living standards of underserved children and families; and to eliminate the cycle of poverty for the families we serve in South Florida.

***CROSSROADS CLUB (CRC)** (Delray Beach): to provide a safe haven for anyone whose life has been adversely affected by, or through, the use of addictive substances.

CROS Ministries (Lake Worth): to serve the hungry— today, tomorrow, all-year-round.

The Drug Abuse Foundation (Delray Beach): to serve as a united team, working together to deliver the most qualitative, cost-effective, and responsive services possible; always choosing to be challenged by faith rather than driven by fear; in the pursuit of creating environments where people find what they need to change their lives.

***Family Promise of Southeast Florida** (Delray Beach): to empower families in making their transition from homelessness to sustainable independence.

***The Soup Kitchen** (Boynton Beach): to feed those who are less fortunate and respond with increased services.

Wayside House (Delray Beach): to be a healing environment that helps women with drug and alcohol dependence by providing them with tools to rebuild their lives, reconnect with loved ones, and recover from active addiction.

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Staying connected to these organizations is part of our due diligence, ensuring that they are doing God's work in our community. You can put your faith into action by serving as a liaison.

If you are interested in serving as a liaison to one of these organizations and would like more information, please contact Jeanne Heavilin (jcheavilin@gmail.com) or Paul Ludwig (pauldcr@yahoo.com). ●



by Nancy Fine

HAVE YOU VISITED THE HOLLY HOUSE RECENTLY?

Have you visited the Holly House recently? This ministry of our church is a beehive of activity on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Often, you can hear the hum of sewing machines as handmade creations are fashioned, or smell the heat from a glue gun as unique items are assembled. Look closely, and you will find beautiful displays of costume jewelry and holiday decorations. In the middle of this large building, located on the northeast corner of the church campus, you will find displays of housewares available for sale to help support the ministry and mission of the church.

This ministry not only provides fellowship to a dedicated group of “Holly House ladies” but also support for one another. They support each other when a helping hand is needed, pray when prayers need to be lifted, and laugh and cry with each other's joys and sorrows.

Stop by on any Tuesday or Thursday morning to see how this ministry truly is a blessing to members and friends of the church community, or contact Linda Prior (561-702-0245, Linda.Prior42@gmail.com). ●

Holly House is a ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach

GIFTS TO OUR CHURCH

Deacons' Fund from Mary Ellen Cook, in loving memory of Pat Duane; from Randy and Stacey LeNeave, in loving memory of Pat Duane; from the List Family Fund, in loving memory of Pat Duane; from Mr. and Mrs. Peter S. Philip, in loving memory of Pat Duane; and from Jarman Smith, in loving memory of Pat Duane.

Remembrance Fund from Kathy Poole, in loving memory of Lucy Drake. ●



ETERNAL LIVES

Our Deepest Sympathies as a congregation are extended to the families of the following members upon the death of their loved ones:

- Bill Hilton –
May 4, 2024
- Bea Stauber –
May 6, 2024
- Pat Duane –
May 10, 2024
- Robert Troup –
May 11, 2024



SESSION REPORT

During April and May, the Session approved two baptisms and received eight new members. ●



NEW MEMBERS

William Aber

Katherine Gaylor

Michael Gaylor

Susan George

Cynthia Good

Jacquelyn Rieger

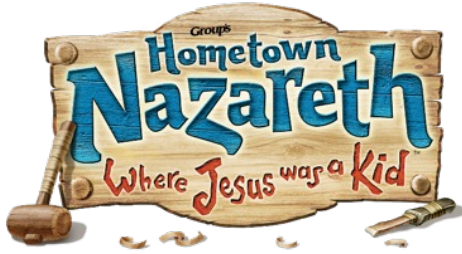


WELCOME



by Grace Cameron Hood

Director of Children and Family Ministry



Vacation Bible School was a wonderful experience for everyone! We had around 70 people involved every day. Children, adult volunteers, and teen volunteers all came together to share the story of Jesus as we visited Nazareth. The children were able to travel from activity to activity with a Tribe led by an adult Tribe Leader and a Teen Assistant. We all celebrated, sang wonderful upbeat songs, and danced. The Tribes were able to visit Mary's home to hear the story of Jesus from her. Her nosy neighbor Eunice also popped in each day. The children played games that Jesus and his boyhood friends might have played. All the children were able to choose shops to visit in the Nazareth marketplace. Each day brought new experiences and new chances to hear who Jesus is today in our lives!

