

THE SPIRE



Your Church Magazine

January / February 2025



NURTURE FAITH

by Dr. Doug Hood

Co-Pastor

LETTING GO OF ANGER

“Let go of anger and leave rage behind! Don’t get upset—it will only lead to evil.”

Psalm 37:8 (Common English Bible)

“No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched,” writes George Jean Nathan.¹ We need to reach no further than personal experience to accept the truth of those words. Anger destabilizes and diminishes our capacity to make sound judgments. Chances are strong that many of the worst choices you’ve ever made occurred in moments of anger. Family disagreements result in family estrangements. Differences in political ideology result in poorly spoken words that magnify simple differences into vitriol, even cruelty toward another. Bad behavior flows from hearts that we once never imagined had such capacity. Anger becomes a palatable emotion that gathers strength unto itself as a tropical storm organizes into the destructive force of a hurricane. The teacher of the Psalms is correct—anger that isn’t released in a healthy manner leads to evil.

Here in Psalm 37, the people of God are angry. The source of the anger is people experiencing success though they do not honor God, do not follow the way of the Lord. It is a spiritual predicament very present today. When keeping the faith becomes difficult and honoring God requires a level of discipline and restraint and personal sacrifice, others ignore God and advance, even prosper in all their endeavors. Fairness seems absent. The result is a stumbling into frustration and destructive anger. We are bewildered by the incongruence of the equation of life: the faithful struggle, and the faithless thrive. Mark Twain’s words are instructive, “Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”² What is unfortunate, argues Travis Bradberry, is that this knowledge is rarely enough to help people keep their anger in check.³

The teacher in this Psalm is asking God’s people to place their frustration and anger into God’s hands. After all, God’s hands have been shown again and again to be really good hands. These are the hands that separated the sea for Israel to pass through when they were pursued by the armies of Egypt. These are the hands that fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness. These are the hands that continue to direct the people in the way of faith and obedience. Our hands are insufficient, certainly not sufficient for such a range of volatile emotions. Such provocation results in a mood that is unpleasant, uncertain, and destructive.

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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.

The teacher knows that. So, the teacher urges that we do not allow anger to overtake us but to wait for what the Lord will finally do. Here is a lesson that Israel will learn again and again.

Psalm 37 invites the people of God to another way. It is finally the way of trust in God. Then, we are persuaded to hold to this other way—to clench this other way rather than to clench anger. Certainly, there will be moments when we will seek to take back into our own hands the anger stirred by injustice and hatred in this broken world. These will be moments when we fool ourselves into believing we would be better stewards of what is just and right than God. God’s hands are even large enough for such foolishness. And they are patient hands. Waiting for us to discover again that such anger in our hands becomes an irritant to our own sense of well-being. It is then that the great teacher asks us once again to hand the anger back to God. Once we are clear that this is where it belongs, we become less worrisome and more expectant of the wonder that God will reveal. ●

¹ Mark Goulston and Philip Goldberg, *Get Out of Your Own Way: Practical Lessons for Conquering Procrastination, Fear, Envy, Neediness, Guilt, and More*. (A TarcherPerigee Book: New York, New York, 1996) 25.

^{2,3} Travis Bradberry, *Emotional Intelligence Habits: Change Your Habits, Change Your Life*. (TalentSmartEQ: San Diego, 2023) 157.

2025 ANNUAL DINNER

We are just a few days away from the 2025 Annual Dinner featuring our 2025 Distinguished Preacher, Dr. Jonathan Walton. Join us on Friday, January 10th at Benvenuto Restaurant (1730 N. Federal Highway, Boynton Beach).

Our evening includes a social hour, a sit-down dinner, a thought-provoking speaker, and live entertainment coordinated by Don Cannarozzi. The cost to attend this much-anticipated event is \$45 per person. Both the church and Benvenuto Restaurant will be underwriting this evening. We provide confidential scholarships for parishioners who may not otherwise be able to participate. We would be grateful if you could help us offset them.

There is still space available. Sign up at the Welcome Center in the Lobby, on our website, or by calling the church office.

You do not need to be a member of the church to attend this event. ●

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Annual Congregational Meeting is on Sunday, February 23rd, immediately following the 11 a.m. worship service.

ALL ARE WELCOME AT THE LORD’S TABLE

For 2025, Communion will be celebrated on Sunday, January 5th; Sunday, February 2nd; Sunday, March 2nd; Sunday, April 6th; Thursday, April 17th; Sunday May 4th; Sunday, June 1st; Sunday, July 6th; Sunday, August 3rd; Sunday, September 7th; Sunday, October 5th; Sunday, November 2nd; and Sunday, December 7th.



by Grace Cameron Hood
 Director of Children and Family Ministry

FIRST FAMILIES MINISTRIES

As we start 2025, let's take a moment to be thankful for all the wonderful events of last year! ●



Our Nursery has been blessed with a number of Teen Volunteers who are caring for our youngest ones.



Primary Sunday School, led by Sandy McGilvray and Marianne Darby, had a blast studying the life of Jesus!



We also welcomed Allison Potter to the Bible Bunch Team.



Throughout the year, the God Squad (5th grade on up) helped serve the church in many ways.



Music continued to be an important part of the lives of all the children



Easter and the Annual Easter Egg Hunt were highlights of the year.



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In June, Vacation Bible School took the children to where Jesus was born and grew up with the theme Hometown Nazareth, Where Jesus was a Kid.



In July, our Middle School and High School Youth attended Montreat Events!



Our First Families went bowling in September, and had a fun afternoon of minigolf at PopStroke in November.



The year ended with our third annual "First Christmas", the Children's Christmas Pageant.

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OUR 2025 AND 2026 DISTINGUISHED PREACHERS

On Sunday, January 12th, we welcome to our pulpit Rev. Dr. Jonathan Walton, an accomplished author, ethicist, religious scholar, and President of Princeton Theological Seminary. Born in Maryland, Walton attended Wofford College on a football scholarship and transferred to Morehouse College for his sophomore year, graduating with a degree in political science. He received his MDiv and PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. He has taught at several universities, including Princeton University, the University of California, and Harvard. Before becoming President of Princeton Theological Seminary, he was the Dean of Wake Forest University School of Divinity.



