

# THE SPIRE



*Your Church Magazine*

January / February 2026



**by Dr. Doug Hood**

Pastor

## NURTURE FAITH

### PRAYING WITHOUT EXPECTATION

*“While Peter was held in prison, the church offered earnest prayer to God for him.”*

Acts 12:5 (Common English Bible)

The great Apostle, Peter, is sleeping in prison, bound in chains. King Herod’s poll numbers are up. Previously, he had James, John’s brother, killed with a sword. This pleased the Jews, so Herod arrested Peter as well. Once a policy decision resonates with the voters, politicians tend to do more of the same. Peter is placed in a prison with sixteen soldiers assigned to guard him. Seems excessive for one man. Perhaps Herod, with all his power, still fears the compelling conviction of Peter’s faith. What is the young church to do? Bound in chains, sixteen guards on watch, and under the orders of King Herod, are no match for the small resources of the faithful. This is a gripping story from Acts. Well, they can pray. That is the one resource at their command. *“Many believers had gathered there and were praying.”* (Acts 12:12b)

What is absent from this great narrative is the substance of the prayers. Perhaps the believers prayed that Peter might be given strength—strength for the trial Peter would face the next day. Perhaps the prayers were for a quiet spirit as Peter faced the certainty of death. Or, perhaps, the prayers were that Peter might be given a boldness of faith as dark clouds gathered around him and the church. These seem to be reasonable prayers. When believers face insurmountable difficulties, as Peter faces, prayers must be reasonable. Prayers for Peter’s release are unreasonable to this community of believers. This we are certain of. The evidence is right in the story. For when Peter is, in fact, released from prison and arrives at the prayer meeting, a servant named Rhoda tells the prayer group that Peter is at the door. Their response is simply, “You’ve lost your mind!” (Acts 12:15.)

What emerges from this story is a rebuke to the notion that God’s power is limited. Prayers may be unwise, such as praying that our favorite team might win the game or that the numbers on a lottery ticket might fall in our favor. Yet, prayer is communion of our spirit with the spirit of God. Should we assume there is only so much God can do? In the pages of Genesis, God’s authority is established as one that simply speaks, and whatever is spoken comes into existence. That is not a God who is limited.

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## CHURCH STAFF

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## THE SPIRE MAGAZINE

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Printers Choice

**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.**

Nothing we may ask for is impossible with God. There is no need to give severe restrictions to our prayers. In our story from Acts, believers are praying for Peter but seem not to anticipate that their prayers will be effective. Here, Emerson is helpful, “Belief and love—a believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers, God exists.”<sup>1</sup>

What the reader learns from these “many believers” is that prayer, ultimately, is about so much more than experiencing communion with God—prayer that has power is prayer that is felt to have a real effect on God. There is expectation in prayers made to God. Throughout scripture is a cast of biblical characters who ‘wrestle’ with God strenuously. This isn’t the casual prayer sewn together from borrowed phrases here and there, but prayer that has nerve and soul—prayer that is an encounter of wills—until one will or the other gives way. Jeremiah 18 presents God as willing to change God’s mind if the people turn from disobedience to seeking God. Nor is powerful prayer an imposing of our will on God as though God may be coerced and exploited. Prayer that triumphs is prayer that actively wills God’s will and participates in bringing that will forth in our lives. That is expectant prayer. ●

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press: 1979) 56.