Many people worked hard to make this program wonderful. Thank you to everyone who contributed time, items, prayers, cupcakes, sheets and more.

Note: If you lent us pillows and rugs, you may claim them in Fellowship Hall. ●



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by Dr. Doug Hood

Senior Pastor

The following is from Confronting Life's Challenges: Sermons on the Struggles We Face which features sermons by Doug Hood, Greg Rapier, and John "Skip" Randolph

ARE YOU AFRAID?

Mark 4:35-41

Listen for God's Word:

"Jesus asked them, 'Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?'

Overcome with awe, they said to each other, 'Who then is this?

Even the wind and the sea obey him!'"

Mark 4:40, 41 (Common English Bible)

That wonderful preacher, Bryant Kirkland, once said, "It is fair to say that Jesus went to the cross with fear, but not anxiety."¹ Dr. Kirkland sought to make clear the difference between fear and anxiety. He states that fear is that disturbing emotion that organically affects our bodies and our outward behavior. It is the result of actual or anticipated danger or pain. Fear is a part of the human condition and to deny that Jesus experienced fear is to deny a piece of his humanity.

On the other hand, anxiety may be understood as how we deal with our fear. Do we allow our fears to become vague and, as a result, become oversized? Do we approach fear with hopelessness? If so, our fears become

destructive. More importantly, anxiety is an indication that we have lost trust in anyone or anything that may come along to help us. Dr. Kirkland is correct; it is fair to say that Jesus went to the cross with fear, but not anxiety. Over and over again, Jesus surrendered

himself to God in prayer, and in that was his peace.

Notice in our lesson this morning from Mark's Gospel that Jesus never says, "There is nothing to be afraid of." That would be ridiculous. The storm



in the story was indeed fearsome, as are the “wind and waves” that threaten us. Rather, Jesus asks, “Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?” Jesus is not saying that everything is going to turn out okay, though in this story it does. That is not what Jesus means by “faith.” What Jesus is asking his disciples about is the quality of their relationship with God. Do they not yet have that relationship with God that gives peace in the face of fear?

