

# THE SPIRE



*Your Church Magazine*

May / June 2025



# NURTURE FAITH

**by Dr. Doug Hood**

Co-Pastor

## NOT WAITING FOR HAPPINESS

*“I’m not saying this because I need anything, for I have learned how to be content in any circumstance. I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor. I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength.”*

Philippians 4:11-13 (Common English Bible)

**H**ave you noticed how many people have delayed their happiness? They seem to believe that if they can achieve a little more success, acquire a little more wealth, or marry the right person then they will possess happiness. Happiness, they believe, is what follows effort, time, and, perhaps, a little luck. It is as though happiness is somewhere out in front of everyone who is industrious enough to pursue it. Happiness is something to grasp, they believe, and their minds remain fixed upon it until they have taken ownership of it. Striving day upon day toward the possession of happiness, what they miss is that the secret of happiness is already present in the lives of those who long for it.

**P**aul’s letter to the Philippian Church provides the secret of happiness—as God’s people, we are to live in humility, looking out for others more than for ourselves. That is a great reversal of the commonly accepted formula for happiness. Essentially, Paul teaches that if we are always chasing after happiness, happiness always remains beyond our grasp. On the other hand, if we occupy ourselves with looking out for others, adding value to other people, and promoting their welfare, happiness quietly joins God’s people and takes up residence in them. Paul is urging God’s people to break free of the tiny little world of themselves and join the great enterprise of God’s work in the world.

**H**ere, in the fourth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Philippian Church, Paul further develops the secret to happiness. Having shared the secret of happiness, disclosed in the activity of Jesus who accepted humility to become like us, for the purposes of restoring us to God, Paul points to a mysterious strength that converges in our service to one another. That strength comes not from any person—or from the community of God’s people—but from the outside. It is God’s strength. There is far more going

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## CHURCH STAFF

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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.**

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on when God's people join with one another for the promotion of the welfare of others. The same Christ who became human to serve now empowers and enables God's people in their service to one another.

Shortly following the death of his wife, J. R. Carmichael entered a nursing home. Yet, if you inquired about him, you learned that he is never in his room. It seems that each morning Mr. Carmichael would shower, dress, eat breakfast, and then move from one residential room to another. In each room, Mr. Carmichael spoke with the resident about their family, read the Bible to them, prayed with them, and told them that he loved them. Then it was off to the next room to do the same thing. Mr. Carmichael missed his wife every day but he never waited for happiness. Happiness found him, as he loved others deeply. ●

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**by Glenn Barton, Moderator**

## DEACONS' CORNER

The new class of Deacons met together for the first time on March 30th. New Deacons were officially installed at both services that day, and those who have been previously installed participated in the ceremonial laying of hands. The team is now 23 strong, and firmly committed to an active year of congregational care and fellowship.

Deacon flocks have been shuffled and re-distributed to the current class, and we are all excited to continue to build relationships with all church members rooted in Christ's love for all of us.

We have many great activities and events planned for the congregation to enjoy this year, including fundraisers for important ministries. We are also pleased to host Fellowship by the Sea on the fourth Sunday of each month. Come and enjoy a nice treat and spend some time catching up with your Deacon.

Sunday, May 4th at 11 a.m. we celebrate our second Church Wide Festival Fun Day. Last year we targeted families and brought a delicious food truck, bounce house, games, cotton candy, and other treats. This year we will have all that and more, so there is something for everyone! ●

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## WHY WEAR RED FOR PENTECOST?

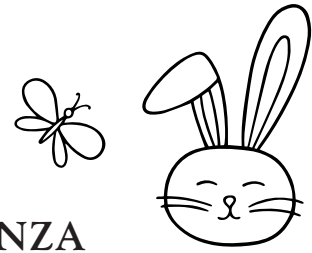
For Christians, Pentecost is a holiday on which we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early followers of Jesus. From historical and spiritual points of view, Pentecost is the day on which the church was started and, therefore, considered the church's birthday.

