

THE SPIRE



Your Church Magazine

May / June 2026



NURTURE FAITH

by Dr. Doug Hood

Pastor

MOVING ON FROM PAST MISTAKES

“I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me.” Philippians 3: 13b (Common English Bible)

How do you view the past? That is a good question for any of us. Or consider another question – Does the past have power over you? Are there regrets that interfere with your well-being and, consequently, the well-being of those who know you and love you? Perhaps thoughts of hurting someone or betraying someone continue to bobble up into the present with the unfortunate result of self-recrimination. Have you taken all your mistakes and failures of the past and carefully preserved them in a time capsule that you open far too often? Each time the time capsule is opened, you hand power to the past to beat yourself up and interfere with your ability to be your best self. Dwelling on the past offers one thing – self-condemnation.

Self-condemnation influences the way we think and how we live in the present. Self-condemnation gift-wraps and hands us a “loser-limp” – a term I learned from Zig Ziglar which simply means that we limp through life as though we have an injury from the past. Those with a loser-limp conclude that the past is responsible for a miserable present and there is nothing that can be done. A limp is a limp, and we must learn to adapt. What many fail to grasp is that punishing yourself for the past does not change the past. And the only thing worse than a mistake or failure in the past is to live poorly into the future. An example would be a young person who once tried a dating website only to experience failure in finding a meaningful relationship. They now choose self-pity rather than, as the apostle Paul puts it, “reach out for the things ahead of me.”

Paul does not indulge in self-loathing, self-pity, or self-recrimination. Remember, it was Paul that held the coats of men while they stoned Stephen, an early Christian, to death simply because of his faith in Christ. Those who stoned Stephen asked Paul to hold their coats so they would have maximum range of arm movement in throwing the stones at Stephen. Paul is now a great evangelist for Jesus Christ. What Paul is teaching the church in Philippi is that he refuses to give power to his past. Paul refuses the “loser-limp” mentality because the work ahead of him is too important to be hindered with baggage from past failures, mistakes, and

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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.

disappointments. The past cannot be changed. And punishing himself for the past only enables self-destructive behavior. Paul will permit nothing from interfering with him from being his best self for Jesus.

When one sets their eyes upon what is ahead of them – not what is behind them – hope flourishes. That is because we do not heal the past, says Marianne Williamson, by dwelling there. We heal the past by living fully in the present. The past may hold lessons for the present and the future. Wisdom instructs that we visit the past only for what we can learn and then turn our attention immediately to the present ¹. That is when our thinking shifts and our behavior changes. Thomas Edison was found one morning standing before the charred ruins of his laboratory in Princeton, New Jersey, after a fire. When condolences were offered, he responded that he was grateful for the fire. Edison continued that a good many of his past failures were destroyed. Now they would not be around to tease him as he continued his pursuits of ideas that would improve life for everyone. Or, as Paul teaches, “I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me.” ●

¹ Marianne Williamson, *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do*. (New York, NY: William Morrow: An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2014) p. 129

by Laura DeBrita

Stephen Ministry Outreach Leader / Coordinator

Let me introduce myself. My name is Laura DeBrita, and I'm the Stephen Ministries Outreach Coordinator for our newly developed Stephen Ministries here at First Presbyterian. I'm happy to share that we had five trainees commissioned on April 26.

As Stephen Ministers, our role is to provide confidential companionship and care for those experiencing difficult times in their lives, such as divorce, illness, the loss of a spouse, grief, or other life challenges.

In my role as your Outreach Coordinator, I will oversee the conduct and evaluation of care receiver interviews, match them with a Stephen Minister, and coordinate with our pastor and possibly other Stephen Minister Leaders throughout the care receiver process.

We are highly trained in the Stephen Ministry protocol and eager to serve any fellow First Presbyterian community member.