Then, on January 11, 2026, we welcome the return of Rev. Dr. Thomas Tewell. He graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and served as a pastor for forty years, including at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in NYC during 9/11. Dr. Tewell has received numerous awards for his social justice ministry, particularly for his work with the homeless in NYC. He led his congregation to know the homeless individuals who slept on their steps personally. Dr. Tewell is the founder of Macedonian Ministry and enjoys serving as a pastor to other pastors, a guest preacher, a consultant to churches, and spending time with his family. ●



DEACON'S CHRISTMAS TREE

Under the capable direction of Deacons Connie Timmons and Ann Shuman, the first *Decorate the Deacon's Tree Party*, held on November 17th, was a roaring success! Immediately following the 11 a.m. service, many of the congregation stayed to enjoy hot chocolate and sweet treats, and joined in making original ornaments to hang on the tree in the church lobby. As noted by Connie following the event, "smiling faces, intergenerational fellowship, snacks, and Christmas music made for a very special Sunday". During the weeks following this festive gathering, the Deacons accepted donations to purchase \$25 gift certificates to Walmart and Target, to be distributed to children throughout Delray Beach by the Achievement Centers for Children & Families, Adopt-a-Family of the Palm Beaches, Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA), Boys and Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, and the Milagro Center.

DEACON SUNDAY

On January 26th, at both services, the Deacons will be welcoming in the New Year, giving Dr. Hood and Dr. Rapier a much-deserved break as they take over all aspects of the services. The Deacons will greet, usher, gather the collection, provide the readings and announcements, and share thoughts on "REIMAGINING SERVICE." If you have ever wondered what the role of the Deacon is or how you, as a member of the church, can "serve" others, this service will help to provide clarity regarding this critical question of faith. This is a wonderful opportunity to see your Deacons in action and interact with them in a more spiritual way.

GIFT FROM THE HEART

A new event this year is the **GIFT FROM THE HEART** Deacons' Scholarship Fundraiser. On Sunday, February 9th, during both services, the Deacons seek to fill the lobby with love and *Gifts from the Heart* in the form of red heart-shaped Valentine balloons. Each donation toward the purchase of a balloon will go directly to the Deacons' Scholarship Fund. Imagine the lobby filled to the brim with bright red hearts, each representing a *Gift from the Heart* contributing to the ever-increasing college costs of our graduating high school seniors. What better way to share the love this congregation has for its youth? Donations toward balloons can be made using forms provided in the Sunday bulletin. Share whatever you can, and let's spread the red and fill the lobby with love. ●



AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE PRAYER TEAM

As members of First Delray I'm sure you all pray. The bible teaches us that God answers prayer and wants to bless his children—he is waiting, all we have to do is go to him in prayer and thanksgiving. The sick are healed, the lost are comforted, the hungry are fed, and needs are met. All requests are known by God before we speak our prayers and yet he welcomes our concerns for others in Jesus Christ.

So, why not pray together as the team we are meant to be?

Joining the Prayer Team takes little time, and daily prayer is done at home following the guidelines of a prayer list that is sent out on Monday afternoons.

How powerful it would be for all of our members to be praying for the same requests, showing God how much we care for the needs of others. Knowing that you are praying with other church members for the same requests is not only a great comfort, it is a very powerful way to pray and shows God how much we believe in him and his loving Son Jesus Christ.

“In that day, you won't ask me anything. I assure you that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Up to now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive so that your joy will be complete.” John 16:23, 24 (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. ●

WHAT IS PER CAPITA?

Did you know the church pays “Per Capita” for every member on our rolls? Per Capita is the assessment that every congregation pays for each church member, which is recorded on their membership rolls. It is assessed by our denomination (Presbyterian Church, USA), enabling Presbyterians to mutually and equitably share the ecclesiastical and administrative cost of sustaining our witness to Christ—as a sign of the covenant that binds us together. These expenses are \$40 per person for 2025.

Even though the Per Capita expense is included in our operating budget, we need your help to ease the financial burden this places on the church budget.

- If you have 2025 giving envelopes, you will find a blue envelope in front of your giving envelopes.
- If you don't have giving envelopes, please consider making an additional gift to help the church with this expense.

Paying your Per Capita does make a difference when our congregation's total assessment for 2025 is just over \$32,000. ●

by Mary Martinez

WELCOME TO “DON CANNAROZZI PRESENTS”!

Many of us at First Presbyterian—and beyond—feel we can never get enough of the extraordinary musical talent of our Director of Music, Don Cannarozzi. Whether he is playing the piano or organ, a Broadway tune or Bach, we are simply mesmerized. This year you will have an opportunity to hear Don not only in worship and at the First Delray Concert Series, but also in occasional concerts, alone and sometimes with musical friends. “Don Cannarozzi Presents” will debut with a 4 p.m. recital on Sunday, March 2nd.

As usual, we will be guided through a musical journey that will leave us not only enthralled with the music but also more knowledgeable! The program’s centerpiece will be Beethoven’s *Cello Sonata No. 2*, featuring Aaron Merrit as the cello soloist. Don and Aaron performed Beethoven’s *Cello Sonata No. 1* last year. Don will also play Chopin’s *Scherzo No. 3* in C Sharp Minor. Don first heard this piece when he started studying piano seriously in high school, and he thought it was the most beautiful thing he had ever heard. It is technically challenging, but Don doesn’t want to put off playing this piece any longer. Other works currently planned include Beethoven’s *32 Variations in C Minor*. (Don tells us “not to worry”—each variation is about 15 seconds!)

As you may or may not be aware, our organ has needed significant work for several years, and there is a chance that the restoration will be done by this concert. If so, Don will play Franz Liszt’s “wonderfully bombastic” organ piece, *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H*. Liszt took Bach’s name and came up with a four-note motif that forms Bach’s family name in German, as Don will no doubt explain further during the concert. For more fascinating musical facts that Don says he is “not making up,” you need to attend the concert!

We recently celebrated Don’s 30th anniversary at First Delray, where he found his home after completing a Master of Music in Organ Performance and deciding that church music was his true calling. The concert is free; a free-will will be taken. ●

WHAT’S THAT BLUE STICKER ON EVERYONE’S CAR ON SUNDAY MORNINGS?

A benefit of being a church member is the blue church parking sticker. Mounted on the inside of your car’s front or back window, this sticker signals that your car belongs on the church lot for non-Sunday events. Since the east parking lot is leased to a valet company, the parking sticker is a visual clue that you are a member and entitled to park in the church lot.

The parking lot on the west side of Gleason Street is leased to the City of Delray Beach for their use other than Sunday mornings. Our blue parking sticker is not a substitute for paying for metered parking in that lot, and you will receive a ticket from the city.

Everyone attending worship can park in the parking lot on Sunday mornings; a parking sticker is not required. If you are a church member and need a new parking sticker, see Nancy Fine ●

by Glenn Barton

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 in May 2021. From the first day, it has filled a special purpose—greeting members and visitors at the Lobby doors. Serving on the Welcome Team provides the unique opportunity to be the FIRST person to greet a member or visitor when they arrive; *the greeter’s smile might be just what was needed for that individual.*

We greeted 911 people over four services in October, and 1,215 people over five services in November. Attendance continues to grow, as does the programming and ministries.