Five colors were used to differentiate the liturgical seasons: Purple, White, Black, Red, and Green. Red symbolizes the joy and power of the Holy Spirit, and is therefore used on Pentecost since the Spirit brings the church into existence and enlivens it.

Join us on Sunday, June 8th, as we celebrate the church's birthday. We encourage you to wear red that morning, whether worshipping in person or online. ●



**by Grace Cameron Hood**  
*Director of Children and Family Ministry*



## EASTER EGG EGGSTRAVAGANZA

The Our annual Easter Egg Eggstravaganza was a complete success. The families enjoyed pizza and then hunted for hundreds of eggs. Thank you to everyone who participated in this wonderful event! ●





## CELEBRATION DAY MARCH 9, 2025

### DID YOU MISS THIS SPECIAL OCCASION?

While most of us try to make Sunday morning worship services, there are times when personal excuses keep us home. Well, there is a small group that holds this church together and keeps it open for all of us to enjoy.

First Delray had a “Celebration Day” to honor Nancy Fine, Aaron Strippel, and Christine Davis where a special time at both the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services was used to thank them for their contribution to our church’s success. A special plaque will be placed in the Lobby in their honor. If you missed the special recognition ceremony, you can still participate by viewing the pictures below from the event. God bless, Nancy, Aaron, and Christine. ●





by Maryann Rana

## WE ARE PRAYING FOR YOU

Prayer is the language of the unquenchable spirit. As I pray, I am grateful to be able to bless others in need, and I wish to share that feeling of deep peace and security that I know prayer will bring. I feel the words of the apostle Paul to pray without ceasing. Have you ever heard any words more comforting? *I will pray for you, or we will pray for you.*

In faith we go to Christ with the one we are praying for, and he is waiting for us to come to him with those in need.

“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.”

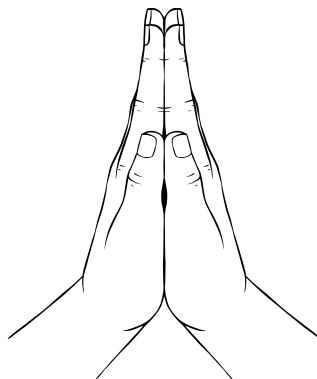
James 5:15, 16 (CEB)

*I give thanks, release any attachment to outcomes, and trust that divine order is at work in all things, always.*

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. ●



If you would like to help with VBS, you may do so by praying for God to act in a big way through our small actions! You may also contribute with monetary gifts and also by clicking on the QR code, which will take you to our Amazon wish list. ●



## ETERNAL LIVES

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

– Elfriede Gruendig –  
July 31, 2022

– Florence Heckrodt –  
September 16, 2022

– Shirley Westby –  
June 30, 2024

– Cornella Wilder –  
April 23, 2025



## SESSION REPORT

During February and March, the Session approved a baptism and received three new members. They elected Jen Buce as Clerk of Session and Carl Fedde as Treasurer for a one-year term. The Session approved designating the 2024 One Great Hour of Sharing to fund eye surgery surgical facilities for the Caridad Center in Boynton Beach. In addition, the Session approved changing our prayer partners when we celebrate communion to “local Presbytery, local ecumenical, national,” starting in July. ●



NEW MEMBER

Patti Weaver

# WELCOME

**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)

**T**he 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*.

**T**eam Harper (Ashley, John, and Mason) are regular greeters at church. They joined in 2022 after worshiping with us on Christmas Eve in 2021. They love getting to know the congregation better, and Mason especially enjoys greeting everyone as they come in for Sunday service. Ashley speaks not only for the Harpers, but for the entire Welcome Team with this thought... *“I think it’s important to share with others that feeling that we felt the first time we attended First Pres, and hopefully others will feel at home as well.”*

