

THE SPIRE

Your
Church
Magazine



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October / November 2020



FROM MY HEART TO YOURS

by Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

Senior Pastor

LONGING FOR GOD

***“Just like a deer that craves streams of water,
my whole being craves you, God.”***

Psalm 42:1 (Common English Bible)

The philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote that each one of us is born with a God-shaped hole in our hearts. Naturally, Pascal was not speaking of a literal hole, such as a square hole. The hole he speaks of is an empty space, a deep longing or hunger. We often attempt to fill this empty space with other things or pursuits. Perhaps we seek a relationship that will satisfy this longing, or acquire some material reward such as a new car or country club membership. Each of these may satisfy for a period. Cracker Jacks at dinnertime will satisfy hunger for a little while. But, these satisfactions will be short-lived. After all, if the empty space implanted in our hearts is for God, any substitute will simply leave empty spaces all around it. Our hearts remain empty.

This scripture from Psalms speaks of deer that crave streams of water. What the original readers of this passage know is that many aqueducts in the Holy Land were built with a mesh-like covering to prevent trash from clogging the water supply. Thirsty deer could hear the streams of water, they could see the streams of water, but they could not drink from those streams. The mesh covering that prevented trash from entering the water also prevented the deer access to the water. So, the longing to quench their thirst remained. What is important for the reader to understand is that before the deer “listened for” and “moved toward” the sound of streams of water, there was first a thirst.

As the deer experienced thirst, often we experience a spiritual thirst, a spiritual yearning for something more. Sometimes, that thirst is noticed when we see others living a deeply satisfying relationship with Jesus. There is simply something about their faith that is missing in our own experience. Other times, we simply become tired of acquiring more and more, and finding that all of it fails to satisfy our deepest hungers. The emptiness remains. And most of us will try almost anything to fill that emptiness, only to be disappointed time and time again. That is because they fail to recognize that only the pursuit of a deep relationship with Jesus through regular prayer and study of Jesus’ teachings can ever satisfy that emptiness.

During my sophomore year of college I had the opportunity to spend the fall semester of study in London. To complete a class assignment, I traveled to Liverpool for a weekend of research. Arriving in the early evening of a Friday – London to Liverpool – by train, I immediately looked for an inexpensive opportunity for dinner. Just as I began to enjoy the fish and chips I had ordered to go, eating while standing along a sidewalk, I realized I had lost my father’s professional Nikon camera, which he had trusted to my care. I lost my appetite, threw away my largely-uneaten meal, and went off searching for the camera. Ultimately my search led me to a homeless man, the Cathedral of Christ the King, and Father Murphy, who had my camera. Returning the camera to me, Father Murphy looked deep into my eyes and asked, “Are you hungry?” In that moment, I sensed that the question was intended for something much deeper than my stomach. ●

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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.**

RESUMING IN-PERSON WORSHIP

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irst Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach will resume in-person worship October 4th – World Communion Sunday at 10 a.m.

The decision to resume in-person worship has been understandably difficult. The desire to once again share a worship experience together had to be balanced with exercising caution for the safety of all members of our congregation, including staff and guests in worship. Some of those who asked that we resume at an earlier date suggested to the church leadership that those who would feel uncomfortable or unsafe attending could continue worshipping via our livestream. However, this suggestion did not consider the comfort and safety of our staff. Resuming in-person worship would remove the option for necessary staff to make the decision to remain at home.

The deciding factor to resume in-person worship was the discovery that the side windows of the sanctuary are glass-sliding doors. Opening these doors during the worship experience would allow fresh air to blow through the sanctuary, theoretically decreasing infection risk. This is similar to the idea behind dining outdoors at a restaurant. Other safety protocols that will be in place include mandatory face masks for all in attendance and social distancing. Please visit www.firstdelray.com/covid-19-qa for additional information.

For those who do not yet wish to return to in-person worship, please continue to join us via our livestream. This summer we have had more people participate in our summer worship via our livestream than we have ever had with in-person and livestream attendance in previous years. Many Sundays we have had nearly 600 devices (computers, tablets, and smartphones) log into our livestream. If that is one person per device, that is nearly 600 people joined in worship!

Whether you decide to continue to join our worship via our livestream or to participate in person, the staff and I look forward to our shared worship on World Communion Sunday. ●

CHURCH MAGAZINE INTRODUCTION

The staff and leadership of the church are pleased to present our new publication, The Spire: Your Church Magazine. This new church magazine will come to you six times a year and will replace the former newsletter that arrived eleven times a year. The current disruption our nation is experiencing because of COVID-19 has resulted in many organizations – profit and non-profit – reimagining how to create value at a lower cost. One area that will save cost to your church is reducing the print and mailing of the former newsletter to a larger, more attractive magazine that is available six times a year. Since the primary cost of providing any literature to the membership is postage, we are able to create a more attractive communication tool at a lower cost.