I'm looking forward to a successful Stephen Ministry here at First Delray Beach. ●

by Maria Graham

MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

For the first two weeks of May, the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study will hold two more sessions on Jesus the Game Changer. Then our next study is The Sermon on the Mount. It was prepared by the BibleProject, a nonprofit company founded in 2014 by Tim Mackie and Jon Collins. A series of animated videos presents the Bible as a unified story leading to Jesus, aiming to help people experience it in an approachable and transformative way.

Though it's only three chapters long, the Sermon on the Mount is a carefully crafted collection of teachings that contains Jesus' most famous words. There are ten sessions in this study, including a closer look at the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, Oaths, Retaliation and Enemy Love, and many other topics.

We meet on Monday mornings at 10 o'clock via Zoom. We would love to have you join us as we learn, pray, and laugh together. Please contact Maria Graham at mmg2352@gmail.com for the Zoom link. ●

by Fred McNaboe

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

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

Join 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.

We look forward to seeing you. Contact Fred McNaboe for details (561-350-4294 or mcnaboe@aol.com). ●

by Dolores McNaboe

WOMEN'S LUNCH BY THE SEA

Join 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. ●

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 2026 One Great Hour of Sharing Offering to fund storm damage repairs at First Presbyterian Church of Junction City, Kansas. ●



GIFTS TO OUR CHURCH

Easter Memorial from Cabell and Anne-Randolph Curran, in loving memory of Judith Barlow Bolling and Maurice J Curran

Easter Memorial from Charlie and Frances Scholtz, in honor of their grandson, Latham Weisshaupt

Easter Memorial from Craig and Julie Whiting, in loving memory of Beverly and Roland Hendickson and Lawson and Marion Whiting

Operating Fund from Joni Grossman, in honor of Neil and Megan Buck's family ●



ETERNAL LIVES

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

– Ken Years –
March 5, 2026

– Walter Crutcher –
April 1, 2026



The Welcome Team

“Each one of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

The 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, with the goal of serving on one Sunday each month or every other month. The commitment is flexible; a substitute is available when needed.

Those serving on the Welcome Team have the unique opportunity to be the First person to greet people when they arrive; they represent the bridge between the church and the worshippers. When people walk into our church and receive a warm reception, it helps prepare their mind and soul for reflection and learning.

Recently, a longtime member came to Sunday service as normal but seemed out of sorts. After a warm greeting and a concerned inquiry from our greeters, the member shared that he had recently lost a close, longtime friend. They all spoke about the recently departed friend and joined hands in prayer of gratitude for his service to our country and all the lives he touched. We all found a little comfort and relief in sharing the grief of our friend, the church member, and in honoring his friend, the deceased.

We are pleased to announce our newest greeters! You can be sure to find these people at the front door as you come to worship service:

Steven and Susan Haught (also new Deacons!) and Connie Smith (current Deacon)

In the fall, Bill and Kathy Wilsher will be part of the Welcome Team.

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

We hope you will join us! ●

by Nancy Fine

Business Administrator

Deacons' Corner

The Deacons are hard at work planning their annual Family Fun Day! Following the 10 a.m. worship service on Sunday, May 3. You won't want to miss this fun-filled Deacon-sponsored event.

A little bird told me that not only are the Deacons providing lunch, but there will be an ice cream truck providing free ice cream for dessert. And, if ice cream is not your preferred sweet, there will be a cotton candy machine!

There will be a bounce house, carnival games, pool tic-tac-toe, cornhole, and more, with something for people of all ages.

Make sure to put this event on your calendar. ●

by Nancy Fine

Business Administrator

The Gift of Prayer

Prayer is often described as a gift because it offers something both simple and profound: direct, personal communication with God. It requires no special setting, no elaborate preparation, and no perfect words. Whether whispered in quiet moments or spoken through tears, prayer creates a space where honesty and faith meet. In a world filled with noise and distraction, this ability to pause and connect with something greater provides clarity, grounding, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Beyond communication, prayer is also a source of comfort and strength. It allows people to release burdens they cannot carry alone and to find peace in the midst of uncertainty. In times of joy, it becomes an expression of gratitude; in times of hardship, it becomes a refuge. This dual nature makes prayer uniquely powerful—it meets people where they are, offering reassurance that they are not alone. Many find that through consistent prayer, their perspective shifts, helping them see challenges with greater patience and hope.