**S**chedules 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.

**P**lease 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!

**D**id you know....

**2025** marks the centennial anniversary of our church! Yes, First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach was organized in 1925 and met in various places with different supply pastors. In 1926, Rev. James H. McCormick was the first installed minister, and sixty-six people joined and became the cornerstone of our congregation. ●

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**by Ann Gill**

## **REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN IN CRISIS**

**A**id to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Inc. (AVDA) is a Delray Beach nonprofit organization that our church has supported for many years. This spring, we want to bless the children they serve who arrive at their emergency shelter or who stay in their transitional housing program with new pajamas. New pajamas signal an opportunity for children in crisis to start fresh in a safe place, in clean new pajamas, ready for a good night’s rest and hope for a better day.

**AVDA’s** residential programs serve approximately 300 men, women, and children annually. Their 64-bed emergency shelter is an inviting and welcoming environment for survivors and their pets. A 32-bed transitional housing program provides survivors with a longer-term residence for up to two years.

**F**rom a survivor’s story, “AVDA mends hearts and nourishes souls, providing protection and safety against the elements, ensuring the well-being of individuals. Thank you, ADVA, for hearing my cry and revitalizing my soul, making life better as I step towards success.”

**D**uring May, the Mission Outreach Team is collecting pajamas for boys and girls in sizes Infant to children size 16. Please bring your donation to the collection box in the Lobby on Sunday mornings throughout the month. Thank you for helping to bring hope to these children who have experienced domestic violence. ●

*The following is from A Month of Prayer and Gratitude: Five-Minute Meditations for a Deeper Experience of Gratitude.*

## SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

*“I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor.”*

Philippians 4:12 (Common English Bible)

Author A.J. Jacobs describes himself as “petty and annoyed.” He’s forgetful of the three hundred things that go right every day and focuses on the three things that go wrong. This self-avowed curmudgeon decided he wanted to become a better person—to learn to be more content and grateful. But how? He decides to take a “gratitude journey.”

This gratitude journey began by thanking everyone involved in producing his morning cup of coffee. Everyone! You see, the act of noticing is the first act of gratitude.

So, Jacobs intentionally thanks the Barista who rings him up at his local shop, finds the local guy who roasts the beans

... and thanks him. He calls an artist in Seattle who designed the lid for his cup. Thank you! He tracks down truck drivers and warehouse workers, the people who pick the beans in Columbia, and the custom workers who guard the borders. Thank you! Thank you!

Of course, the workers are



bewildered. They've never been thanked. Jacobs even drives out of New York City to the Catskill Mountains and thanks those who guard the watershed—99.9 percent of our coffee is water, after all. Every thank you on his journey turns into a story. New relationships are formed. A deeper appreciation is developed for each person's role in his coffee supply chain.

**B**y the time Jacobs finishes his "gratitude tour," one thousand people have been thanked. Crazy to consider: a thousand people involved in creating his morning cup of coffee! In retrospect he finds himself embarrassed for complaining about paying \$2.57

a cup. Practicing gratitude helps Jacobs become grateful.

**Y**ears before A.J. Jacobs ever thought about gratitude, the apostle Paul was eloquently suggesting that he had discovered a "secret"—a secret possessing the power to transform a life.

**"I** have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation," he wrote (Philippians 4:12 NIV). Scholars feel that Paul was borrowing language from the Greek mystery religions where a person needed to go through a series of challenges to "discover a secret." The implication is that contentment is a learned behavior. Discovering

contentment is a challenge.

**S**ome of us might react defensively to Paul's claim. "Wait a minute," we refute. "Paul doesn't know what's going on in my life. I'm suffering. He's an ivory-tower theologian who is detached from reality."

**N**ot so. Paul writes these words from a Roman jail—a rather hideous place—waiting for possible execution on trumped-up charges. Prisons were literally holes in the ground where one's family had to provide food to stay alive. No "three hots and a cot."

**S**o, from this hellish place,





Paul writes—to ordinary, working-class folk with no health care or 401(k)s—that he has learned an important secret: contentment. An audacious claim, isn't it? Paul challenges us to consider the truth. Contentment is a state of being independent from our possessions and circumstances.