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## 2026 ANNUAL DINNER

We are just a few days away from the 2026 Annual Dinner featuring our 2026 Distinguished Preacher, Dr. Thomas K. Tewell. Join us on Friday, January 9th 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. ●

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## ALL ARE WELCOME AT THE LORD’S TABLE

For 2026, Communion will be celebrated on Sunday, January 4th; Sunday, February 1st; Sunday, March 1st; Thursday, April 2nd; Sunday, May 3rd; Sunday, June 7th; Sunday, July 5th; Sunday, August 2nd; Sunday, September 6th; Sunday, October 4th; Sunday, November 1st; and Sunday, December 6th. ●

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## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Annual Congregational Meeting is on Sunday, February 22nd, immediately following the 11 a.m. worship service. ●



**by Rachel Therrell**

*Family Ministry Associate*

## YOUTH GROUP

**O**ur youth had fun this holiday season.

**O**n November 16, we enjoyed a Friendsgiving meal together complete with tree decorating and a competitive game of Family Feud. A big thank you to the congregation for being our “survey of 100 people” Some fun facts: most of you put up your tree the week after thanksgiving?, enjoy eating stuffing with your Turkey, love watching the Macy’s Day parade Balloon characters, and are thankful for your health.

**A**fter participating in the annual Children’s Pageant, the youth got into the Christmas Spirit at our Holiday themed Lock In. On December 12th we spent the whole night at the church in our Christmas pajamas; painting pottery, playing games, finding the Baby Jesus in an Escape Room, and singing Christmas karaoke. We woke up early on December 13th and headed to the beach for a sunrise Bible study. Thank you to Jen Buce and Donald Jennings for staying with us all night.

**N**ext up is Rock the Universe on January 24th at Universal Studios in Orlando. Contact Rachel Therrell to sign up for this memorable experience.

**H**ere is our schedule for January/February

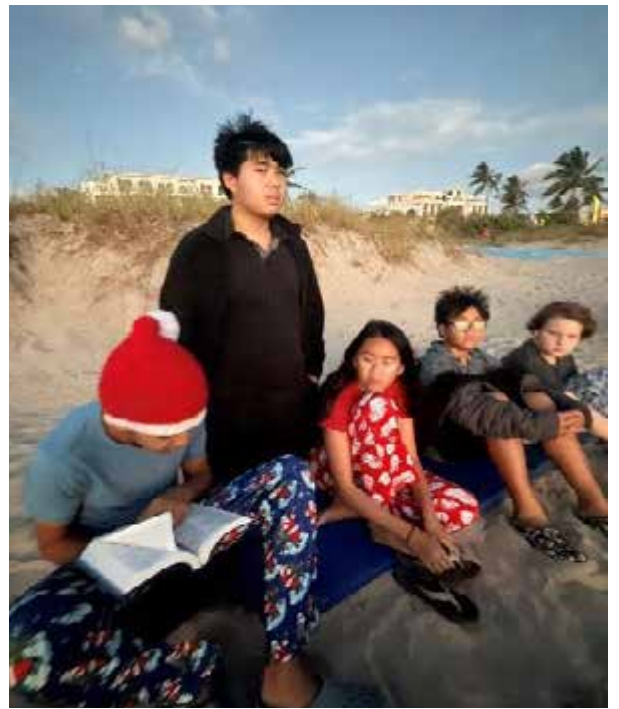
- January 11 - Youth Group 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- January 18 - Youth Group 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- January 24 - January 25- Rock the Universe 12 p.m. to 5 a.m.
- February 1 - Youth Group 12 p.m.
- February 8 - Valentine’s Day youth group 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- February 22 - Youth Group 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.



Youth Group Enjoying Friendsgiving



Youth Lock-in



The Lock-in concluded with time at the beach



**by Maria Graham**

## MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

**O**ur first Bible Study of 2026 is Jesus the Game Changer, a documentary series on how the life and teaching of Jesus changed the world and why it matters. Karl Faase, our host, interviews authors, pastors, and speakers in the US, UK, Australia, Singapore, and India to understand the depth of influence Jesus had on human history. Karl Faase previously served as a Baptist pastor in Australia. He is now the CEO of Olive Tree Media (which produced this series), and is the voice behind the “Daily Nudge” radio spots. Women’s Bible Study meets Monday mornings at 10 a.m. via Zoom. New members are always welcome to learn, pray, and laugh with us. For a Zoom invitation, please contact Maria Graham at [mmg2352@gmail.com](mailto:mmg2352@gmail.com). ●

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**by Fred McNaboe**

## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Welcome to The Men's Breakfast Gathering  
Thursday mornings @ 8:30 a.m.