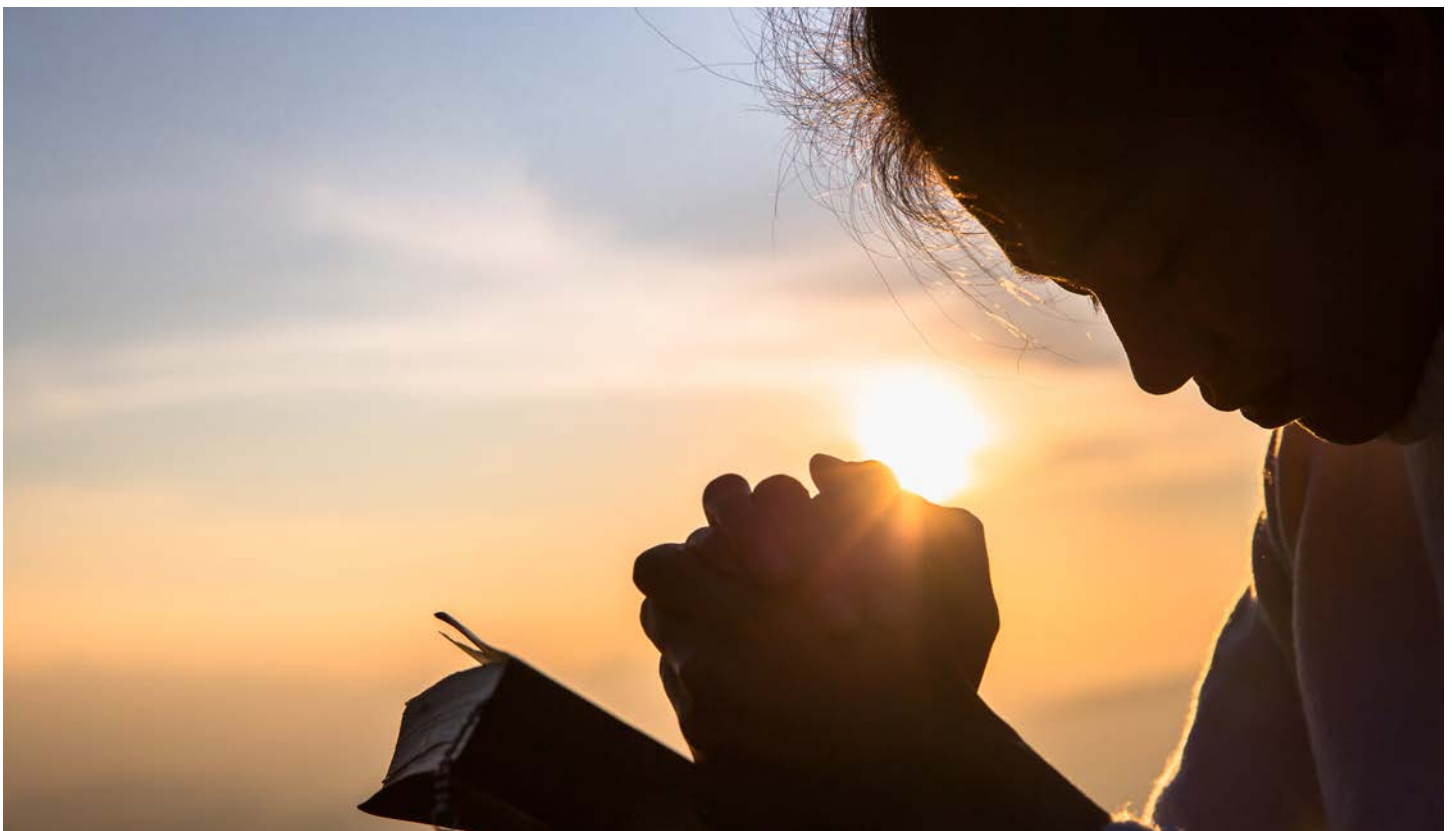
This past weekend millions watched the Super Bowl. And, down to the last four seconds, millions were praying for a Raven victory. But, hear this; millions were also praying for a forty-niners victory. They could not

both win, though there was a mother at the game that wished exactly for that! Faith is not about one outcome or another. Faith is about trust in a relationship regardless of the outcome. Jesus took his fears to God in prayer and, in the quality of that relationship with the Father, found peace rather than anxiety. Jesus overcame fear by surrendering himself to God over and over again, trusting that God would be present.

There is one area of life where many of us understand this: marriage. During a wedding ceremony, the bride and groom make promises to one another. The promises usually go something like this: “I promise to be

there for you, in health and in sickness, in riches and in poverty, in joy and in sorrow.” Notice, no one makes a promise for the material or physical outcome of those being married. There may be health or sickness, prosperity or struggle, joy or sorrow. The promise made is in the quality of the relationship; one will be there for the other, regardless. The faith Jesus speaks of here is the quality of the relationship between the disciples and God.

Let’s return to our story this morning in Mark’s Gospel. Notice how the story unfolds. The disciples become afraid of the storm that is swirling around them. Fear becomes anxiety and





then they turn to Jesus and ask, “Don’t you care?” Can you imagine turning to Jesus and asking that question? I can. I have. Yet, the question speaks to the quality of the relationship with Jesus and to God. “Don’t you care?” The question suggests that there is relationship work to be done.

Jesus stands up and gives orders to the wind and to the lake, “Silence! Be still!” One Bible scholar says that this is a far too tame translation of what Jesus spoke. “Muzzle yourself!” is a more accurate translation.² With the authority of the spoken word, the wind settled and there was a great calm. That is when Jesus asks them the faith question, the relationship question, “Don’t you have faith yet?”