Finally, prayer is a gift because it transforms not only circumstances but the heart itself. It cultivates humility, deepens faith, and encourages compassion for others. As individuals pray, they often become more aware of the needs around them and more willing to act with kindness and grace. In this way, prayer is not just an inward practice but an outward force, shaping how people live and love. Its true power lies not only in the words spoken, but in the lasting change it inspires within those who embrace it.

Prayer requests come through the church office and are then distributed to prayer team members. Each request is carefully and thoughtfully lifted in prayer with respect and confidentiality. Please contact Nancy Fine with your prayer concerns or to join our prayer team. ●



by **Grace Cameron Hood**

Director of Children and Family Ministry

EASTER EGG EGGSTRAVAGANZA

The annual Easter Egg Eggstravaganza was on March 29, following the 11 a.m. worship service. Much-needed rain moved our activities inside. Pizza and Eggs were plentiful. It turns out that the Sanctuary worked well for the egg hunt, although several eggs were found several days later!



NIGHT OUT ON THE AVE

The Night Out on the Ave was a fun time for the youth to gather and spend time together. It was a beautiful evening with many Peep-centered activities!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Ready to travel back in time? Join us in Rome for our Vacation Bible School, June 8 to 12, 2026! Children will explore the caves of the Underground Church, meet the Apostle Paul, create cool Bible-time projects, experience thrilling real-life dramas, play high-energy games, sample tasty Mediterranean snacks, and hear unforgettable music. We are starting the preparations for this high-energy event. If you have children, registration is now open and can be completed online or on the forms in the church lobby!



MOTHER'S DAY TREAT, MAY 10, 2026

The Children's Sunday School Classes are hosting a Mother's Day Treat for all the mothers and grandmothers of children and youth in Sunday School. Plan to come to the Sunday School Room downstairs after church. Your children will have a special treat to celebrate their favorite people! As you make Mother's Day Reservations, plan to stay for 15 to 20 minutes following worship.



CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVING THE CHURCH!

The Children and Youth have hosted the Fellowship by the Sea several times. It is a fun way for them to meet their church family.



CELEBRATING BIRGIT

Upon her retirement, many of the young people of the church celebrated Birgit Djupedal Fioravante and her contributions to each of them personally and collectively! ●



by Connie Timmons

We're back! After a couple of weeks to recuperate from the Step Above Rummage Sale, the ladies of Holly House have returned to their workstations to participate in fellowship and get their creative juices flowing. The hustle-bustle atmosphere is gradually returning as we explore new ideas, take inventory, and plan for what comes next.

We're open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We have many all-season handcrafted items to decorate your home or to give as gifts. Stop in to have a look around. Maybe you would like to join us? ●



Holly House is a mission of our church, and all proceeds go to the support of the church.

by Nancy Fine

Business Administrator

Why Wear Red for Pentecost

For Christians, Pentecost is a holiday commemorating 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, is 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 May 24 as we celebrate the Church's birthday. We encourage you to wear red that morning, whether worshipping in person or online. ●

Capital Campaign Projects

On a recent Sunday, I greeted a couple coming through the west door. As we said hello, they told me they are from California and visit the church twice a year while on vacation, once in the spring and once in the fall.

The wife asked me what we had done to the church. She added that they thought they were in the wrong place. When I told her we were doing capital campaign renovations, she asked when we put the tile on the west side rotunda. I laughed and said it had always been there, though we painted the area around it. She said they had never seen the tile and thought it was new. Her husband said the church looks amazing and that we should be proud of what we are doing.