Anne Gaudrée has been a member of First Pres. for over 25 years, and she is one of the original greeters for the Welcome Team. Anne loves being a greeter. She says it is truly an honor to serve and see new and familiar faces each week, celebrate their joys, and show compassion in their times of need. She says each time she serves she experiences “another joy and another connection.”

Schedules are offered one to two months in advance. Greeters usually serve once every four to six weeks, and we are always looking for new people to join the team. This is a wonderful and enjoyable way to serve with a small commitment.

Please contact Carolyn Kettle (recruiting/scheduling for the Welcome Team) to join this ministry—to welcome people warmly and sincerely into this place of worship. Reach out to Carolyn (561-504-9550 or carolynskettle@gmail.com) for more information or to join the team! ●

by Dick Falk

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENEROSITY TEAM

LAISSEZ LES BONS TEMPS ROULER*

*(*Let the good times roll)*

We are grateful to everyone who enthusiastically supported First Delray last year and helped the church achieve a banner year. Let’s keep the momentum going in 2025. The membership is growing. The children’s ministry needs more classroom space. The concert series regularly sells out. And, the outreach to the less advantaged in our community continues to be impactful. There is a wonderful story to tell here. We urge you to maintain your generous giving. ●



SUSTAINING MINISTRY EXCELLENCE

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



Building Disciples, Transforming Lives
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DELRAY BEACH

GIFTS TO OUR CHURCH

Memorial Garden Fund from Joyce Sterrett, in memory of her parents, John and Jane Coltman.

Pennies from Heaven from Sam and Naomi Abramovitz, in memory of Deborah Salmore.

Remembrance Fund from William Cook, in honor of Sara Catherine Cook; and with sympathy from Creon and Kathleen Smith. ●



ETERNAL LIVES

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

– Jackie Williams –
March 23, 2024

– Ruth Landis –
November 3, 2024

– Emme Cortelyou –
December 11, 2024



SESSION REPORT

During October and November, the Session received twelve new members and approved two baptisms. The Session called the Annual Congregational Meeting for Sunday, February 23rd, following the 11 a.m. worship service. ●



NEW MEMBERS

Dana Bathurst

Bruce Bodie

Laurel Bodie

Howard Chapman

Cabell Curran

Amanda Ennis

Anne-Randolph Harrell

Steve Hogue

Sue Hogue

Jane McGeehan

Andy Rhyne

Carolyn Rhyne

Gina Rodeberg

Stephen Rodeberg

WELCOME



There were so many powerful and fun moments in the last year. As we look to the new year, there are more to come!! Here are a couple of important dates to put on your 2025 calendar:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Annual Easter Egg Extravaganza | April 13 |
| Vacation Bible School | June 9 – 13 |
| Family Golf Fun | November 2 |
| Children’s Christmas Pageant | December 14 |

There will be additions to this list. Pastor Greg and I will be planning some joint events with the youth, children, and young adults in the church. Those dates to come! ●

THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES PRESENTS

A SCHOOL OF PRAYER WITH DR. C. CLIFTON BLACK

On Sunday, April 6th, Dr. C. Clifton Black, the retired Otto A. Piper Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, will preach at both morning worship services. Then, at 4 p.m., he will present *A School of Prayer* in the Conference Room on the second floor of the Center for Christian Studies. Teacher, preacher, and author of twenty books and more than 200 essays, articles, and reviews, his insight about prayer will be something you won’t want to miss. ●



“HOLY CURIOSITY”

A sermon preached on November 24, 2024, by Dr. Rapier

Proverbs 20:8-12

John 18:33-19:1

“Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?’ Pilate responded, ‘I’m not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus replied, ‘My kingdom doesn’t originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn’t have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn’t from here.’ ‘So you are a king?’ Pilate said. Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice.’ ‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked. After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, ‘I find no grounds for any charge against him. You have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?’ They shouted, ‘Not this man! Give us Barabbas!’ (Barabbas was an outlaw.)

Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped.”

John 18:33-19:1 (Common English Bible)

There was a man by the name of Frankie Gaye who returned home from the Vietnam war profoundly changed, his spirit visibly marked by the trauma and despair he had witnessed while serving his country. To the people around him, something about his haunted demeanor didn’t add up. Frankie had served his country honorably, yet he returned home feeling broken, lost, and aimless. Frankie Gaye’s older brother, Marvin, picked up on this shift and sensed profoundly that something just wasn’t right. Marvin began looking at his own community and he felt that same disconnect. It was as if the promises of the world and maybe even the goodness of God’s people that he was taught about in the church didn’t align with what he was witnessing on his own block.

At this specific cultural moment in the early 1970s, Marvin Gaye found himself at the prickly intersection of hippie-era idealism and real-world problems. He found himself staring down the unsettling reality of a society grappling with drug addiction, poverty, and widespread unrest. NPR describes

this as a moment in American history where idealism crashed into reality and as a result, Marvin Gaye began to question his role as an artist and wonder aloud how he could address the pain that was so evident everywhere he looked. His response became one of the most famous and influential American songs ever written: *What’s*

Going On. Marvin Gaye penned the lyrics and recorded the track as both a social statement and a personal lament. The song offers no easy answers. It gives no solutions to the pain of the moment. Instead, it holds a magnifying glass to an unsettling reality—to human brokenness, societal differences, and corporate and individual sin—and by



singing those words, Marvin Gaye invites us as his listeners *to wonder*, to enter into a curious space and ask one another, *What is truly going on?*

Marvin Gaye's question echoes the spirit of today's scripture—a curious and even unsettled stance toward a complex and often disappointing world. It's a posture mirrored by a very questionable biblical character and one of my absolute favorites in Scripture—Pontius Pilate. Pilate is remembered as one of the Bible's great villains, the man who handed Jesus over to be crucified, who could have stopped Jesus from dying—but didn't. I love Pilate. And I love Pilate because I relate to him so, so much. Pilate has some serious gifts coupled with some serious deficits, and his story is less evil than it is tragic.