**D**eep down, most of us know this to be true. We have met people living in bitter poverty . . . yet they are full of joy. We've known people who have suffered tremendously yet still choose to forgive and love. We know people who give the shirt off their back, because their needs are secondary to others. History is sprinkled with people who transcend their difficult circumstances. They

have discovered the secret of contentment.

**I** remember Doris, who attended Logan Memorial Presbyterian Church. She was in her late seventies when we met. Her life hadn't been particularly easy. After losing her husband to cancer, Doris went back to work as a psychiatric nurse—while raising four teenage girls on her own. Despite her very real challenges, Doris always chose gratitude.

**F**or years, Doris sent me a \$30 gift every month to help our work with inner city youth in Camden, New Jersey. One day, I opened her envelope and a \$15,000 check fell out. “Dear Reverend Main,” she wrote. “I was going to purchase a new

car but decided to send you the money to build your new high school.” I was humbled and elated. Two weeks later, I received another letter from Doris. “Dear Reverend Main,” she began. “Great news! I went to the doctor last week. He said I can't drive anymore. I didn't need my new car, anyway!” What a great attitude. When Doris was diagnosed with cancer, she would always plan a lunch with a friend or a trip to the movies. After her treatment. “Why should going to the doctor be drudgery,” she shared with me. “Now I can look forward to those visits!” When her eldest daughter had the sensitive conversation about what she wanted to have happen to her body after she died, Doris said with a smile and a wink, “I always wanted to go to medical school!”

**B**ut I'll never forget her memorial service when the pastor, Reverend Don Painter, gave an inspiring eulogy in her honor. “Doris was the most ‘pro-choice’ person I ever met,” he exhorted. Then he clarified. “Not in the political sense. But she always chose joy and gratitude.” I believe Doris had discovered

the secret of contentment. It's possible.

**H**enri Nouwen, the late Catholic theologian, said, "Gratitude never comes without effort. The more we choose gratitude in the ordinary places of our day, the easier it becomes."<sup>1</sup>

**W**hy is the apostle Paul so passionate about people learning the secret of contentment? I really believe that content people are liberated to serve more freely. Content people are other-centered—interested in and aware of other people's stories and lives. Show me a truly content person, and I'll show you a joyful person. The saints of Christianity reveal to us that joy is never found with

the accumulation of stuff or the consolidation of power. The saints of the Christian faith show us that joy and peace can be found in the most difficult of human circumstances. Contentment is an inner state of being.

**I** know I have work to do in this area of my life. My trivial complaints are an indictment of my supposed spiritual maturity. At times I have the audacity to complain when my candied yams are too sweet and my venti triple-shot latte with cinnamon sprinkles is too hot. Oh my! And churches can be even worse. I hear complaints about the wrong font size in the bulletin, or the color of the pastor's tie, or the fact that bagels have been served

for the past three weeks in coffee hour. Come on, saints! It's time we do some self-reflection and start discovering *what it can mean to be content in every and any situation.*

**P.S.** After the service at Delray Beach Presbyterian, one of the parishioners approached me. Sadly, I can't remember her name. But she made a great point! She challenged me to clarify the difference between complacency and contentment. She's right. Contentment is not complacency. Contentment doesn't mean to do nothing. Contentment, I believe, creates a kind of freedom and mental space that allows us to make a difference in the world. The apostle Paul was never complacent. He wrote letters to churches, preached sermons, and mentored leaders—even amid persecution and personal adversity. Paul's contentment provided a unique internal condition that allowed him to continue acting in ways that furthered God's work and witness in the world. ●



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<sup>1</sup> Nouwen, Henry J.M. *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*. New York: Doubleday, 2021, 85-86.

**by Nancy Fine**

Business Administrator

## SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Every year on the first Sunday of May, we transition to our summer worship service schedule of one service at 10 a.m. We continue with this schedule through the end of October.