Our desire remains the same – to connect you meaningfully with the life and ministry of your church and provide resources that will help you in your own formation in Christ. Reprinted here, from former editions of the newsletter, are two articles that share the daily spiritual practice of two individuals. “Looking over the shoulder” of others, observing what they do for their own spiritual growth, is helpful for developing our own practice. Once you have read these articles, I would welcome you to provide your own daily practice for possible publication in a future issue. ●

*With joy,
Doug*

by Grace Cameron Hood

*Director of Children and
Family Ministry*



WORLD COMMUNION DAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020

How exciting that we will be resuming in-person worship on World Communion Sunday! It is appropriate that we will be gathering together again in our Sanctuary on a day where millions of Christians around the world are also joining each other in worship, from before the sun even rises for us to well past the sunset.

Our desire to come together as a congregation and as a global family is powerful. Our worship this year will look different, but around the world, the invitation to the table

is already given in many different ways, in different languages, and with different types of bread that reflect each country. We have different faces, languages, cultures, clothes, and practices, yet what brings us together is that we break bread in communion and remember that our God is still present and working in this broken world.

On this World Communion Sunday, we will be creative in how we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We are asking that you, as a family or as a worship attender, think about what bread means to you. Does a particular type of bread represent

your background or your history? Please bring enough bread for you and those in your party in a zip-lock bag. We will provide the cup. As you enter the church, you will be able to pick up a cup of juice and take it to your seat.

Life does look different now but we can still worship together, whether it is physically or electronically. On World Communion Sunday we will gather together in remembrance of the blood and body of Christ, and join people around the world as we take the bread and the cup that unifies us as the body of Christ. ●

by Maryann Assad

Prayer Ministry Team

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

I was greatly inspired by Dr. Hood's August 23rd sermon, "Does Prayer Work?". He spoke about the importance of prayer and the way we approach God with our requests and concerns. He also asked us to consider, examine, and think about how our approach to prayer cultivates our relationship with God.

It is very obvious in scripture that the Lord wants us to pray, and we are given many commands concerning prayer. In Luke 18:1 Jesus tells his disciples a parable "to show them they should always pray and not lose heart". Ephesians 6:18 says to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people".

The Prayer Ministry Team has been alive and well. As always, we are partnering with God in prayer during this crucial and uneasy time, deepening our love for him, our faith in him, our worship of him, and our surrender to him. We find that he waits on us to pray and then pours out his power in response to those prayers. We earnestly pray that by next year we will be meeting again on Sunday mornings. As a reminder, our team continues to pray faithfully on a daily basis as a commitment to our church and its members. Please join us in this vital ministry on behalf of those struggling and in need. ●

YOUR IMPACT IN THE GREATER COMMUNITY

Family Promise of South Palm Beach County

This is a continuation in our series about some of the many worthy charitable organizations our church helps support through the Mission Outreach Committee.

Family Promise of South Palm Beach County assists temporarily homeless families as they get back on their feet. Family homelessness represents 18% of the homeless in PBC – the largest demographic.

Family Promise SPBC assists the families with a variety of services including shelter and meals provided by a volunteer network of 20 congregations. Our church hosts the families a few times a year, preparing dinner and interacting with the children and parents. Due to the pandemic, Family Promise is following social distance guidelines by housing the families in hotels and having the volunteer congregations deliver meals to them.

but even with her income and their small savings they soon fell behind in their bills. The family moved in with a cousin and shared ONE rented bedroom – eventually,



and helping Shawna to adjust to her new normal. Being homeless is a trauma-based experience that often shows both short- and long-term negative effects on mental health, so Family Promise also provided counseling and therapy strategies to help them cope and to promote mental wellness. With weekly case management meetings for the parents, as well as individual counseling sessions, the family started their journey. Randall secured a higher paying position, Shawna was promoted, and the children excelled in school.

Randall and Shawna had pledged to save their earnings so that they could get a home of their own. And, they succeeded! Randall and the children love to sing at their church,

and are grateful to Family Promise and its supporters for helping them “open a new door”.

Blessings,
Marchele Courtney ●

“When God Closes a Door...”

Randall, Shawna, and their four young children were living a normal life until Randall’s job was downsized. Shawna, a stay-at-home mom, returned to work,

they were told to leave.