Similar to Marvin Gaye, Pontius Pilate has the spiritual gift of curiosity. He asks good questions, he's driven by

wonder, and he allows his curiosity to lead him. He's received this prisoner, this troublemaker named Jesus of Nazareth, and he's heard the rumors: this man claims to be king of the Jews. Such a claim is blasphemy. This should be an open and shut case. After all, Pilate's not Jewish—what does he care? His only job is to keep the peace, and he'd be well within his rights to put a rubber stamp on the execution and move on. Even more, Pilate is accountable to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court who are mostly Sadducees, and Jesus doesn't get along with the Sadducees. The path of least resistance makes political sense. It should be an easy act of governance. Jesus is a false messiah, an enemy of the state, and therefore, he should be punished. Yet Pilate stays curious. He doesn't adopt the stance of some glazed-eyed bureaucrat. There's nothing rote about this scene. Instead, Pilate looks at Jesus with curiosity, and he asks Jesus: *What's going on?*

You say you're the king of the Jews. What's going on?... Something's not adding up here. You're not like the other prisoners. I deal with them day in and day out—something about you is different. What's going on?... The angry mob is telling me one thing, but my experience with you so far has been the complete opposite. What's going on?... You say you came to testify to the truth, but tell me, Jesus, what is truth?

Do you hear the curiosity behind Pilate's words? The earnest desire to do a good job and get to the heart of the matter? This is Pontius Pilate's *Marvin Gaye* moment, early 1970s, where the idealism of a just trial crashes against the reality of an innocent man laid bare before him. Pilate has asked all the right questions, and he's uncovered something that none of Jesus' accusers can see, something the crowds can't see either, something even Jesus' own disciples struggle to grasp. Pilate, by





approaching his work with curiosity, discovers that Jesus is someone special. And maybe even that his kingship is real.

So Pilate returns to the Jewish leaders and says *I find no grounds to charge him*. Translation: *He's not in the wrong. You are*. I wonder if Pilate left a little pause here as if to say, *you, tell me, what's going on?*

Marvin Gaye's question remains as relevant as ever. It was relevant back in the days of Pontius Pilate and Jesus Christ, and it's relevant for us today. When we examine our communities, our nation, and our world, we can't help but see the chasm—the gulf between the way things are and the way things ought to be, between the world Jesus promises and the reality we live in. And for those of us brave enough to look in the mirror, the chasm is the same. Look close enough, and each one of us will

discover something profoundly not right, if only we're curious enough—and brave enough—to ask what's going on.

Anyone who's spent some time around children knows a thing or two about curiosity. Especially that one word question—**why?** Such as: Mom, **why** don't dogs talk? *Well they do in their own way—they communicate, they bark. Why? Well, that's the way they're built. Their vocal chords are different than ours. Why? Because their bodies are different. Why? Well, because God made them that way. Why? Well, that's just the way it is.*

Too often we go through life accepting the way it is. We're too tired, and we've got too much on our plate—no room for wonder. Yet Jesus tells his disciples to *make yourselves like children when you come to me*. Elsewhere in the gospels, as the disciples are trying

to keep a group of children away from Jesus, Jesus says: *let the children come to me*. Jesus invites curiosity and wonder, and he rarely settles for *the way it is*.

What gives you pause about *the way it is*? If you were Marvin Gaye today, what would your song be about? Think about your life right now. Where do you feel a nudge, that sense of disconnect? Could it be that this curiosity is actually God inviting you to see with fresh eyes? God's eyes, even?

Our story picks up where Pilate returns to the court and says *I find no charge against this man*. He then asks another one of those good questions: *I'm allowed to release one of these prisoners...How about Jesus?* The leaders say no. I imagine Pilate giving them the side eye right about here. He's asked the right questions, and he's not blind to what's unfolding. He sees the

situation with clarity. He's drawn the religious leaders into this clarity, directing their gaze to Jesus and challenging them to confront the man before them, yet, even now, they choose the wrong thing. And Pilate—rather than standing up for what is right—gives in. He steps back, washes his hands of it, and allows Jesus to be whipped, and eventually executed.

This is Pilate's tragedy. Pilate possesses the spiritual gift of curiosity, yet he will always be remembered for his spiritual deficit of conviction. This is Pilate's legacy: a legacy of curiosity without conviction. Pilate was so, so close to getting it right. His curiosity served him well, but in the end, when it mattered most, he lacked the conviction to act.

In his book *The Signal and the Noise*, professional poker player and statistician Nate Silver describes the importance of holding loosely to our priors—to acknowledge where we stand prior to new information, yet when new data arises, to adapt. Like a poker

player reading the flop, or a political forecaster weighing a new poll, we should approach each new moment with openness as an opportunity to learn and adjust. And statistically—Silver argues—curiosity pays off. The poker players at the final table are the ones who are able to adjust in real time, who remain curious throughout the hand, seeking new information and learning as much as possible from the cards and their opponents so that they can adapt with wonder and insight. Curiosity literally pays off. Yet under pressure, Pontius Pilate folds. He lacks the conviction to truly go all in, push in his chips, and act on the insight he's received.