There is joy to be found when we make this transition. Overheard in the Lobby are remarks like, “How have you been?”; “I haven’t seen you in ages!”; “How is the family?” During six months of the year, people attend either the 9 a.m. or 11 a.m. service. Then, in May, our church family reunites and reconnects at 10 a.m. This reconnection strengthens us as a faith community.

Remember that if you are at a second residence or traveling during the summer and fall, you can still worship with us through our live streaming available on our website. The service can be watched live or at any time convenient for you. ●

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**by Grace Cameron Hood**

Director of Children and Family Ministry

## FIRST FAMILIES MINISTRIES

What makes you stand in awe of just how big God is? Is it when you gaze up into the massive limbs of a giant oak tree or when a summer breeze stirs a field of wildflowers into waves of color? Maybe it’s when you pause to take in a spectacular winter sunrise. All those things remind us of the greatness of God, the God whom we were made to magnify. You are invited to register for *Magnified!*™ VBS for the week of June 9 to 13. Hours are 9:00 am to Noon. Ages are 3 (potty trained) to completed 5th grade. Help spread the word to your family, friends, and neighbors. You may register online or with the forms available in the Lobby and the Christian Education Building! ●

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Calling all children to join us for *Magnified™ Vacation Bible School*. We will encourage kids to look closely at the details of God’s amazing world and magnify, or proclaim, the greatness of God. God made us, cares about us, loves us, forgives us, and is faithful to keep all his promises to us. We can praise God together! We were made to magnify God! Don’t miss out! June 9-13, 9 a.m. to noon. Ages 3 (potty-trained) through completed 5th grade. Register online now ([firstdelray.com/upcoming-events](http://firstdelray.com/upcoming-events)). ●



# HOLLY HOUSE

## WE'RE BACK!

After a busy month of preparation for the annual Step-Above Rummage Sale, the rummage sale itself, and the breakdown from the rummage sale, the members of Holly House are back to meeting twice a week doing what we love best. We returned to our facility with shiny refinished floors and set about rearranging and reorganizing our materials and spaces. Let our work begin! We have been fortunate to receive donations that have sparked creativity and presented opportunities to expand our ministry.

We are excited to begin our new season of ministry and fellowship. Stop by Holly House for a visit on Tuesday or Thursday mornings between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.. You are always welcome.

Check out our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/CleverCrafter](http://www.facebook.com/CleverCrafter). ●





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



# First Delray Concert Series

*Music by the Sea*

## TRANSFORMATIONS: THOUGHTS ON OUR FIRST DELRAY CONCERT SERIES

As I prepared to write another (hopefully) engaging article about our First Delray Concert Series, I found myself thinking about “transformations”—all kinds of transformations that spring from the experience of music.

First, I thought of the way in which music can transform our mood, our thoughts, and even our physical health. Sitting at my post at the ticket table outside the Sanctuary and watching people emerge from our concerts, I can witness this change firsthand. Regardless of how they might go in, everyone who comes out is smiling and relaxed; they seem to be joined in some invisible way as a more united community. Science tells us that music stimulates parts of the brain that relate to our emotions, autonomic physical reactions, and thinking—especially our memories. One of the things it does is stimulate the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that triggers sensations of pleasure and well-being. While I know the science behind it, nonetheless, the effect of music on our concert goers seems quite miraculous to me!

Another kind of transformation that our March concert, *Give My Regards to Broadway*, brought home to me is the ability of our much-loved First Delray musicians to transform themselves into completely different people—people who are able to make us relate to their particular lives, challenges, loves, and emotions based on the circumstances and message of a piece of music. This is a transformation that affirms each of us as we stumble through the highs and lows of our own life stories.