**J**oin us for a morning of good food, meaningful conversations, and genuine friendship. Our breakfast meetings are a chance to connect, share experiences, and build lasting bonds in a supportive environment.

**W**e look forward to seeing you. Contact Fred McNaboe for details (561-350-4294 or [mcnaboe@aol.com](mailto:mcnaboe@aol.com)). ●

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**by Dolores McNaboe**

## WOMEN'S LUNCH BY THE SEA

**J**oin hosts Dolores McNaboe and Kathy Wilsher for Women's Lunch by the Sea, a monthly lunch where you can meet new women and catch up with old friends. Held on the second Tuesday of each month at noon at Boheme Bistro on Atlantic Ave, just a short walk from the church, this casual, no-pressure gathering is designed for women seeking a warm, inclusive environment lunch. Separate checks are provided. Contact Dolores (561-702-4142) or Kathy (561-252-0709) for more information. ●

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## SESSION REPORT

During October and November, the Session received four new members and approved two baptisms. The Session called the Annual Congregational Meeting for Sunday, February 22nd, following the 11 a.m. worship service. They also approved the Moms and Babies Discharge Package from The Drug Abuse Foundation as the 2025 Christmas Eve Offering recipient. ●



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## GIFTS TO OUR CHURCH

**Christmas Eve Offering**, from Andy and Linda Balsler, Leo and Pat Phillips, and from Connie Timmons, in memory of Beth Fine.

**Holly House**, from Marie Claire Ged and Dan Mallett, in memory of Mary F. Ged, and from Renee Joseph, in memory of Nancy Graham; and from Heather Dennis and Kevin Gillespie, in honor of Merrill Beveridge.

**Music Fund**, from Nancy Lohr.

**Operating Fund** from Mary Markovitz and from Bob and Fran Eisenberg, in honor of Bruce and Laurel Bodie's 60th wedding anniversary.

**Remembrance Fund** from Thomas Zola, in memory of Riva Richards; Steve Bruch, Liz Carrozzo, and Sudan Torre, in memory of Nancy Graham. ●



## ETERNAL LIVES

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

– Robert Van Brott –  
October 2, 2025

– Richard Schaublin –  
October 10, 2025

– Riva Richards –  
November 7, 2025

– Nancy Barlow –



## NEW MEMBERS

Barbara Davilar

Janice Faustin

Paula Miller

Beverly Mills

Steve Mills

# WELCOME

## *The Welcome Team*

### *The Welcoming Ministry at First Delray*

*“And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God’s diverse gifts.”*

I Peter 4:10 (Common English Bible)

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

**T**hose serving on the Welcome Team have the unique opportunity to perhaps be the first person to greet a member or visitor when they arrive; the greeter’s smile might just be what was needed for that individual.

**I**n September 2025 we greeted 1,164 people and in October 1,613 people. Attendance continues to grow at First Delray, as does the programming and ministries. This is a wonderful and enjoyable way to serve with a small commitment.

**E**ach Sunday is a new gift for the greeters. It fills us with joy to welcome friends old and new into our beautiful sanctuary, and there are often special visitors who show up. One Sunday in November, a couple came through the doors with knowing smiles and approving head nods. In greeting them, we learned they were married in this church by Pastor Ted Bush in 1990! As I chatted with my new friends Peter and Rosemary Messmore, I discovered they both served as Deacons here. Peter taught Sunday School, and Rosemary played piano in those years. I introduced them to Nancy Fine and Aaron Strippel, who better bridged the history gap than I could, and Dr. Hood gave them a personal First Pres greeting before hopping into the pulpit to start service. It was like meeting a family member for the first time!