On Easter Sunday, a visitor was staring at the new stained-glass windows, tears in his eyes. He said that looking at them, knowing that the four symbols represented the four gospels, reminded him of the church he grew up in. He said it made him feel like he was “home”.

These are just a few of the many comments that the staff and I have heard over the last few months as we progress with our capital campaign renovations.

Behind the scenes, Bill Bathurst has been finalizing details for new flooring and paint in the Sanctuary. I suspect that over the summer, you will begin to see some interior renovations in our Sanctuary.

Our biggest project, the air conditioning system for the Sanctuary and education building, is progressing. The air conditioning company is working with the City of Delray Beach to finalize the permits so we can replace our ancient, inefficient air conditioner. We are eagerly awaiting the start of this project, which will begin as soon as the paperwork is in order.

Your support for our Renew & Rejoice campaign is noticed and appreciated. As we continue working to enhance our facilities for future generations, it is important that payments for campaign pledges are received. This ensures we have positive cash flow to move forward with our promised projects. If you have not already done so, you can make a pledge (or even a one-time gift) to the Renew & Rejoice campaign by visiting our website, completing a form found in the lobby on Sunday mornings, or mailing a check to the church. ●

FIRST IMPACT LETTERS FROM OUR MISSION AGENCIES

Farmworker Childrens Center (Campo Alegre)

Dear members of First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach congregation,

At this time, as First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach celebrates their 100 birthday, we would like to thank you for your many years of involvement with our non-profit agency, Farmerworker Childrens Center, Inc. Your congregation has been alongside us for over 35 years providing support and services to underserved farmworker children and their families.

Our goal has always been to serve the families and children of farmworkers who on a daily basis labor in the fields and stables in the Palm Beach County area.

The many successes and stories that have come from our joint labor of love, would not have been possible without the support of First Presbyterian Church of Delray. Your generosity, concern, and commitment to those less fortunate has enabled us to keep our “Help with Homework” program and “Campo Alegre”, alive and active for over three generations.

Help with Homework, our “Little Schoolhouse” at Pines North and the Community Center at our Delray site are the hubs of this community of farmworker parents and children. Three generations of families have walked through the doors. The parents know that they can come and be helped with any issue or need they may have ... at times the only need is “just needing someone to listen to them”.

Thank you for hearing our need to help this community of people and partnering with us.

Yes, we have the statistics and numbers to report ... but who can measure the level of confidence each child gains because they didn't fall behind in their studies? How do you put a number on a smiling face ... when they are helped with their homework or when they learn English without forgetting their own native language? Who can measure the trust that is gained just because someone cared enough to ask ... How was your day at school?

These are the hidden treasures we hold on to as we push forward into a new generation of farmworker families and their children who will walk through our school house doors.

It is with a grateful heart that we realize and acknowledge that without the help and support of organizations such as yours ... none of it would be possible.

For each child that walked across their graduation stage ... You helped. For each child who turned in a homework assignment ... You helped. For each child who splashed in the waters of a swimming pool for the first time ... You helped. For the 1000s of children who experienced summer camp (Campo Alegre), instead of being home alone ... You helped.

Your continued support of Farmworkers Childrens Center is to invest in the next generation of children who will one day be a part of this great world.

Blessings to all,
Donna Marie Goray
Founder/Volunteer Treasurer

Caridad Center

Caridad Center is honored to join in celebrating the 100th anniversary of First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach. For more than **25 years**, your steadfast partnership, through the caring hearts and generosity of your members, has been integral to the growth and sustainability of Caridad Center and to the lives of the most vulnerable in our community. Due to your faithful support, more than **7,000 patients** each year receive life-affirming medical, dental, vision, mental health, and social services, care that many would otherwise never have access to without the church. Your lifetime giving of more than **\$208,300** has directly shaped the quality of care for families living paycheck to paycheck, giving them not only the ability to survive but the strength to provide for themselves and their loved ones. Your generosity has also left lasting milestones, such as the dedication of **Women's Wellness Room 2 in July 2019**, and your support of our Eye Clinic, which has helped patients regain their sight and receive critical surgeries that restore both health and independence. These are just some of the many ways First Presbyterian's commitment has created a lasting legacy of hope and healing.