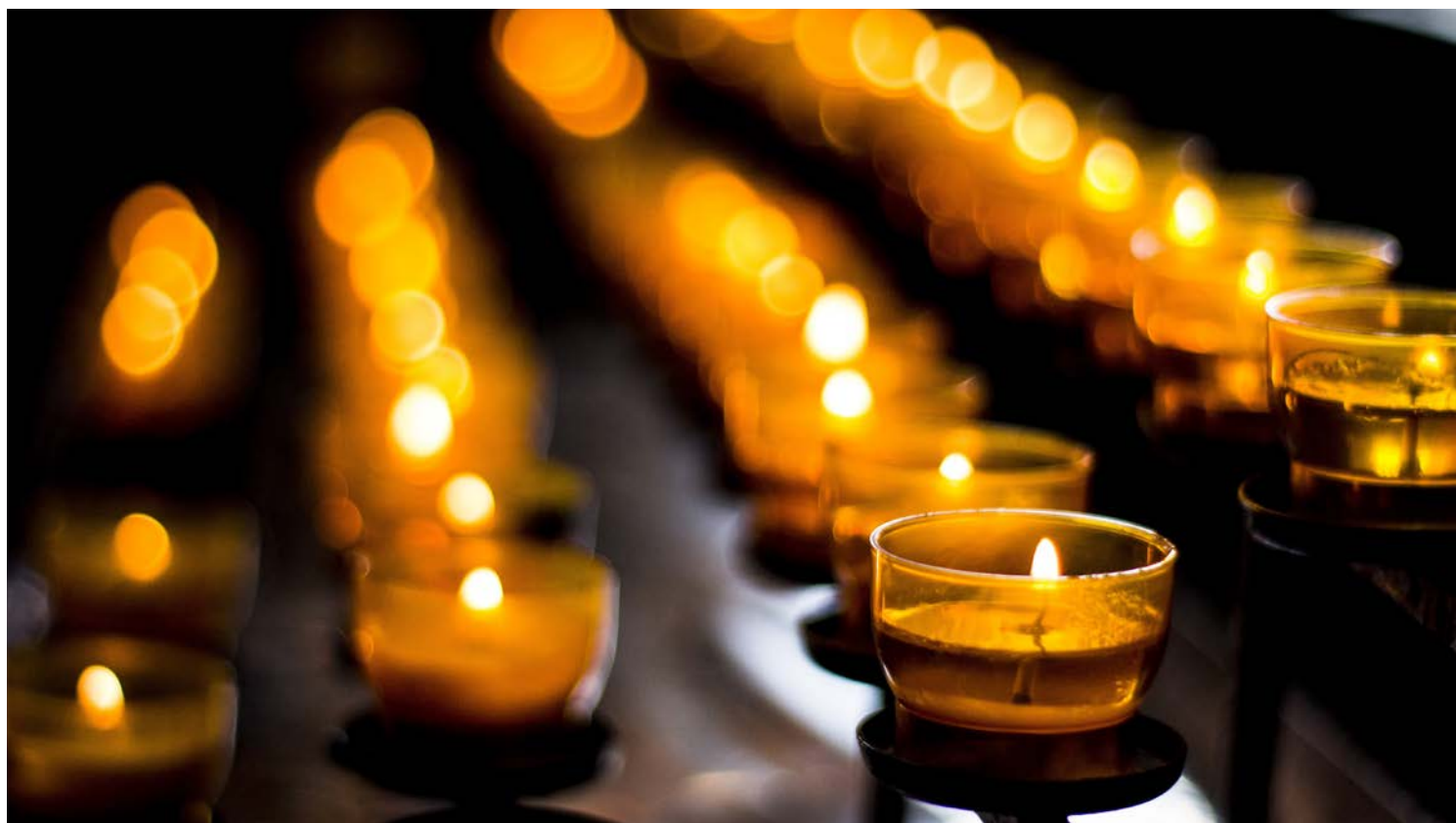
What good is curiosity lacking conviction? Pilate shows us that it's not good for much. Pilate folds. And often, we fold too. God has gifted us each with the eyes to see and the ears to hear and a community to help us discern, yet often we neglect what we know to be true. We choose safety over justice. Affability over what's right. Pilate's tragedy often mirrors our own.

God doesn't want us to go down that route. Instead, God wants us to step toward what's broken, to mend, to heal, and to stand for truth, justice, righteousness, wholeness, wellness, equity, grace, and love. God wants us to stand boldly for what's right and to do the hard and messy and curious work of reconciliation. Because we have been blessed with a great gift: the gift of curiosity, imagination, and wonder. The gift of asking *What's going on?* The gift of seeing beyond the way things are and toward the way things could be—and should be. It's a glorious and holy gift, and it's completely meaningless unless we couple it with conviction.

Pilate didn't. Will you?

Will you ask good questions? Will you seek truth? And will you have the conviction to follow through?

Let us wonder these things. ●



FIRST IMPACT

In March 2019, with Session approval, the Caring Kitchen, a program of Christians Reaching Out to Society (CROS) Ministries, began using Fellowship Hall on Thursdays to provide meals to the under-resourced in our community. Our Facilities Maintenance Manager, Aaron Strippel, was our onsite staff member who oversaw our facility usage. Through his interactions with the Caring Kitchen staff, volunteers, and clients being served, Aaron saw how this outreach program, supported by the church's Mission Outreach budget, impacts people in our local community.

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the Caring Kitchen had to suspend its programs. However, the need for meals for those in our community who are food insecure was made even more significant as a by-product of the pandemic.

Aaron, who had kept in touch with the Caring Kitchen's staff, discovered in mid-2020 that they were restarting the meal program in a different format. They would prepare the meals at Cason Methodist Church, box them up, and then take them to various outdoor locations in Delray Beach to distribute them safely. Recognizing the need in our community, Aaron volunteered on Thursdays to help prepare the meals and take them for distribution.

In 2023, the Caring Kitchen transitioned to inside locations for meal distribution and asked the church if it could provide space on Wednesdays. The answer was yes, and Aaron was back as the onsite staff contact for the Caring Kitchen, where you will find him on Wednesdays sitting at the table with local police officers and homeless advocates.

Aaron, having become immersed in the program and recognizing the difference a nutritious meal can make in someone's life, asked if he could continue helping on Thursdays to prep, transport, and distribute meals at the Elks Club in Delray Beach. With the support of the church staff, Aaron continues his volunteer work.

Aaron says, "There is great satisfaction in helping people in our community." He comments that volunteering on Wednesdays and Thursdays "brings exposure to the church and the good work it does in our community." He has met numerous people and is "proud to represent First Delray."

The impact of your financial support to our church allows us to open our doors on Wednesdays and provide a safe space for our neighbors to receive a healthy meal each week. Your generosity enables us to have an employee on staff with a kind and caring heart who is proud to call First Delray his second home. Thank you for your generosity on behalf of Aaron Strippel and the people helped through the Caring Kitchen. ●



FILL A BAG, FEED A FAMILY

Food insecurity is impacting our neighbors. Through Christians Reaching Out to Society (CROS) Ministries, donating canned or boxed, unopened, unexpired, and non-perishable food items during February can help people in our community.

CROS Ministries's food pantries have seen a 71% increase in the number of people they serve over the last four years. Since 1978, they have been a constant presence in the community providing food to our most vulnerable neighbors.

You can make a difference by donating food during February for one of our two annual food drives. Suggested items include:

- Peanut Butter
- Canned Meat—Tuna, Chicken, Ham
- Boxed Pasta
- Bagged or Boxed Rice
- Dry Beans
- Canned Fruits and Vegetables
- Canned Soup
- Canned Sauces
- Other non-perishable items



You may leave your donation in the Lobby on Sunday mornings or outside the church doors by the covered circle during the workweek. If you prefer not to shop, consider making a monetary donation in the form of a check payable to “CROS MINISTRIES” and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office.

Your generosity can impact families in our community. Thanks for caring and sharing. ●



by Maria Graham

MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Monday Morning Women's Bible Study will devote the first two Mondays in January 2025 to the final two sermons in Rev. Susan Sparks' "Spread the Joy" series.

On January 20th, we begin the six-session video study "How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-Women, Anti-science, Pro-violence, Pro-slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture" by Dan Kimball. Dan says that there are many verses in the Bible that seem difficult to comprehend, but we can gain understanding when we examine the verses in context. On staff at the Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, CA and Western Seminary, Dan's passion is to see Christians follow and represent Jesus in the world with love, intelligence, and creativity. This study should lead to some intriguing discussions!