**B**eing part of the timeline that is First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach widens our Christian fellowship every day in ways we could not imagine! This is an invitation for you to contact Carolyn Kettle (recruiting/scheduling for the Welcome Team) and become part of this ministry – to welcome people warmly and sincerely into this place of worship.

**P**lease reach out to Carolyn (561-504-9550 or [carolynskettle@gmail.com](mailto:carolynskettle@gmail.com)) for more information. We hope you will join us! ●

## *Deacons' Corner*

The Deacons last met in person on November 16th in the Conference Room. Dr. Hood made the time to join us between services and led us in prayer as we prepared for the festive Advent season. The Pastor liaison for the Deacons has been Dr. Rapier until his departure in October, and we are all extremely grateful for the extra effort and time that Dr. Hood is giving to the Deacons, as well as the other ministries and congregation of our beloved church.

October was a celebratory month for us; we hosted a Hawaiian-themed “Meet Your Deacon” fellowship hour in between services on October 12th. The congregation, choir, and staff all got in the spirit, and the service looked more like a Jimmy Buffet convention than Sunday worship! A week later, on October 19th, during the Centennial celebration, we all said goodbye to Dr. Rapier, and the Deacons presented him with an award of gratitude for his spiritual leadership and guidance.

On November 23rd, the Deacons put up the Christmas Tree with lots of help and beautiful handmade ornaments. The tree was up through Christmas, and we collected money to buy gift cards for 300 needy children in our community. On behalf of the children from the Achievement Centers for Children & Families, Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches, AVDA (Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse), The Boys and Girls Club of Palm Beach County Delray Beach Chapter, and the Milagro Center, thank you!

On January 25th, we are looking forward to leading the congregation in service on Deacon Sunday. January will also mark the beginning of our 2026 scholarship program.

Fellowship by the Sea is hosted by the Deacons on the fourth Sunday of each month. The Deacons will meet again on January 18th at 10 a.m., in person between the services. ●

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## *Deacons' Gift from the Heart*

On Sunday, February 8th, the Deacons will fill the Lobby with love with their Gift from the Heart campaign to raise money for the Deacons' Scholarship Fund. Each donation toward the purchase of a red balloon will enable the Deacons to provide funds to our senior high school students to help offset the ever-increasing costs of college. Imagine the lobby brimming with love for the youth of the church. Donations toward balloons may be made with the forms in the Sunday bulletins. Share whatever you can, and let's spread the red and fill the Lobby with love. ●



**by Grace Cameron Hood**

*Director of Children and Family Ministry*

## 2025 FLEW BY! THERE WERE SO MANY WONDERFUL MOMENTS FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES.

There were so many powerful and fun moments in the last year. As we look to the new year, more to come! Here are a couple of important dates to put on your 2026 calendar.

Annual Easter Egg Extravaganza	March 29
Vacation Bible School	June 15 – 19
Bowling	August 9
Family Golf Fun	November 8
Children’s Christmas Pageant	December 6

There will be more additions to this list. Rachel and I are planning some joint events with the youth, children, and young adults in the church. Stay tuned for those dates!



Serving the Church



Rock the Universe



Youth Sunday



Bowling



Youth Sunday



Mother's Day



Pentecost



Father's Day



Bowling



Capital Campaign



Special Events by the Sea



Special Events by the Sea



Vacation Bible School



Vacation Bible School



High School Montreat Trip



Middle School Montreat Trip



Palm Sunday



Easter Egg Extravaganza



Putt-Putt Outing



Christmas Pageant Teen Angels



Christmas Pageant



Putt-Putt Outing



Eating Together



The God Squad



Worshipping Together



Our Sunday School Teachers



Children's Sunday School



Having Fun

# HOLLY HOUSE STEP-ABOVE RUMMAGE SALE

## DROP OFF DONATIONS

Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday  
January 13th through January 31st, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## CHURCH ATTENDEE SHOPPING

Wednesday, February 4th, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## ALL SHOPPERS ARE WELCOME ON

February 5th, 6th, and 7th, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

“The time has come,” the Walrus said, “to talk of many things.” Indeed, that is true because the time has come for searching in all the nooks and crannies, closets, garages, and storage lockers, and all your other hiding places for treasures that you wish to donate to the Step-Above Rummage Sale. Donations will be accepted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., from January 13th through January 31st. Clothing, accessories, shoes, and books are collected at Fellowship Hall. Linens, household items, jewelry, toys, tools, electronics, sports equipment, and all other goodies are dropped off at Holly House.