Through your partnership, Caridad Center now provides more than **73,000 services** annually, standing as a safety net for those who cannot afford even their next meal or are just days away from eviction due to rising costs, job loss, or low wages. We could not do this without the church's guidance, generosity, and unwavering faith. Because of you, our patients feel safe, valued, and dignified. As you celebrate this historic centennial milestone, please know that your legacy is alive in every patient's smile, every family's restored hope, and every life that has been touched and transformed. We give thanks for your leadership, your compassion, and your lasting impact, and we look forward to walking side by side with you all into the next 100 years of faithful service to our community.

Jennifer Gregoire Lavin
Chief Advancement Officer ●



First Delray Concert Series

Music by the Sea

“WHY WE SING” – MORE THOUGHTS ON THE POWER OF MUSIC

Some of you will remember that I sang in our church choir before COVID. I hope to return at some point, but in the meantime, I love singing with the Glee at my development in West Boynton. Our conductor has found the perfect piece to be our signature number—it’s called “Why We Sing.”* In addition to having a lovely, soaring melody (and some nice harmony for us altos), it is a testimony to what music can do for our souls. While it addresses vocal music, which is what I know best, it certainly applies to instrumental music as well. Here’s the opening verse, and the chorus:

*“A sound of hope, a sound of peace,
A sound that celebrates and speaks what we believe.
A sound of love, a sound so strong.
It’s amazing what is given when we share a song.*

*This is why we sing, why we lift our voice,
Why we stand as one in harmony.
This is why we sing, why we lift our voice.
Take my hand and sing with me.”*

One of the things that is so beautiful about this “magic” (which we know to be the Spirit moving among us) is that the feeling conveyed by the music can be joyous, melancholy, or meditative—it doesn’t matter, it will still touch many hearts. I know I run the risk of repeating myself, but I think all of us on the Concert Team feel the need to continue to testify to the power of the concerts we have been blessed to share with you and our communities.

As we saw on March 29 at our third concert with The Latin Divos, music can prompt almost everyone within hearing to want to join in. I know I couldn’t stop from singing softly along with their version of “Hallelujah” by Leonard Cohen. And when things got lively with “Guantanamera” (you’ll know it if I write it phonetically as *juan-tana-mera*), just about everyone was clapping and signing along, happy to release whatever worries and sadness they may have brought into our Sanctuary that day—freed from the weight of life’s troubles, if just for a few minutes.

The love that is exuded from the performances of these three men is a force that has ignited audiences across cultures. Calling to mind a few more lines from “Why We Sing,” I am reminded that:

*“Music builds a bridge. It can tear down a wall.
Music is a language that can speak to one and all.”*

Not only does music inspire singing, but it often leads to impromptu dance as well. The Latin Divos concert was graced by the spirited sashay of two of our ushers, Oleksandr and Olena Donska, down the center aisle. I'm sure there were at least a few people (stranded in the middle of their full pews) who would have liked to have joined them. I know in my heart that the Lord wants us to experience these moments of shared joy and togetherness, and that is what our concerts are about.

The last concert for the first half of the year took its cue from The Latin Divos and Friends, exploding the instrumental component into the big band led by Matt Calderin. And WOW! I think this may be the first time that our Sanctuary was filled with the sounds of quite this much brass. The Concert Team knows how much of our audience enjoys music "of a certain era"—and even the younger among us can appreciate the legacy of greats like Duke Ellington, Louis Prima, Billie Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald. As Dr. Hood noted in his program introduction for this year's series, music plays such a strong role in our memories, and listening to the notes of "Fly Me to the Moon," "Baby It's Cold Outside," "All of Me," "Come Rain or Come Shine," or the tunes from Bernstein's beloved *West Side Story*, conjured treasured moments for many of our concert goers.