For example, we saw Kyaunnee Richardson make us believe she was the humble Bess from the opera *Porgy and Bess* at our January concert, *An Afternoon with Gershwin*. At our March concert, *Give My Regards to Broadway*, as she sang the tour de force aria, “Glitter and Be Gay,” Kyaunnee transformed herself into Cunegonde from Bernstein’s *Candide*—a woman fraught with conflicting emotions about being trapped in the position of being a courtesan but quite enjoying the luxurious lifestyle it afforded her. This is what good performers do, of course, but this sort of transformation is still one that amazes me.

Perhaps the nature of the *Broadway* program was particularly likely to bring my attention to this kind of transformation, given that each song was part of a larger story, and each play is filled with characters made to come alive through the music. In a single concert, Birgit Djupedal Fioravante brought us almost to tears singing “Send in the Clowns” as she expressed the disillusionment of someone who has seen a bit too much of life. Then, just a few minutes later, she had us laughing at her antics as the indefatigable Lucy to Don Cannarozzi’s musically talented but oblivious Schroeder.

Anyone who was there had to believe that Alejandro Viera singing “Maria” was the totally lovestruck boy from *West Side Story*, and that Shane Tanner was the rakish gambler from *Guys and Dolls*—though we know and have known them in many other roles. And we recognized

Ardean Landhuis as Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables* as a man who sees the world as black and white, and himself as the arbiter of God’s justice, though he had played one of the racetrack threesome before Intermission. Because they could transform so completely into their characters, we felt the truth in the sentiments about love and devotion that were beautifully conveyed by Neil Nelson singing “If Ever I Would Leave You” from *Camelot*; Kathleen Shelton’s hurt but hopeful “Maybe Next Time” from *Cabaret*; and the bond expressed by Mario Arévalo and Laura León as the characters from *Wicked* looking back over their relationship in “For Good.”

Yet another kind of transformation seems to be occurring as a result of the concert series: First Delray is becoming known as a place not only of inspiring music, but also as a church with its eyes on serving its community and a heart that reaches out to everyone in it. We owe great gratitude to our volunteers for helping to create this atmosphere of welcome and caring. Our website may express our beliefs about Christian love, but there is nothing like having the opportunity to demonstrate it. While our mission work touches many segments of our local community, the concert series taps into a whole

other side of South Florida—giving us one more channel for outreach and service.

Finally, we never know when some aspect of concert attendance may transform someone’s life—a brief conversation, a curiosity about what goes on here on Sunday mornings, or someone just seeking a greater sense of community can each transform this music ministry into blessings that go beyond the concert hall.

You, our faithful church members and friends, are making this happen. We hope you have secured tickets for the remainder of our season and are ready to attend (or did attend, depending on the publication date of this Spire) our May concert, “*The Latin Divos Return*” (May 4th), and have put your tickets for our fall concert, “*The American Spirit*” (October 26th), in a safe place!

If you do not have them yet, tickets can be reserved via the church website ([firstdelray.com/concerts/reserve-concert-tickets](http://firstdelray.com/concerts/reserve-concert-tickets)) and paid for with cash, check, or credit card on the day of the concert. They can also be purchased any Sunday morning at the Welcome Desk, until they sell out... so don’t wait! ●



Do you feel called to provide compassionate understanding and encouragement to others? Do you want to provide ministry and make a difference in someone’s life? Do you want to provide care to people who are hurting? If yes, becoming a Stephen Minister may be a good fit for you.

Our Stephen Leaders—Skip Randolph, Wil Brown, and Laura DeBrita—will begin training people to become Stephen Ministers in October. Several members of our congregation have already said “yes” to the call, including Evelyn Babbitt, Kathy Baldwin, Daisy Chin-Lor, and Penny Johnson. Won’t you consider joining them in this caring, compassionate, and understanding ministry?

Visit our Stephen Minister page on our website ([firstdelray.com/our-ministries/stephen-ministry](http://firstdelray.com/our-ministries/stephen-ministry)) for more information. ●

**by Maria Graham**

## MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

**Y**ou Were Made For This Moment is the title of the next Bible Study for the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study. Presented by Max Lucado, this 5-week video series delves into the story of Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai, who saved the Jewish people from a wicked plot to annihilate them. Without ever mentioning God by name, the book of Esther asks us to have hope and trust in God's providence even when we cannot see it working.