The success of the Step-Above Rummage Sale depends on your participation and donations. 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 13th, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. No registration is necessary. To volunteer during the sale, please sign up on the church website by January 31st.

The sale will be open to church attendees on Wednesday, February 4th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. All shoppers are welcome during public sale dates: Thursday, February 5th, through Saturday, February 7th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. A hot dog lunch will be available for purchase sponsored by the Men’s Fellowship.

This is our big event and every year we hope to surpass last year’s success. We look forward to seeing you on donation days and at our annual Step-Above Rummage Sale.

Holly House organizes The Step-Above Rummage Sale. Holly House is a mission of the church, and the proceeds go to the work of the church. ●





*Holly House is a mission of the First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach and proceeds from all sales go to the work of the church.*

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Please join the ladies of  
***The First Delray Presbyterian Church's Holly House***  
for our first ever  
***Reimagine, Recycle, and Reuse: Fashion Show, Lite Supper, and Silent Auction***

**First Delray Presbyterian Church**

Tuesday, February 3, 2026, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Tickets \$10 (tickets are limited)

Tickets available to church attendees, friends, neighbors

- Sundays at the Welcome Center beginning Jan. 4
- In the church office
- Holly House on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon

Attend this ***Step-Above Rummage Sale Preview*** shopping opportunity while enjoying fellowship, light supper, fashion show, and silent auction. Fashions and accessories that are available for purchase will be modeled. Some clothes are brand new and even have designer tags! All articles of clothing and shoes for women, men, and children are \$4. Upscale jewelry, accessories, and housewares will be featured in the silent auction. Holly House is organizing this premier event. Contact Donna Van Horn, 267-221-1165 or [DJVAvalon@yahoo.com](mailto:DJVAvalon@yahoo.com), if you would like to volunteer to help with the event. Proceeds support the ministry and mission of the church. ●

# FIRST IMPACT

## LETTERS FROM OUR MISSION AGENCIES

### Drug Abuse Foundation

**O**n behalf of the Drug Abuse Foundation of Palm Beach County, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach on the occasion of your 100th anniversary. This is a remarkable milestone that speaks to a century of faith, service, and unwavering commitment to the community.

**T**hroughout the decades, your church has stood as a beacon of hope, compassion, and spiritual leadership. Your commitment to outreach and service has not only strengthened the lives of your parishioners but has also uplifted countless individuals and families across Palm Beach County through your outreach activities, such as your donations to DAF. We are especially grateful for the generous support and partnership you have extended to our organization over the years. Your support has assisted us in changing the lives of those who struggled with substance use.

**Y**our steadfast encouragement and contributions have enabled us to continue providing critical services to those most in need—particularly pregnant and postpartum women and their newborns, who rely on specialized care and support during vulnerable times. The impact of your support cannot be overstated. It is through the strength of community partnerships like yours that we are empowered to carry out our mission and bring hope to those striving for a better future.

**A**s you celebrate this historic moment, please know that your legacy continues to inspire and uplift. We are honored to be part of your story and look forward to many more years of shared purpose and community impact.

Stephanie Thompson  
Executive Vice President/ Chief Operations Officer

### Crossroads Club / Living Skills In Schools

**F**irst Presbyterian Church has been supporting CRC Recovery Foundation for several decades. CRC began as an organization to help fund the Crossroads Club. Thanks to the support of the Church, CRC was able to purchase and renovate the current campus for Crossroads at 1700 Lake Ida Dr in Delray. Today, over 600 people a day go to meetings at Crossroads where they find a clean, safe, and welcoming environment to reinforce their addiction-free productive lives.