It seems to me that Jesus calming the storm was less about the need for the storm to stop before something terrible happens. The development of the story suggests that Jesus provided a demonstration for the disciples of the power in whom they are asked to place their trust. Jesus wants the disciples to have confidence that no matter how fierce the storms are that we face, no matter how many crises crash upon us in our journey we call life, nothing has greater power than God. The great miracle of this story is not the calming of the wind and sea. The great miracle is that a relationship with God has the capacity to calm us in the midst of a storm. As my friend Howard Edington once said, “God may not calm every storm but God will calm us in every

storm.” As we continually develop our relationship with God and become more conscious of God’s continued presence with us, there seems to be less and less reason to be afraid of anything in life.

Ernest J. Lewis once shared this story. A young minister in Australia made a pastoral call on one of his older members. As he went into the room, he noticed a chair was pulled up by the bedside. He said to the man lying on the bed, “I see I’m not your first visitor today.” The man answered weakly, “I’d like to explain that. When I was a little boy, I had difficulty praying to Jesus; so my minister suggested that when I sat down to talk to him, I pull up another chair. Then I’d talk to him

just as if he were sitting right there.”

The young minister left after reading the Shepherd’s Psalm, the Twenty-third Psalm. A few days later, earlier in the morning, there was a knock at the pastor’s door. An anxious daughter sobbed out her story. She told him how her father had died without her being present. “I went out of the bedroom only for a few minutes to rest. I was only gone for just a little while. When I returned he was gone. He died alone and I am so sorry for that. There was no change in him from when I left the room except for one thing. His hand was on the chair.”³

Friends, the Christian affirmation is that we were made for fellowship with God. When we understand that, we also understand God’s desire that we surrender every fear, every worry, and every concern to him in prayer. It is then that we place our hand on the chair, confident that God is there. It is how Jesus overcame fear and he invites us to the same. Amen. ●

¹ Bryant M. Kirkland, “Look Fear in the Eye”, *A Pattern for Faith* (The Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, 1983), 159.

² William C. Placher, *Mark: Belief, A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2010), 76.

³ Ernest J. Lewis, “A Walk Through the Valley”, *Best Sermons, Volume X: 1966-1968 Protestant Edition*, edited by G. Paul Butler (New York: Trident Press, 1968), 173.





THANK YOU FROM YOUR GENEROSITY TEAM

The Generosity Team would like to thank you for your support of First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach in 2024. For the first time in recent history, pledges to the church have exceeded \$1 million. You, the congregation, help us be a beacon of hope in our community and beyond.

In January, the initiatives for the 2024 stewardship campaign were announced.

- Nurturing Our Faith
 - Expand programs for children and youth
 - Support the growing Vacation Bible School
 - Fund summer youth trips to Montreat
 - Support our music ministry and assist with the First Delray Concert Series
 - Further development of ministry outreach
- Enhancing Our Congregational Care
 - Relaunch the Stephen Ministry program
 - Select and train Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers
 - Provide resources for Stephen Ministry
- Sustaining Ministry Excellence
 - Implement the Co-Pastor model
 - Provide resources for training and counseling
- Strengthening Our Pillars of Support
 - Continue our purpose of Building Disciples, Transforming Lives

Just midway through the year, we are pleased to report that we have accomplished many of our goals. We anticipate that additional programming and activities will be launched in the second half of this year.

Listed below are just some of the things you have made possible.

1. Training of three individuals to become Stephen Leaders. They, in turn, will train people to become Stephen Ministers, with the full program being launched in 2025.
2. Sending two groups of teens and their chaperones to the Montreat Youth Conference in July: middle school and high school. This is the first time we are able to offer a middle school youth trip to Montreat.
3. Beginning in the fall, we are looking to add an additional Sunday School class for our growing children's programs.
4. Approximately 70 people (children, teen helpers, volunteers, and staff) were involved in this year's Vacation Bible School.
5. Completed all the steps to implement the Co-Pastor model for Dr. Doug Hood and Dr. Greg Rapier. Their installation service will happen this fall.
6. Three sold-out concerts for the First Delray Concert Series, with the final 2024 concert on track to be sold out. Planning has begun for the 2025 concert season.

We invite you to support this church financially and by getting involved with the various ministries we offer. If you haven't already completed your 2024 Estimate of Giving, you can do so by contacting Christine Davis in the Finance Office or visiting our website (www.firstdelray.com/give).