Our final concert, "Lights, Camera, Music!"—vocal and instrumental music from the movies, will take place on October 25. While the lineup for this performance is still being worked out, you can be sure you will go away humming a tune that you first heard on the Silver Screen. While we can't offer you popcorn, we guarantee that the afternoon will be one you remember. Tickets can be reserved on our website, to be picked up and paid for at the "Will Call" table on concert day; reserved/purchased on Sunday mornings at the Welcome Center; or reserved/purchased through the church office by dropping by or calling our Business Administrator, Nancy Fine.

A number of you have inquired about 2027. You can't imagine how this fills the hearts of our Concert Team! As you read this article, we are starting to plan yet another wonderful season of bringing people together! And while we are looking ahead, it's a good time to make a special thank you to Marsha Bird and Penny Johnson, who, since Birgit Djupedal Fioravante's departure in February, have masterfully picked up her duties and made two exceptional concerts happen smoothly.

So in closing, I share just a few more words from "Why We Sing" – *because it is why the Concert Team is devoted to making the First Delray Concert Series possible:*

*"Soothe a soul, mend a heart.
Bring together lives that have been torn apart.
Share the joy, find a friend.
It's a never-ending gift that circles back again..."*

See you at the concert, and may your heart keep singing until then!

*Words and Music by Greg Gilpin. ●

MUSING OF AN OLD MAN

An Unanswered Question

*“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.
He will drive out your enemies before you,” Deuteronomy 33:27 NIV).*

“How do you know that God even exists?” “How can God be without a beginning?” “Where did God come from?” Honestly, I don’t know. The Christian faith demands a great leap of faith: here is something that cannot be proved, only believed—*accepting that God is*.

“In the beginning, God...”. The first thing that Scripture tells us is that before anything was created, God already existed without beginning or end. God alone is uncreated; we speak of him as eternal. God exists before time itself and is not bound by the successive moments of time as are we. And that dear friend is the second leap of faith I have taken. *I believe the Scriptures are the truth*. I fully ascribe to “Jesus loves me this I know ‘cause the Bible tells me so...”

It’s all there in the biblical book of Genesis. “In the beginning” the eternal God creates all things. Whatever now exists, exists only because God created it.

There is no such thing as eternal matter. There is no eternal realm of ideas. There is no eternal convulsing of matter—ever expanding, ever contracting. There is only the eternal God who created all things, and *who already was in the beginning*. Nothing exists apart from the will of God, and all created things depend upon God for their existence.

God is unlike his creatures, which are bound by both time and space, in this most fundamental way. God has no needs, as do we. God has no parts, as we do. Although he is personal, he does not have the kind of passion or emotions that we do. It is he who gives orders to the sun and the stars, who gives life to inanimate matter (as when he made Adam from the dust of the earth – Genesis 2:7), and who is Lord over life and death. This God utterly transcends his creatures.

This distinction is one of the most fundamental points of Christian theology and must be clear to us before we can meaningfully talk about the Christian faith.

How can finite creatures, bound by both time and space, and prejudiced by sin, truly know and correctly understand anything about a God who is so transcendent that he cannot be seen or observed?

Indeed, God cannot be known by his finite creatures, unless and until God chooses to reveal himself in such a way that we can know it. This is exactly what God does when he enters our living by the Holy Spirit to reveal himself to us.

We will always be dependent upon God for our very life and breath. And we are also dependent upon his self-revelation if we are to ever get to know him. The realization of this fact is the beginning of a proper understanding of spiritual things.

From my perspective, everything happens in a series of successions. One thing relates to another, like pages of a storybook. Our days are strung together ... I finish one page and turn the page for the next page. One hour triggers another, and I can’t foresee what’s to come.

But God dwells in eternity. He exists in the past and in the present and in the future, all in the same moment.

At this very moment, God exists.

At the same time, he exists at the time of Abraham.