Our Bible Study meets at 10 a.m. on Monday mornings via Zoom. We would love to have you join us as we learn, laugh, and pray together. Please contact Maria Graham (mmg2352@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation. ●

by Dolores McNaboe

WOMEN'S LUNCH BY THE SEA

The Women's Lunch by the Sea is open to all church women. This is a great way to meet other women and connect on a more personal level. Hosted by Dolores McNaboe and Kathy Wilsher, they meet on the second Tuesday of every month at noon at Boheme Bistro on Atlantic Avenue, adjacent to the church. Tables are reserved, and you are responsible for paying for your meal. RSVP to Kathy Wilsher (561-252-0709). ●

DR. MICHAEL B. BROWN RETURNS

We are excited to announce that Dr. Michael B. Brown will return to our pulpit on Sunday, February 16th. Make sure to put this date on your calendar. ●



HOLLY HOUSE STEP-ABOVE RUMMAGE SALE

Drop Off Donations

Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday

January 14th through February 1st, 9:30 a.m. to noon

Church Member Shopping

Wednesday, February 5th, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

All Shoppers are Welcome

February 6th, 7th, and 8th, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

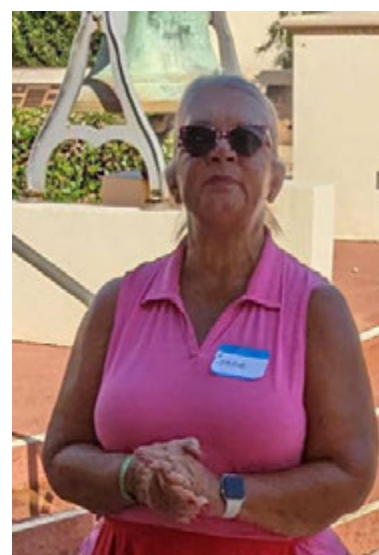
Looking for something to do in January? Look no further than your closet, your cupboards, secret hiding places, and all the spots where you have sequestered your donations for the annual Step-Above Rummage Sale. We will begin accepting donations on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. until noon beginning Tuesday, January 14th and ending Saturday, February 1st. Clothing, shoes, accessories, and books can be dropped off at Fellowship Hall. Holly House is the drop off site for jewelry, housewares, linen, electronics, toys, tools, and sports equipment.

If you would like to help set up for the Rummage Sale, please come to Fellowship Hall or Holly House on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays beginning Tuesday, January 14th, from 9:30 a.m. until noon. To volunteer during the sale dates, please sign up on the church website.

The sale will be open to church attendees on Wednesday, February 5th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. All shoppers are welcome during public sale dates: Thursday, February 6th, through Saturday, February 8th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. A hot dog lunch will be available for purchase sponsored by the Men's Fellowship.

Check your closets, cubbies, lockers, nooks and crannies for those items you wish to donate. We are looking forward to seeing you at our annual Step-Above Rummage Sale.

Our annual sale is a mission of our church and the proceeds go to the work of our church. ●







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



First Delray Concert Series

Music by the Sea

MUSIC BY THE SEA: CONCERTS THAT TOUCH OUR HEARTS CONTINUE!

Did you make the last event of our inaugural season of the First Delray Concert Series, “This Land is Your Land”? It seems that many of you did, since we were once again sold out! (*ALERT: Reserve your tickets now for 2025! See below for details.*)

The November 10th concert was a timely opportunity to celebrate those things on which we can all agree: honoring our veterans, looking back with pride at the sacrifices of the many who built our country, and remembering how fortunate we are to have the kinds of freedoms we do—however imperfect they may be.

If you missed it, it was both an uplifting and moving program “hosted” once again by Shane Tanner, who shared bits of history that made the afternoon even more memorable. The concert opened with a brilliant brass rendition of Aaron Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man.” Everyone joined in the spirit when our multi-talented Associate Music Director and performing member of the Concert Team, Brigit Djupedal Fioravante—with her guitar and hootenanny spirit—had us singing along with the trio that included Kyaunnee Richardson and Christopher Waite. It was a proud moment when the exceptional instrumental quintet, Krescendo Brass, joined by a percussionist, played the songs for each of our armed services, and the veterans in attendance rose to be applauded.

There were solemn moments as well, when our

soloists performed songs that carry the weight of our sometimes painful history as a country: “The House I Live In,” sung by Christopher Waite; “Take Care of this House,” sung by Kathleen Shelton; “Make Them Hear You,” sung by Neil Nelson; and “Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor,” sung by the Ensemble. We were reminded of the sadness and longing that the separation of war can bring as it was brought home by the beautifully rendered versions of “Aura Lee,” sung by Fernando Gonzalez, and “Bring Him Home,” shared with us once again by Alejandro Viera. Perhaps less familiar to us was “A Letter from Sullivan Ballou,” in which Kyaunnee Richardson spoke and sang the words from an actual letter written by a Civil War soldier to his wife as he faced what he feared might be—and indeed was—a fatal battle for him.

Yet, along our musical journey, our hearts were lifted up by the hopeful message of “Bridge Over Troubled Water” and the comforting strains of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “God Bless America.”

As always, our Director of Music, Don Cannarozzi, made outstanding contributions to the program, playing the piano with great sensitivity for each of our soloists and delighting us with his renditions of “The Entertainer” and a medley of patriotic songs.

For me, personally, I think what made me leave with my heart full was knowing that I was among so many who share my faith in God’s kingdom, above any earthly worries.

GET READY FOR 2025!

Four more fantastic concerts are upcoming!

You should already have received a letter and brochure outlining the four concerts for 2025 and asking, once again, for your valued support in this musical mission. If not, visit the Welcome Center in the lobby after worship to get all the information. Here's the outstanding concert schedule we have planned:

- **January 26: "An Afternoon with Gershwin"** (An orchestral version of "Rhapsody in Blue," plus songs from "Porgy & Bess," as well as other well-known Gershwin tunes)
- **March 23: "Give My Regards to Broadway"** (A new set of Broadway favorites in a reprise of our very popular concert of show tunes from this past year)
- **May 4: "The Latin Divos Return"** (Need we say more? Get your Latin groove on!)
- **October 26: "The American Spirit"** (A concert for remembering and celebrating our unique American spirit)

The "Concerts" section of our church website (firstdelray.com/concerts) makes it easy to reserve tickets online (firstdelray.com/concerts/reserve-concert-tickets)

as well as sign up to be a sponsor (firstdelray.com/concerts/concert-sponsor). If you use the online option, you can always mail a check, put it in the offering plate on Sunday, or give it directly to our Business Administrator, Nancy Fine. (*Credit cards cannot currently be used to pay online.*) If you'd like to purchase and pay for your tickets in person with cash or credit card, you can do so by seeing Nancy Fine after a worship service or by dropping by the church office—or, you can wait until the concert date and pick up your reserved tickets at the Will-Call table, paying then with cash or a credit card.