Great things are happening at First Delray Beach. Through your support and generosity, we are a growing, vibrant congregation and a place where we can *Build Disciples and Transform Lives*. ●



SUSTAINING MINISTRY EXCELLENCE

- **Nurturing Our Faith**
- **Enhancing Our Congregational Care**
- **Strengthening Our Pillars of Support**



First Delray Concert Series

Music by the Sea

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES!

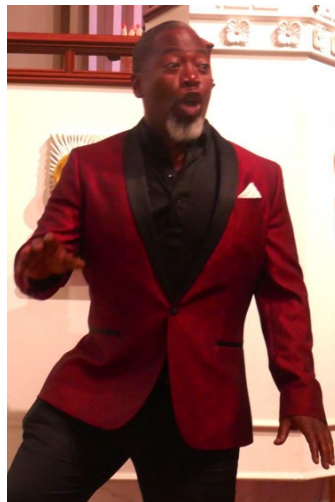
Did you catch our last concert, “The Magic of Mozart”? If not, you missed an amazing display of virtuosity from our much-loved Director of Music, Don Cannarozzi, conducting a 28-piece orchestra and playing a piano concerto by Mozart at the same time! This, of course, got a well-deserved standing ovation.

We were also blessed with the talents of internationally known pianist, Tao Lin, who was the perfect partner for Don on this concerto written for two pianos, and the voices of our First Delray soloists and friends—opera singers by night and our choir members by (Sun)day. They treated us to the “best of” the operas *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, as well as a solo motet and concert aria written by Mozart. Thanks to copious program notes (courtesy of Birgit’s dedication), all could enjoy the stories behind the operas—some all-too-human situations and emotions!

This was Don’s “dream concert,” and we are so happy that the First Delray Concert Series was able to fulfill that dream! Having the Krescendo Orchestra making sublime music in our Sanctuary also seemed like a dream to us in the audience. The sounds of strings, horns, wind and percussion players radiated throughout the room as a glorious testament to the wonderful acoustics of our church.

Had an orchestra of this size ever made music here? We don’t think so; this was a very, very special event. We know that we advertised on the local public radio station for a reason: We are raising the bar on concerts offered by churches in our area, and people are discovering us as a source of professional and high-caliber musical events—and a vital spiritual community in Palm Beach. People are experiencing us not only as a concert venue, but as a place to commune and worship—blessed with a music program and talent like few other churches in the area.

As we completed this concert and thanked our many generous sponsors, our Associate Pastor, Greg Rapiet, was packing his backpack for his long walk on the Camino de Santiago. Like Greg, we feel like we are on a journey. And we are ready and excited to complete 2024 and announce our 2025 plan!



This fall's concert, "This Land is Your Land," is a wonderful conclusion to this year's concert series. Honoring our veterans and celebrating all that is good with our country reflects one of our key goals: to bring people together across the local community through music. We hope all will attend to come together in solidarity as Americans, with all our different backgrounds and viewpoints, knowing that the land that we live in offers greater freedoms and opportunities than almost any other place on earth. Sing along and celebrate!

But what about 2025? Because of your generosity and support, after only a few concerts, there was no doubt in our minds that this mission of First Delray should continue in the year to come. And wait until you hear what we have planned. You are about to get the insider information on what's in store:

Concerts for 2025—Save the dates now! Tickets will be available mid-September of this year for all four concerts.

- **January 26 – "An Afternoon with Gershwin,"** including *Rhapsody in Blue* with a chamber orchestra and solos from *Porgy and Bess*.
- **March 23 – "Give My Regards to Broadway,"** the best of Broadway and the American Songbook—you loved it, and our wonderful soloists will treat you to more.
- **May 4 – "The Latin Divos Return!"** Get your Latin dance moves ready...it will be hard to sit still!
- **October 26 – "The American Spirit,"** with powerful spirituals and other thoroughly American songs expressing the spirit of our nation.

So, get ready, and join us by sponsoring, attending, and praying for the mission of the First Delray Concert Series in 2025. With God's grace and your support, we are confident we can continue to make a musical and spiritual contribution to First Delray and our larger community. ●



let go — the type of goodbye said in earnest at middle school graduations, often with an oath to stay close forever, by friends who cannot, will not, remain the same.