Family Promise welcomed the family into its 90 day program. They immediately began working with Randall in his job search, finding Day Care for the children,

MEET KYAUNNEE RICHARDSON

Music has been in my family for as long as I can remember. I have been singing since I was two. I learned music from my mother who played the organ, piano, and the clarinet, and was also a chorus and band teacher. She was the one who introduced me to classic Disney, classical music, and pop music, my favorite being Whitney Houston. At Christmas we would listen to Handel's *Messiah* and Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. Mom encouraged me to sing in the choirs at my church and school beginning in elementary school. Some of my fondest memories were getting out of class to rehearse for these massive productions, like the hyped-up Christmas Pageant or the annual Fine Arts Spring Concert.

As a teenager I saw *Phantom of the Opera* which led me to opera and classical music, where I discovered great singers such as Luciano Pavarotti and Marian Anderson. It was then that I realized that I wanted to be an opera singer. I graduated with my Bachelor's degree from New World School of the Arts College and my Master's degree from Florida State University, both in Vocal Performance.

In 2015, Birgit Fioravante informed me that First Presbyterian Church was looking for a soprano section leader and introduced me to Don Cannarozzi, who has since become a musical mentor to me. Coming from a contemporary Baptist church, I knew the music would be different. Being in this new choir was a challenge. I had to quickly sharpen my sight-reading skills and learn traditional hymns that were all new to me. The music is both musically and spiritually fulfilling. I enjoy the challenge of singing these inspiring pieces and I feel appreciated by my talented colleagues, the congregation, and the staff. When I sing, I feel a strong sense of validation that I'm lending my gift to a greater purpose. To have that support and love from the church family is truly a gift from God.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the messages from the pulpit. Can I just say that both of these pastors, Doug and Greg, ROCK?! I walk out of each service saying, "I needed to hear that." In addition, I feel the love and warmth from the church family as





they welcome me with open arms. I was always taught that the church is supposed to be a spiritual hospital for those who are in need, and each Sunday I am amazed by how this church has helped its community and how the community has responded to it. I look forward to serving at church every Sunday morning.

Doug, along with many other pastors, have asked the question, “What is your purpose/calling?” I found my answer while in graduate school. It was the opening night of Kurt Weill’s *Street Scene*. We were coming towards the middle-end of Act 1, and I was about to make my first entrance on stage. Just as I picked up my right foot to move forward, someone leaned against my right shoulder and whispered in my ear, “This is what you were meant to do.” I turned around. No one was there. I’m sure many people would’ve shrugged this off, but I knew within my heart of hearts and deep within my soul that God had spoken to me. I knew that performing on stage, whether in church or in the grandest halls and arenas in the world, is where I am meant to be. You couldn’t convince me to do anything else. I knew this gift that had been bestowed upon me was given by God and I made it my business to develop it to the best of my abilities. I love singing. It is my passion and I know I am to use this gift to advance God’s kingdom here on earth. ●

LOOKING FORWARD FOR FIRST FAMILIES

by Grace Cameron Hood

Director of Children and Family Ministry



This summer has been one of great uncertainty and change. For the next couple of months, ministry will look different for us all. In-person worship will resume on Sunday, October 4th. At this time there will be no Nursery, Bible Bunch, or on-site Sunday School. The decision to resume these programs will depend on safety issues as determined by the Session of the church.

In October, Sunday School will continue to be offered via Zoom at 9 a.m. A weekly email is sent on Thursdays to all First Families with details on how to join. If you would like to participate and have not received the link, please let me know at gracehood@firstdelray.com.

In November, First Families have traditionally gathered for mini-golf. We do have a tentative date on the calendar for Sunday, November 8th, but due to current state and county restrictions, Putt’n Around the Green cannot confirm this outing. Stay tuned for more information!!

Our *Hanging of the Greens Service* on Sunday, November 22nd will also be re-imagined. You may put this date on your calendar. More details will be coming!

The name of the game is flexibility! Thank you for your patience as we strive to minister in safe and effective ways. ●

by **Grace Cameron Hood**

Director of Children and
Family Ministry



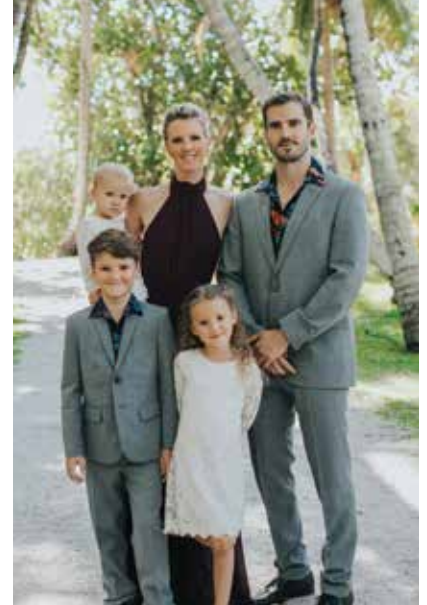
FIRST FAMILIES FUN FACTS

The Kennedy Family

I am very excited to introduce First Families Fun Facts as part of our new church magazine! In this “fun” new series we will be asking our wonderful First families to share a little more about themselves with us. I hope you enjoy getting to know them better in the month to come!