At the same time, he exists at the time of his future kingdom.

For God, later is the same as earlier. The end is the same as the beginning. Now is the same as then.

He watches my existence from above, somewhere. He sees the whole of it at one time, from the eternal now.

Eternity is beyond my imagination or definition. The eternity of God refers to his existence backward throughout time and beyond, further than I can imagine, and outward into the future, as far as I can imagine and beyond. God never had a beginning and will never have an ending. There never was a time when he was not, and there will never be a time when he ceases to be.

By definition (the Scripture's), God must be incomprehensible. If I could unravel the mysteries of his Person, I would elevate myself to his level, which I, of course, cannot.

He is infinite as it relates to space, everywhere present at the same time. He is infinite as it relates to time, existing in all time equally, and in the past, present, and future simultaneously. So, his qualities and attributes are infinite—his love will never end; his mercy will never cease; his truth will never expire; his holiness is as eternal as he himself is.

It might help to think of God as the author of the story of us—of you and me.

The other day I was reading a historical novel, and things weren't going the way I wanted them to go. So, I stamped my foot and shouted at the author, "Blast it all, why did you have Will's pregnant wife get sick and die while he was off fighting the American Revolution?"

I'm thinking that an author decides he'll publish a book, so he imagines a plot, he chooses his characters, and starts writing the book. When I read that book, I know that the story is the work of the author. Only he can alter what is happening in the story, so I find myself asking the author to not let anything bad happen to one or another character. You might think of the author as the god of the world he created.

For me, it's easy to think of God as the author of all there is, the "*Book of Life*".

As for us, characters in the Book of Life, we must turn the pages one at a time to follow the storyline through its ins and outs and how things are going for each of us. But when the Book of Life is finished and published, there are no surprises for God. Of course not, he imagined the plot from beginning to end.

I know we can't fully comprehend God, but that's all right.

But where did God come from? Again, I don't know. But that's alright too.

By the way, my storyline in life has been going well. It's had its ups and downs. As Phyllis and I look at it we've been blessed and blessed and blessed.

I believe that "God is," and I believe the "Bible is true." I made the leap of faith nearly seventy years ago and I haven't regretted it. ●

by Rachel Therrell

Family Ministry Associate

Youth Fellowship

Spring has been a season of growth for the youth here at First Delray. We enjoyed time together, growing our friendships and our relationships with Jesus. As we prepared for Easter, we watched Season 1 of the show *The Chosen*. It was interesting and eye-opening to see the life of Jesus on a screen rather than just read about it in the Bible.

We have over 15 youth participating in this year's Youth Sunday on May 3rd. It was a cooperative effort picking out the theme **Light my Path**, choosing the hymns, and writing prayers and messages to share with the congregation.

We are ending the school year with a Lock Out on May 22. The group will stay out all night and participate in activities such as bowling, arcade games, and other group games.

As our group continues to grow and change, I am always looking for volunteers! If working with middle school and high school students brings you joy, please join us in the fall for our weekly youth group or chaperone one of our fantastic outings. Please email racheltherrell@firstdelray.com to be added to our volunteer list. ●



by Nancy Fine

Business Administrator

Summer Worship Schedule

As we transition in May to our summer worship schedule of one service at 10 a.m., there is great joy in the Sanctuary as the 9 o'clockers and 11 o'clockers gather for worship. We continue with our one-service schedule until the end of October, when our seasonal attendees return to the area. This reconnection strengthens our faith community when we all gather to worship. ●

WALKS WITH THOUGHTS

Three hundred sixty degrees of pure blue sky. No clouds. A faint outline of a half-moon rising. A brilliant globe immediately overhead, its golden rays shimmering toward earth. A gentle breeze. 76 degrees.

Spring in Delray. A perfect day for a walk. Today I decided to explore Pan's Garden in Palm Beach. Billed as Florida's first all native plants garden, this unique small walled garden at 386 Hibiscus is easily missed. Although it has no parking lot of its own, metered public parking spaces line Hibiscus and a few of the surrounding streets. The garden has no entry fee.