**T**ony Allerton, CRC board member, started Living Skills in the Schools, LSIS, at Crossroads. This is a program where a clean and sober for at least 2 years presents their story of going from recreational use of drugs and alcohol into addiction and then recovery. The stories are riveting and for students in 6th grade through high school. Over 10 years ago, Crossroads asked CRC to take over the funding and management of LSIS.

Since then the programs have expanded to include puppet presentations for children in kindergarten through 5th grade. Where self esteem, why you do the things you do, peer pressure and problem solving are discussed. This year over 90 thousand students and parents attended presentations.

The Church's support has been an important part of the growth of LSIS. Since Crossroads Club has evolved into a self-supporting entity, CRC has put all its energy into raising money to support the growth of LSIS. So much so that we are changing the organization name from CRC to LSIS. This will better align our goals and mission to reflect our work moving from recovery to prevention

Larry Eaton  
President

## Wayside House

Founded in 1974 by Dr. Susan B. Anthony (great-niece of the famed suffragist) and Phyllis Michelfelder—both women in recovery—Wayside House began as a humble cottage with a powerful vision: to create a safe, supportive space for women to heal. Today, we are a nationally accredited behavioral health facility offering residential and outpatient programs, holistic therapies, and a nurturing community where women can rebuild their lives.

This year marks a remarkable milestone for First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach—100 years of faith, fellowship, and service to our community. From its founding in 1925, the church has been a steadfast source of spiritual guidance and compassionate outreach, enriching lives across generations. At Wayside House, we are especially grateful to count First Presbyterian Church among our most cherished partners. Since 2000, their support has helped us provide life-changing treatment and recovery services to women struggling with addiction. Through their generosity and belief in our mission, thousands of women have found healing, hope, and a renewed sense of purpose.

As First Presbyterian Church celebrates a century of service, we celebrate the many years of shared purpose and partnership. Here's to continuing our journey together—uplifting women, strengthening families, and building a brighter future.

With Gratitude,  
Tammie Sellman  
Chief Development Officer ●





# FirstDelray ConcertSeries

*Music by the Sea*

## FEELING THE SPIRIT – THROUGH THE GIFT OF MUSIC

It's hard to believe our concert series – “Music by the Sea” has completed its second successful year and is setting the stage for another inspiring season!

Anyone who has attended will attest to the power of music to renew our spirits, and our final concert of 2025, in particular, touched us deeply, with its selection of spirituals and folk songs that were meaningful for so many of us. Special thanks go to Neil Nelson and Brigit Djupedal Fioravante for all that they did to make this a very special program. Neil's commentary, his own singing, and his premiere as our MC, contributed greatly to attendees' appreciation of the performance. The sing-alongs, led by Brigit on her guitar, were a roaring success, and Don's organ solo of “My Lord What a Morning” shook the sanctuary when he literally “pulled out all the stops.” Those of you attended were fortunate to hear Brigit sing an emotional rendition of “Wayfaring Stranger” at both the concert and on Sunday morning – I cried both times.

But that was history! Thanks to your continuing generous support we are preparing another varied and outstanding series of concerts for 2026. You'll meet new singers and hear outstanding musicians as we make our way from love songs to Latin, to Big Band and movie music.

First up, on February 8, at 4 PM, and just in time for Valentine's Day, is “Music to Eat Chocolates By – All the Yummy Tunes.” We'll be featuring our extraordinary soloists, with some additional guest performers, to offer you a *not to be missed* afternoon of popular and classical love songs. This concert will be presented without an intermission to give all who attend, time to get to the parties, festivities and the kickoff of the Super Bowl game. You will be “warmed up” for cheering your favorite team with a bit of chocolate and love!