**T**his study began on April 21st and ends on May 19th. Please join us as we learn, laugh, and pray together. Newcomers are always welcome.

**C**ontact Maria Graham ([mmg2352@gmail.com](mailto:mmg2352@gmail.com)) for a Zoom invite or an update on what the topic of the next study will be. ●



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**by Dolores McNaboe**

## WOMEN'S LUNCH BY THE SEA

**A** Women's Event: Lunch by the Sea is held the second Tuesday of each month. Experience Christian fellowship and good food at Boheme Bistro on Atlantic Avenue. Order lunch, separate checks provided. Join us next on Tuesday, May 13th at noon. Hosts Dolores McNaboe and Kathy Wilsher. RSVP Kathy (561-252-0709). ●





**O**ur Capital Campaign, Renew & Rejoice, kicked off on Sunday, February 23rd with a reception in Fellowship Hall. Over 100 people were in attendance for the event, which highlighted our needs. Under the leadership of Campaign Chairs Henry Hagan and Bert Evans, almost fifty volunteers worked on our campaign. We thank them for their work.

**T**his endeavor to renew our church facilities has a goal of \$3 million and a challenge goal of \$4 million. Pledges to the campaign can be paid over three years by checks, cash, credit cards, securities such as stocks, bonds, or through qualified charitable distributions from an IRA, as well as non-cash gifts. As of April 9th, the date this article was written, almost \$2.75 million has been committed. *Remember that any pledges or gifts to the campaign are above and beyond your support to the operating budget.*

**S**everal repairs have already been completed, including purchasing a new golf cart and repairing the organ. Quotes have been received to complete other much-needed improvements, and work is being scheduled. Over the next several months, you will see the changes to our church facilities funded by your support.

**I**f you would like to join us in this exciting and essential effort to better ourselves and increase our ability to serve God and one another through the work of our church, you can visit our Capital Campaign page on our website, watch our campaign video, and make a pledge. Through you, the members of our faith family, and your commitment to our *Renew & Rejoice Capital Campaign*, we will continue to be a beacon of hope in our community for generations to come. ●

## WALKS WITH THOUGHTS

A new discovery—the Hypoluxo Scrub Area. A beautiful, quiet place to walk and talk with God. A sand ridge replete with South Florida history and a panoramic view of acres of pristine scrub and the white sugar sand of an ancient shoreline. Hard to imagine I had never heard of this gem until a few weeks ago.

Located just north of Boynton Beach on Hypoluxo Road immediately west of Federal Highway, this trail is easily passed by. But, because you now know where it's located, you too can pull into the small parking lot—just as we do today.

The largest observation tower I have seen yet in a south Florida park and a 14-foot statue commemorating the barefoot mailmen greet us. Traveling barefoot along the beach, these famous men delivered mail from Hypoluxo Island south to Miami. The approximately 100-mile round trip included a stop at the Orange Grove House of Refuge in Delray Beach (near where our church stands today) and usually lasted six days. Historians believe the Seminole name *Opoloccha* (meaning “water all around, no get out”) was first written mistakenly as *Hypoluxo* by an early settler.

While reading the history of Hypoluxo and the barefoot mailmen presented here at the trailhead, I notice a reference to the Minerva Chapel, one of the few original Hypoluxo buildings that still exist today. The first European settlers in this area invariably set about building places to worship—places to thank God as they gloried in his creation.

Giving God glory. The age-old words of the Gloria Patri spring to mind. I grew up singing “*Glory Be to the Father...*” every Sunday, just as the angels

sang “*Glory to God in the highest*” when Christ was born. Recently I researched several websites to help me understand what it means to give God glory. What I found surprised me. In addition to praise and honor, I found reference to living a life that reflects God’s character is also part of many theologians’ views of giving God glory. That latter view is much more difficult for me to practice than my prior understanding that glory equals praise and thanksgiving.