Before I close, on behalf of our Concert Team, we'd like to thank all of those who have already signed up as sponsors for 2025. Sponsorship support is vital to the continued mission of this musical ministry. If you have not already become a sponsor, we ask you to consider doing so, at whatever level feels right to you. This musical mission is making a difference: New members have found us through the concerts, old friendships have been renewed, spirits lifted, and contributions made to sustaining our outstanding musical program at First Delray. Surely, God has been at work, and for this we are filled with gratitude, and inspired, with your help, to make this concert season another one to remember. ●

WELCOME STEPHEN MINISTRY TO FIRST DELRAY

We are excited to announce that we will be launching Stephen Ministry at First Delray beginning this Fall. Stephen Ministry is a program which equips laypeople to provide one-to-one Christian care to people in our congregation and the community who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. It is a confidential ministry. The identity of those receiving care and everything they discuss with a Stephen Minister remains private. Between now and this Fall, we will be recruiting and training people within our congregation to be Stephen Ministers, the individuals who will provide care to those in need. A Stephen Minister walks beside someone who is hurting, a caring Christian friend who listens, cares, prays, supports and encourages. We ask that those who may have an interest in becoming a Stephen Minister contact one of the certified Stephen Leaders within the church, or Doug Hood or Greg Rapiere. The Stephen Leaders are Laura DeBrita, Will Brown, and Skip Randolph. You may wish to speak to any one of them directly if you have an interest. You can contact Nancy Fine at the church office (561-276-6338) for their contact information.

We are looking forward to this program which will offer valuable assistance to those in need in our congregation and within the community. Do not hesitate to contact any of the above mentioned persons if you have any questions. We will continue to update you on our progress.





by **Nathanael Hood**



BONHOEFFER

A Movie Review by Nathanael Hood, MA, New York University;
MDiv, Princeton Theological Seminary

The average layperson has probably never heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor and theologian who was murdered by the Nazis during the waning days of World War Two. But the man had an incalculable effect on the warp and weft of twentieth century Christianity. A tireless writer and pulpit firebrand, Bonhoeffer was one of the founding members of the Confessing Church, a movement that opposed the Third Reich's attempts to centralize German Christianity into the pro-Nazi German Evangelical Church. Many of their members, Bonhoeffer included, were arrested and executed in concentration camps for speaking out against Hitler. But even in the face of Nazi militarism, Bonhoeffer was a devout pacifist, insisting in his writings that evil could only be conquered by Christian love. Not that you'd know that from the poster of Todd Komarnicki's new biopic *Bonhoeffer: Pastor. Spy. Assassin.* which features the titular pastor carrying a handgun. This handgun was one of many controversies arising from the movie, even leading to one of Bonhoeffer's

descendants denouncing the ad in a major German newspaper as a gross distortion of history. But *Bonhoeffer* does a lot of distorting, much of it ultimately benign, and putting a pistol in Bonhoeffer's hand would be one of the least significant changes Komarnicki and his associates made to impress the importance of the great man's life on its audience.

Many of the film's most unapologetic inventions revolve around Bonhoeffer's time studying abroad at Union Theological Seminary in the United States in the 1930s. Though generally bored with the state of American academia—at one point he boasts he could teach the very classes he attends better than his teachers—Bonhoeffer nonetheless had a powerful spiritual awakening in the States thanks to his exposure to the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he taught Sunday School. Perhaps worried that Bonhoeffer's transformation at the hands of the African-American church would be underappreciated or—even worse—disbelieved by audiences,

Komarnicki adds a preposterous scene where Bonhoeffer crashes a Harlem nightclub and wows a black audience with an impromptu jazz rendition of a German piano ballad. Another benign sequence sees one of Bonhoeffer's black friends introducing him to the realities of American racism during a trip to Washington D.C. where they're assaulted by a racist white hotel owner. I use that word "benign" again deliberately because, despite their fancifulness, these sequences speak to a genuine renewal of religious feeling in Bonhoeffer that would ultimately lead him to reject the soulless and empty religiosity of German Christianity in favor of a more radical lived experience of God.

Less benign are the changes the film makes to Bonhoeffer's life during the Third Reich in the 1940s where he served as a secret resistance agent while working for the Abwehr, Germany's military intelligence office. While the film more or less accurately depicts his work delivering messages to

sympathetic contacts in England and helping Jewish prisoners escape into Switzerland, the film implies Bonhoeffer had a major role in the 20 July plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer's apparent part in the plot was a major selling point for the film whose marketing hammers home the idea that he rejected his pacifist beliefs for the sake of the greater good. But in actuality Bonhoeffer does no actual assassinating—in fact the most he's involved with the plot is a scene where he's depicted as merely being in the same room with other resistance fighters who actually plan and eventually execute the attempt. But this was enough, the film insists, for his eventual execution at hands of the Nazis. Perhaps, but this doesn't change the film's strange underselling of his involvement. Indeed, with the exception of one prisoner exchange sequence the film almost entirely overlooks Bonhoeffer's double agent work within the Abwehr.

If I go on about the film's changes to Bonhoeffer's life, it's because the film itself provides little else to comment on. It's competently filmed and respectably acted, though the less said of the abrupt cameos by Winston Churchill and one of the least convincing Hitler impersonators I've seen, the better. It is, by most standards, a perfectly average historical biopic. Why, then, did it make me cry three different times? Perhaps because for all its distortions of history it competently tells the story of an extraordinary man without downplaying the centrality of his faith. The film goes into greater theological detail about Bonhoeffer's beliefs than I expected. Consider one scene where Bonhoeffer delivers a sermon in Berlin's national cathedral before an audience of Nazis—he centers the sermon on Jesus' dismissal of hypocritical Pharisees and teachers of the law in Matthew 23, reminding listeners that nobody hated "religion" more than Jesus of Nazareth.