And, you know what? It’s exactly that — and more. More because — as with a graduation — you’ve accomplished something, and those accomplishments aren’t going away. You’ve learned something, and those teachings aren’t going away.

So the question now becomes what do you do with it? This gift you’ve been given. This education by walking. Do you let it atrophy? Or do you put it to work? Use it to spread some good in the world?

For this, I know the answer. But for now, I choose rest.



We walked into Santiago at 10:30 yesterday morning, three of 1,668 pilgrims from the various routes to arrive on June 6, 2024. We took our pictures and received our Compostelas



and checked into a hotel with an actual, functioning air conditioner. Pierre played on the playground. Lissette enjoyed a massage last night and I had one this morning. Then we returned to the cathedral and enjoyed worship together as a family. Before worship began, I showed Pierre four angels on the altar lifting some figures whose names I do not know. I showed him the angels’ wings.

Soon, the first deep notes bellowed from the cathedral’s organ and a woman began to sing in Latin, her voice high and airy.

Pierre turned toward me, eyes wide. “Daddy, that singing... is that the angels?”

“Yes, Pierre. Yes, it is.”

Buen Camino. ●



Greg returns to worship on July 28, 2024.

by Maryann Rana

Prayer Ministry Team

PRAYING ON BEHALF OF OTHERS

Are you doing your duty as a Christian? When was the last time you prayed for someone or something? It is not necessary to personally know the who and the what. There are so few times that we hear the outcome, and though results are wonderful to hear about, it is the prayers we send out that truly matter. What matters is that you pray in faith to Father God.

Praying in faith touches the all-knowing heart of our Father. He will handle whatever the situation calls for according to his will, and his will always comes in the best way possible. Remember, we are Christians just doing our duty in caring for one another's needs. With all the discord that is going on in the world today, we need to pray at every opportunity.

“Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health. And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve.”
James 5:15, 16 (Common English Bible).

Prayer requests come through the church office and are then distributed to team members. Each request is carefully and thoughtfully lifted up in prayer with respect and confidentiality. Please call Nancy Fine in the church office (561-276-6338) for more information or if you are interested in joining. ●



by Maria Graham

MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

In July, the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study will conclude *The God Who Sees*. This video study, prepared by Kathie Lee Gifford and Joanne Moody, delves into the lives of people in the Bible who wondered if God saw them in their distress. What they discovered is that even in the darkest of times, God watches over us and never abandons us.

We will take a break during the month of August, but will start up again in September with a new study. (Stay tuned to discover what it will be!) We meet via Zoom at 10 a.m. on Monday mornings. New members are always welcome. Contact Maria Graham (mmg2352@gmail.com) for more information or for a Zoom invitation. Have a wonderful summer! ●



WALKS WITH THOUGHTS

Gratitude. The theme the youths picked for the Youth Sunday service. The theme of innumerable sermons. Recently, I have been reading our Associate Pastor Greg's blogs as he walks the El Camino Trail in Spain. As I read them, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for this amazing man who is soon to be our co-pastor.

Because I cannot join him in body on the El Camino Trail, I decide to take a short walk of my own. Today finds me in Lantana Nature Preserve, a rare coastal hardwood hammock.* This small, reclaimed bit of old Florida lies beside Lake Worth Lagoon off Ocean Boulevard in Lantana. The paved paths are shaded here, a welcome retreat from the scorching late May temperatures of the past week. I stumble, and a mother with a small daughter stops to ask if I am all right. I assure her I am and smile my gratitude.

Benches line the path every 200 to 300 yards. I sit often and relish

the silence. Here, it is still enough to hear the light crunch of an individual leaf as it drops to the ground. A lone yellow butterfly flies through a stand of mangroves along the Intracoastal, only to be joined in a moment or two by several dancing swallowtails and fritillaries. In front of my bench, a brave green anole (a small green lizard native to Florida) thrusts out its brilliant red throat fan as he pauses before scuttling across the path. A musky, slightly salty aroma rides the breeze from the small inlet to my right. And I wait here in silence and gratitude until God comes and sits with me awhile.