Lauren Purdo grew up in Delray Beach and met **Douglas Kennedy** from Asunción, Paraguay at the University of Pennsylvania where they both went to college. After graduation they moved to work in Manhattan, where they were married and where **Tommy** and **Callie** were born. In 2014, they felt led by God to move to Paraguay to work with Doug’s family. Doug also opened a Vitamin Shoppe franchise there. **Eva** was born in Boca Raton during a summer vacation back in Florida, arriving early while Doug was still in Paraguay. He said it was the best birth yet!



When Covid shut down borders, the family wrestled with the decision to stay or travel back to Florida. The Lord reassured them that he knows no borders or boundaries; that these are human creations and limitations, and that wherever they are, whether in Asunción or Delray, he is within them and with them. The Lord put Deuteronomy on their hearts – *Do not forget the humbling experiences and lessons gained after six years in Paraguay.* After a very strange humanitarian flight to a completely empty Miami Airport, the Kennedy family arrived in Delray Beach in April. For almost ten years, the Kennedys have been attending services at First Presbyterian whenever they visit Delray Beach. When First Delray Beach went virtual in March they watched the streaming services from Paraguay, and it was a comfort and a blessing to them amidst all the turmoil and uncertainty.

Tommy, **Callie**, and **Eva** adore Ms. Grace and the kids program, and they look forward to Sunday every week. The Kennedy family is appreciative for the warmth and kindness that First Delray Beach has shown them over the years. When they will return to Paraguay is uncertain, but what is certain is that they will forever be grateful to First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach. ●

The Negrón Family

I would like to introduce our little family of four. We are the Negrón family and myself, **Stephanie**, my husband, **Joaquín**, and our son and daughter **Tomás** and **Lydia** have been members of First Presbyterian Church of Delray since the kids were still babies. In the church, we have found a beautiful support system in which to raise our children and to teach them the morals, values, and faith we thrive on at the center of our family. Guided by the leadership of Grace and Doug, we always feel supported in our efforts as parents and as members of the church community. My parents, Holly and Steve Anderson, are also dedicated members and deacons at the church, and we yearn for the days when we can sit in the pew together again.

The four of us were fortunate this summer to spend quality family time together exploring God's creation and traveling to Sedona, Arizona, and the Grand Canyon. The beauty out west is truly awe-inspiring and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to still see the beauty and blessings we have all around us during this very tumultuous time. We look forward to getting back to Sunday School in person and to seeing all of our church friends again. ●



HOLLY HOUSE

As a first step to the church reopening, Holly House is offering in-person sales to church attendees on Tuesday, Thursday, and possibly Saturday mornings. We have craft supplies, fabric, sewing notions, and handmade products ready for purchase (cash or check only). In order to follow safety guidelines and limit the number of people gathered, all shoppers are required to make an appointment. Masks are also mandatory. If you would like to shop for Fall and Holiday crafts at Holly House, please make your appointment by contacting Linda Prior (561-702-0245 or linda_prior@hotmail.com). Thank you! ●



by Jeanne Heavilin

Co-Chair of Mission Outreach Committee

OUR GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

The COVID-19 pandemic continues, the impact of the pandemic continues, but your caring and giving also continue.

There are families in our congregation who are still being financially impacted. You have once again demonstrated your love and caring for each other by giving to Our Great Hour of Sharing in August, a special collection to benefit our Member Support Fund. The Member Support Fund was started in March in response to the impact of the pandemic and has already provided over \$42,300 in assistance. You contributed \$30,870.76 to Our Great Hour of Sharing, which will help us to continue assisting our families with rent and mortgage payments, food, medical expenses, transportation, and other financial needs. THANK YOU!

Please continue to keep these families, and each other, in your prayers. ●

by Rev. Greg Rapier

Associate Pastor



“A LIFETIME OF PRAISE”

A sermon preached on July 26, 2020 by Rev. Greg Rapier

Mark 12:28-31

Psalm 150

“Let every living thing praise the Lord!”