Or consider a most likely invented scene near the end where Bonhoeffer celebrates the Lord's Supper with his fellow concentration camp prisoners and a sympathetic Nazi guard. The film treats the act of Communion with due reverence and import instead of as a passing religious observance. Perhaps I'm merely jaded from years of superficial depictions of Christianity that such religious sincerity caught me off guard. And that is the operative word to describe *Bonhoeffer*—sincere. It sincerely believes in Bonhoeffer's life and faith as extraordinary. It sincerely sees in his resistance to fascism a model applicable even today for resisting institutionalized evil. It sincerely believes that in merely telling the story of this man an audience might be encouraged to speak out against tyranny in the midst of rising antisemitic violence and political divisiveness. And maybe, just maybe, they're right. ●



If you were to create your own year-end list with a religious bent, what would you include? Favorite scriptures? Prayers you've found yourself repeating over the past twelve months? How about a list of all the places God has showed up for you this year? In this way, list-making can be a wonderful exercise, a way of recalibrating for the new year as you remember the ways God has been active in your life and as you consider the specific texture and tenor of your faith. ●

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WALKS WITH THOUGHTS

If you live in the Delray Beach/Boca Raton area of South Florida, chances are good that you have driven past some section of the 217-acre Yamato Scrub Natural Area in northeastern Boca Raton. In an earlier column, I introduced you to Pondhawk Trail that winds through the southern portion of the natural area. Today, my husband and I are walking the Cicada Trail, a paved trail in the northern section of Yamato Scrub, which is accessed from a small parking lot off Clint Moore Road. The trail out and back is approximately 1.1 miles, which suits me well at six weeks post knee replacement surgery. For those of you who want a longer walk, this paved path joins the 2.8-mile unpaved Skyblue Lupine Hiking Trail.

Leaving the parking lot, my husband and I walk over a bridge. Given the dry November and early December we have experienced, native grasses and

other vegetation all but hide the small trickle of water below. The path enters an area of small green cacti and waist-high saw palmettos, their razor-sharp edges spreading across the landscape. The occasional slash pine gives height to this landscape. At close to 100 feet tall, these straight native pines tower over the sprinkling of their crooked 60-foot sand pine neighbors. The desolate beauty of this scrub area is punctuated by the occasional purple fruit of the American beautyberry.

We cross a wide dirt access road, where I spy the broad brownish-grey back of a gopher tortoise ambling across the pavement ahead. Now a State-designated Threatened species, these tortoises trace their family trees back to land tortoises that walked southeastern North America more than 60 million years ago. I hear a low-pitched hum, the sound of a commercial plane flying low

overhead. As my eyes follow its path, I see the outlines of skyscrapers to the east and am struck by the juxtaposition of old and new. Here I stand in a habitat preserved as it was hundreds of years ago while above me modern day Florida flourishes.

Old and new. I pause to reflect that God has viewed this land from its beginning and sees it beyond its end. *“For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night”* (Psalm 90:4; a prayer of Moses). The omnipresence of God: the concept that God can be everywhere in every time, simultaneously, always leaves me somewhat confused, yet comforted. Maybe you find it so, too.

My husband and I resume our walk and shortly find ourselves confronted by a change in the landscape. Here is the coolness of a hardwood forest hung with Spanish moss. A few steps farther and we are unexpectedly in a sea of deep green ferns and grasses bathed in glorious sunshine. *“You make everything beautiful in your time”*, the contemporary hymn *In His Time* reminds us. *In his time*. Not our time, but God’s time. *“God’s time, whatever that means!”* I want to shout at the tune playing in my head. But I am afraid it is one of those “not my will, but thy will be done” moments.

That said, I do want to encourage you to travel the Cicada Trail. To delight in the scenery of an earlier time in Florida while (maybe) pondering the mystery of the omnipresence of our God. As you walk, may you not just contemplate God’s omnipresence, but also feel assured that God’s grace surrounds you now and forever. ●





by Rev. Greg Rapier

Co-Pastor

IN THE WORLD ... CONNECTING CHURCH AND CULTURE

I love this liminal space we find ourselves in—the end of one year, the beginning of another. With each new year comes new opportunities to learn, reflect, and grow. And with each passing year comes a chance to look back, evaluate, and remember. This is why I love making lists. I make lists for just about everything. Top ten movies I’ve watched (*Dune: Part II* ranks pretty highly); top ten books I’ve read (Kaveh Akbar’s *Martyr!* gets my top spot for 2024), a playlist of my favorite music (The Avett Brothers’ *We Are Loved* would make a wonderful selection for worship sometime), etc. My lists are robust and eclectic, and I take them way, way too seriously.

About six months ago, I started a longer-term list-making project, one that I don’t think will ever be truly finished. Walt Disney once echoed this sentiment about one of his beloved projects, saying, “Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world.” Likewise, I expect this list will grow with me over time—to morph and shift as I do the same. It is a living, breathing document. Yet each time I return to it, the list does what all good lists do—it helps me reflect, take inventory, and consider my relationship with the items listed on the page.

The list? My hundred favorite passages in scripture. A personal lectionary of sorts. For fun, here are my top ten, as of today (tomorrow, these ten may change):

10. Genesis 32:22-32—this description of Jacob wrestling with God is a favorite metaphor of mine—a visceral manifestation of what many of us go through on a spiritual level. Our scriptures invite (and even celebrate) our struggles with the divine.

9. Exodus 32:11-14—I love this text for what it reveals about God. Here, Moses and God are engaged in a healthy debate, and as a result, God changes God’s mind. I love the ramifications—that we worship a collaborative God, and that our conversations and prayers matter.

8. John 11:35—Jesus Wept. What a gift it is to have a God who cries for us and whose heart breaks alongside our own. Even more, what a gift it is to have a God who does something about it—resurrecting Lazarus in the ensuing verses.

7. Genesis 9:7-17—after the horrific events of Noah’s Ark, God places a rainbow in the sky. With this covenant, God promises care and protection for not just humanity, but all of creation.

6. John 14:1-7—I read this text

more inclusively than most. When Jesus says “nobody will get to heaven except through me,” I don’t picture a bouncer who checks IDs and church attendance as much as someone with a wide-open door joyfully receiving anyone who would like to enter.

5. 1 Corinthians 13—the love passage. This was read at my wedding, and, I hope, will be read at my funeral as well.

4. Acts 2:42-47—a perfect, crisp, and distilled picture of Christian community. This is what it means to be the church.

3. Psalm 139:1-18—this is, in my opinion, the most tender psalm. It’s an intimate, almost grandmotherly depiction of a God who knew us before we were born and will follow us to the ends of the earth.

2. Galatians 3:28-29—a passage about inclusivity and equality under God. It’s one of those foundational texts that makes abundantly clear God’s expansive love for God’s creation.

1. 1 John 8b—God is love. This half-verse means everything to me. It’s the bedrock of my faith. Everything else—in faith, in scripture, and in life—gets filtered through these three words.

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Sunday Morning Worship Services

9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