I find myself contemplating one of Greg's recent El Camino blogs. I was struck by his fellow traveler's idea that we should all be deacons. Every one of us. Caring for others wherever we find them: along dirt pathways, in foreign hostels, at church, living next door, or walking in local nature preserves. Then came another thought: how much we owe those people who care for us and love us.

Those in whose eyes we see God. The Good Samaritans, pastors, friends and neighbors, children, and spouses in our world.

As I resume my walk, the Reverend Fred Rogers, more often known simply as Mr. Rogers, comes to mind. Recently, my husband and I watched the biographical drama based on a small portion of his life. He is one of my heroes—and Time Magazine's too. Millions of children and their parents have seen God reflected in those soft, compassionate eyes of his. One of my favorite scenes in the recent film portrayed Mr. Rogers kneeling in prayer while raising up innumerable people to God. The beautiful combination of caring and gratitude brought Paul's words to mind, "I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:16 CEB).

Today, I, too, am experiencing a beautiful day in this Lantana neighborhood. Now is my turn to send up a prayer of thanks not only for the quiet magnificence of this place, but also for you. May your life be blessed as St. Paul's and Mr. Roger's were, with the grace of God and a thankful heart. ●

*American settlers used the word *hammock* to refer to a cool, shady spot. Today, in Florida, the word hammock has come to mean a cool, shady rise of land containing hardwood trees and tropical plants. Over the span of many centuries, the seeds of these trees and plants have been carried on the wind or by migrating birds from the Caribbean islands to our south. There are only a few hardwood hammocks left in the United States. You can tell that the hardwoods in these hammocks are tropical by the shape of their leaves, which are pointed at their ends to easily shed water from frequent tropical rains.





by Rev. Greg Rapier
Associate Pastor

IN THE WORLD ... CONNECTING CHURCH AND CULTURE

As part of his sabbatical, Dr. Greg Rapier walked the Camino de Santiago, a 500-mile pilgrimage across northern Spain, and documented his journey on his blog. His final post is reprinted here; to read past posts, visit <https://revgregrapier.wixsite.com/walk-with-greg/>

Day 36-38: Lavacolla, Santiago

“The real Camino begins when you return home.”— Pilgrim’s proverb



I’ve always hated this quote—exactly the type of pseudo-mystical, unnecessarily cryptic, Paulo Cuelho-inspired, slap it on a dorm room wall and call it deep nonsense that doesn’t mean much of anything.

I get it now.

As we walked into Lavacolla I found myself suddenly and unexpectedly emotional—nothing theatrical and no tears (not that anything’s wrong with crying). Whatever I was feeling—this complex jumble I couldn’t name—it was all on the inside, volcanic and acidic

and warm. Like I was a knotted up hose, weather-worn and full of punctures, with the water turned full blast.

Pierre was asleep. It was late in the afternoon and most pilgrims had stopped walking. We would have too if not for the fact that our original booking was downright hostile toward us, leading us to walk another four hours, which, truth be told, was completely fine because those four hours were some of the best of our Camino.

We were alone.

I told Lissette about the feeling and we processed together. Her Camino and mine and ours. What it all means. How we feel about it being nearly over.

I was ready for the Camino to end and so was she. The albergues had lost their romanticism long ago, and our feet were sore and our knees were swollen, and we were tired of staying in a new place each night, and whenever we laid down for precious sleep, we couldn’t shake the visions of those bed bugs a few nights back. Yes, we were ready.

And yet.

There was a sadness. A longing. Grief. A bucket list item shifted from future-tense to present and now, very soon, to the past. Not a hope but a memory.

There’s so much I wanted the Camino to accomplish. So much I wanted to accomplish. Scratch that. There’s so much I *have* accomplished. This past month has changed me in ways both obvious and subtle. Yet again, there’s so much left undone. Changes to make. Weight to lose. Friends to discover. A whole lifetime to sift through.

Then that quote popped into my head. The one I never liked.

The real Camino begins when you return home.

See, whenever I heard the quote (which is quite common in Camino circles), I pictured someone afraid to

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**Sunday Morning
Worship Service**

10 a.m.