*Thank God for a garden, be it ever so small.** Today it is easy to thank God—for this garden, for this perfect day. Last week, it was just as easy to grumble and complain about the string of wet unpleasant days when I wanted to bury myself inside the apartment. Then, walking a few blocks, I hid inside my hooded slicker. The wind blew gustily from every direction, and the clouds alternately spit and poured rain. The thirsty, fickle flowers, bushes, and trees, however, looked up to the heavens and welcomed the drenching.

Paul in Thessalonians (5:16-18) tells us to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Where would any of us be without the clouds that bring the rain that feed our thirst? Where would we be without God, who provides us the clouds and the rain? Without God, who provides us all with, maybe not what we want at the moment, but with what we need?

I should remember that the next time I complain about the rain.

Today, in this beautiful garden, confronting the golden statue of Pan, the ancient mythical god of shepherds, I think of the great shepherd of my life, Jesus. He is near as I walk along this paved path surrounded by lush greenery. His presence enfolds me as I examine shoestring ferns, alligator flag, and leafless beaked ladies tresses. He is here as the Chapmen goldenrod, starry rosinweed lilac, and the delicate ivory flowers of pineland blackanthers lend touches of contrast to the sea of green that is this garden.

Rereading those last couple of sentences, I imagine you think me an expert on native Florida flora, or a constant user of the iPhone's Picture This app. Neither is true. Fortunately, all the plants here in Pan's Garden are labeled—not only with their unpronounceable Latin names, but also with their common ones as well. You, too, can pass as an expert on native plants and trees here in Pan's garden. Just as you, too, can linger here with Jesus at your side.

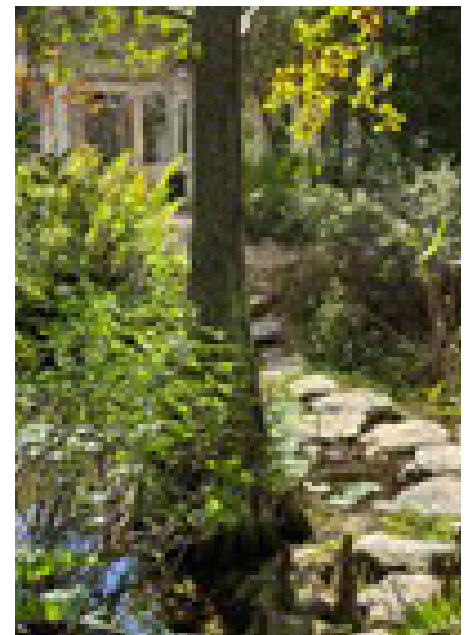
I take a shortcut to the other side of a small pond, crossing on paving stones which lie among native water lilies. These beautiful white floating flowers with their round golden centers fill the air with a sweet, clean perfume. Ahead, along the western boundary of the garden, I encounter a colorful tile wall, its vivid blues, greens, yellows, and oranges shining brilliantly in the morning sun. This wall with its fountain, originally built in 1920 for Palm Beach's oceanfront Casa Apava

estate, was reassembled here in the early 2000s.

Adjacent to Pan's Garden lies the headquarters of the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach (www.palmbeachfoundation.org), which frequently hosts exhibits and events open to the public. The one I visit today is entitled *The Third Era of Design: Architectural Trends in Post-Depression Palm Beach*. This exhibit traces the architectural roots of the island's metamorphosis from a winter resort into a community, where residents stayed for months rather than a few weeks.

Returning to Pan's garden, I take one last look at the natural beauty that surrounds me. Then, before leaving, I murmur a prayer of thanksgiving not only for this garden, resplendent in sunshine, but also for the rainy days that helped make it so.

*Clotilde del Riego (1915). *Thank God for a Garden.* ●



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

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Sunday Morning Worship Services

10 a.m.