Then, in March, look out, because here come our beloved Latin Divos – with additional soloists and musicians to get our toes tapping and our hearts soaring with their unique blend of Latin pop and opera stylizations. If you have attended their concerts in the past, you KNOW what fun they are, and if you have not, you have to sign up for this one!

Tickets can be reserved *online* at for all or any of the 2026 season's shows, or they can be purchased or reserved by calling the office or seeing Nancy Fine, our Business Administrator at the Welcome Center on Sunday mornings. Brochures are also available for you to share with friends! Mark your calendars and don't miss these fabulous performances:

February 8	<b><i>Music to Eat Chocolate By</i></b> – All the Yummy Tunes
March 29	<b><i>The Latin Divos and Friends</i></b>
April 19	<b><i>Big Band by the Sea</i></b> – Sentimental Journey
October 25	<b><i>Lights, Camera, Music!</i></b> (Music from the movies!)

As always, we invite you to join our family of sponsors. To become a 2026 sponsor, simply fill out the form you received in the mail, or visit the Sponsorship tab on the First Presbyterian website at [firstdelray.com/concerts/concert-sponsor/](http://firstdelray.com/concerts/concert-sponsor/)

We believe that what you have enabled us to build here at First Presbyterian is a unique and powerful mission of outreach, community-building, and fellowship, all based on an offering of truly outstanding music experiences. We welcome your prayers, as well as your participation, for the 2026 concert series. ●

## OUR 2026 AND 2027 DISTINGUISHED PREACHERS

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.



Then on January 8, 2027, Dr. Michael B. Brown returns as our Distinguished Preacher. He is the pastor at Blowing Rock Methodist Church in North Carolina. Prior to Dr. Brown's ministry there, he was the Senior Minister at Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. He is an accomplished author, preacher, and teacher. ●

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**by Wil Brown**

### STEPHEN MINISTRY

The Stephen Leader team is hard at work training Stephen Ministers. Five members of the congregation have answered the call to serve you in this very impactful ministry. A Stephen Minister walks beside someone who is hurting, a caring Christian friend who listens, cares, prays, supports, and encourages, but a Stephen Minister is so much more than a friend! The twenty weeks of training equip laypeople to provide one-on-one Christian care to people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Each week of training brings a new skill or tool to assist the Stephen Minister in providing uniquely Christian care to the Care Receiver. Stephen Ministry is a confidential ministry. The identity of those receiving care and everything they discuss with a Stephen Minister remains private.



If you have an interest in Stephen Ministry, contact one of the certified Stephen Leaders or Pastor Doug Hood. The Stephen Leaders are Wil Brown, Laura DeBrita, and Skip Randolph. Contact Nancy Fine in the church office for their contact information. ●

**by Dick Falk**

Chair

## 2026 GENEROSITY CAMPAIGN

We all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Because of the unwavering support from the members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church for the past 100 years, for which we are truly grateful, we are able to announce our campaign to provide the necessary support to begin the second century. The torch has been passed. As torch bearers, it is our opportunity and responsibility to nurture the ministry and mission taking place on this beautiful campus. Shortly, you will receive additional information about this. Please prayerfully consider your commitment.

Thank you.

The Generosity Team ●

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**by Nancy Fine**

Business Administrator

## DOES PRAYER REALLY WORK?

Have you ever wondered if prayer works? Have you ever thought, “I am praying for someone, and they didn’t even know?” Have you said to yourself, “Praying doesn’t make a difference”? I can tell you from personal experience that prayer works; prayers are felt, and praying makes a difference!

Recently, I faced a heartbreaking loss when my 43-year-old daughter died unexpectedly. In that moment, I immediately turned to prayer, praying for her children and her brother. Praying for others is always my default.

But what I didn’t expect was to be on the receiving end of so many prayers. When catching my breath was hard, I felt prayers. When my chest hurt, I felt prayers. When I closed my eyes and saw her face, I felt prayers. When I had to make difficult phone calls, I felt prayers. I genuinely believe that the prayers I felt and continue to feel keep me going. Prayers from my church family, my friends, and churches across the country are felt. Prayers have and will continue to help me through the pain of losing my daughter.