I continue thinking on my now-expanded definition of giving God glory as I start along the paved path ahead of me. All above me, a bright gold sun hangs in a clear blue sky. The occasional slash pines and saw palmettos wave silently in a gentle breeze. Sporadic prickly pear cacti sport brilliant yellow flowers amid swashes of pristine white sand. How easy to thank God as I revel in his creation. However, walking in Jesus’ footsteps—that’s a harder proposition.

A crackling in the dried leaves to the right of the trail catches my attention. A small brown lizard with black markings, unnoticeable if not for the slight patter of his feet among the rustling brown leaves, scurries into the saw palmettos. His movement is met with the raspy *cheep, cheep* scolding of a vivid blue and gray Florida scrub jay perched in a low pine.

A few steps farther along the paved path, a loud noise startles me. I stop and turn to the sound at my right—a gopher tortoise. The large, lumbering, endangered animal appears to ignore me as it plods through the powdery white sugar sand alongside me for several feet. Then, with quickening pace, shovel-like scaly forefeet hoist its weighty shell up onto the paved path in front of me. The

tortoise angles across the pavement and disappears in the shrubbery ahead to my left. The thought comes to mind that while this particular tortoise never knew the barefoot mailman, its grandfather probably did. I laugh, and again I say a prayer of thanksgiving for this place.

I wander the paths here in thoughtful contemplation for another 45 minutes. The scenery changes very little as I walk with my God and glory in his creation.

And so, as I leave this place, I praise God for the things he has created—for the barefoot mailmen of the past, for gopher tortoises and Florida scrub jays and prickly pear cacti, and for you and me. Then I pray for help in the days ahead as I continue to give God glory by attempting to live the example of Jesus Christ. Amen. ●





by Rev. Greg Rapier  
Co-Pastor

## IN THE WORLD ... CONNECTING CHURCH AND CULTURE

I didn't know spring had officially sprung until the spring breakers showed up outside the church. The delightfully unique weather patterns here in tropical Florida make it so that an entire season can pass, and you won't even notice. That was this past winter for me. Other than a few days when the temperature dreadfully dipped below 70 degrees, and the way our pews began to swell—much like I-95—the season came and went pretty much unnoticed.

Here in South Florida, that's a feature, not a bug. We love our tropical paradise—a *little slice of Heaven*, one of our distinguished guest preachers once called it. And yet, there's something to be said about the liturgical rhythm of the year as well.

E.B. White's children's novel *Charlotte's Web* is structured around four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. More than a framing device, this structure gives rhythm to the lives of Wilbur, Charlotte, and everyone else in the barn. Creatures are born in the spring, they thrive during the summer, and wilt during autumn. In the transition to winter, Charlotte dies.

The book teaches children—

and their parents—about life and death, and it does so gently and with bravery. It's Ecclesiastes chapter three for ten-year-olds: *There's a time to live and a time to die, a time to spin webs and a time to get out the old broom and clean up.* It reminds us of the way God ordered the world all the way back in Genesis—with structure, dependable rhythms, and rest. It reminds us of the liturgy of life and the inevitability of change, and yet how, even with change, some things remain eternal.

Like God.

Like hope.

The novel doesn't end in

winter, but instead carries forward into the following spring. By this point, Charlotte has been dead for some time. Her greatest friend, Wilbur, has mourned her, but he hasn't forgotten her spirit. In fact, he's kept it alive. And as the calendar turns, he watches her egg sac, which he'd tucked carefully into the corner of the barn, burst open and overflow with new life.

This is what happens in spring.

This is what happens each year. Some live, some die, but no matter what, we hold out hope. Because we know how the story ends. It ends with life. Abundant, beautiful life. ●



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## **Sunday Morning Worship Services**

**10 a.m.**