Please help make a difference in someone’s life by joining the Prayer Team. Contact me to help surround those who are hurting with the gift of prayer.

*If you or a loved one is dealing with substance abuse issues, there is help available. Contact the Drug Abuse Foundation at 561-278-0000 or the CrossRoads Club at 561-278-8004. ●*



# 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. ●**



## WHAT IS PER CAPITA?

**D**id 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 2026.

**E**ven 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 2026 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.

**P**aying your Per Capita does make a difference when our congregation’s total assessment for 2026 is just over \$33,500. ●

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

**O**ne 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 indicates that your vehicle is authorized to park on the church lot for non-Sunday events. Since the east parking lot is leased to a valet service, the parking sticker serves as a visual signal that you are a member and have permission to park in the church lot.

**T**he parking lot on the west side of Gleason Street is leased to the City of Delray Beach for their use, except on Sunday mornings. Our blue parking sticker does not replace paying for metered parking in that lot, and you will get a ticket from the city.

**E**veryone attending worship can park in the parking lot on Sunday mornings; a parking sticker is not necessary. If you are a church member and need a new parking sticker, see Nancy Fine at the Welcome Center on Sunday mornings or contact her in the church office (561-276-6338). ●

## WALKS WITH THOUGHTS

A few days ago, my close friend, Barbara, brought me an early Christmas present: an angel advent devotional book. The gesture got me thinking about community. My husband and I are fortunate to have found a condominium community where people support each other. Where we party and socialize together frequently, but also bring each other meals, provide transportation, and talk through our losses and grief when needed. Where we share laughter and love.

That same day, I invited a friend from the community to explore a recent find: Delray Oaks Natural Area. One of several Palm Beach County natural areas, Delray Oaks consists of a small conservation plot of 25 acres with a paved trail just off South Congress Avenue at SW 29th Street. The trail is a modest half mile, but well worth the effort. Here in this tropical hammock with its canopy of cabbage palms and live oak trees, you can walk and talk with God in comfort even in the hot summer months. Today, in late November, the sprawling live oak trees capture my imagination with their short stout trunks and long horizontal limbs that nearly brush the ground. Many of their still green leaves are obscured by hanging nets of Spanish moss.

The sight of these trees reminds me of a riverboat tour I took a few years ago at Huntington Beach State Park in South Carolina. Our guide there explained that many of the live oaks surrounding us were twice, maybe even thrice, as old as our country. Their secret to surviving the battering winds of tropical storms

and hurricanes: they work together underground. After young trees establish a strong deep taproot, they develop shallow root systems which intertwine with the roots of other live oaks, at times even grafting onto them. The combination of the deep strong taproot and web of more superficial roots not only prevents the oaks from toppling during strong winds, but also provides a means of sharing nutrients, water, and distress signals.

Staring at these strong old trees with their ever green leaves, I am struck by the similarity to Christians and their relationships to God and other people. Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are these: to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and, to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22: 37,39). Is it too fanciful to think that as Christians, our taproot is God; that our shallower roots intertwine with each other, thus building a community

of support, much like these beautiful, sturdy, old live oaks?

As we walk in companionable silence, my friend stops to sniff the air. I notice that the moist dirt of the path underfoot, the tall ferns, wild coffee, bright American beautyberries, and decaying leaves combine with the tree canopy overhead to bring a pleasant fresh, yet slightly earthy, musty scent to the coolness of the air. We reach the turning point on the trail—a large observation platform overlooking a small swamp, where we sit a few minutes before returning to the car.

I invite you to corral a neighbor or friend and share a walk with God here among the amazing live oak trees, the namesake of Delray Oaks Natural Area. As you walk and talk, may you experience the joy and love of companionship with God and each other. ●



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## **Sunday Morning Worship Services**

**9 a.m. & 11 a.m.**