Psalm 150:6 (Common English Bible)



Praise God with the blast of the ram’s horn! Praise God with lute and lyre! Praise God with drum and dance! Praise God with strings and pipe! Praise God with loud cymbals! Praise God with clashing cymbals! Praise God with organ and piano. Praise God with choir and hymnal. Praise God with guitar and synthesizer. Praise God with saxophone and clarinet. Praise God with DJs and record samples. Praise God with banjo and didgeridoo. Praise God with music. Praise God with songs. Praise God with worship. Praise God with dirt?

There was a kid in rural Kansas who went by the name of Nate. Nate was a hard worker, the way that people in small agrarian communities tend to be. Growing up, Nate went to school, worked on the farm, and on Sunday mornings he attended the local Mennonite church. This is simply what was expected of boys his age. This is what everyone did.

When Nate got older, he discerned for himself a call into ministry. If you were to ask him, he’d tell you he remembers distinctly the moment where he left for seminary. The moving truck was packed with all of his belongings, and as he left

the farm to begin his drive east to the big city, Nate had this thought that everything in his life up until this point—everything he knew about the farm, the sun, the soil, the seasons—was all for nothing. That it was all pointless, irrelevant. And Nate mourned that. He mourned the soil. The farm. The life that gave him pleasure. As he began his call to ministry, Nate mourned his former life, because he knew that to turn toward God was to turn his back on the farm.

Fast-forward eight or nine years. It’s now around 2014, and Nate is an ordained minister in the Mennonite

church. He holds a Master's degree in Divinity, and is in the process of graduating from Princeton with a PHD in Practical Theology. Nate is at a bit of a crossroads now. He has a lot of options when it comes to work: He can continue with congregational ministry, he can teach (as so many PHD students do), or he can go back to the farm. And all throughout seminary, these past eight or nine years, it was the farm that kept calling back to him. You can take the kid out of Kansas, but you can't take Kansas out of the kid...or something like that.

He's stuck at a crossroads between the farm and academia, but more than that, he's stuck at a crossroads between the farm and God. Suddenly, Nate has a realization: There is no crossroads. Nate realizes that he does not have to choose. He realizes that God has always cared about the farm, and that God has always cared about that kid from Kansas too. And Nate realizes that God's hand has always been in his life, uniquely preparing him for this moment.

So, Nate goes to the Seminary President's office. President Barnes is intimidatingly tall and reserved, but when Nate gets to the office President Barnes is there waiting for him with a smile, holding a set of blueprints. Nate's confused, thinking, "That's not really like him. He's not a sad man but he doesn't smile all that often. Why is he holding these blueprints? What are these blueprints about? What do they have to do with me?" Then, President Barnes hands Nate the blueprints and says, "It turns out... we own a farm."

On that plot of previously unused farmland, Nate created

an official, accredited, seminary curriculum, combining his ministry experience, his PHD training and his farming background all at once. On any given day, you can drive by the Farminary (that's what they call it) and you will find seminary students shoveling manure and turning compost and pulling weeds and planting seeds. At the Farminary, students learn what it means to tend to the soil—and also the soul—and they learn about the interconnectedness of life and death, and they consider what it means to care for the lives of others, and they see through the seasons a very natural cycle of life, death, and resurrection.

The Farminary was, and is, so successful that other seminaries have begun to imitate Nate's idea, and Nate's work has gone on to receive international recognition from outlets ranging from *Modern Farmer* magazine to *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today*.

So yes, praise God with soil. Praise God with manure. Praise God with compost. Praise God with sweat and hard work. Praise God with plants that live and die and live again. Praise God with every season. Praise God with innovative ideas. Praise God with your passions. Praise God with those parts of you that you thought you'd left behind. Praise God with farmers. Praise God with teachers.

There's a woman named Darcy, who knows God, and who loves God, and who spent her whole life teaching English at the college level. Specifically, she taught creative writing. Darcy is a brilliant writer. She's published about a dozen books over the years. But you will find no grand innovations with

Darcy, nothing like you would with Nate. Darcy simply woke up every morning, wrote for a little bit, and then drove about an hour down the mountain, and poured the rest of her day into her students. As a creative writing teacher, Darcy's biggest job was to train students to see the world the way artists and poets do. The way God does. To encounter everything, from nature to human nature to everyday interactions, with both awe and specificity. To see beauty and goodness and sacredness all around. To see something, or someone, worthy of being written down and captured and celebrated, for no other reason than existing, because in God's kingdom existing is enough. We all hold the essence of God, and Darcy taught me how to see that essence. Darcy taught me how to see the world around me, and I'm a better pastor because of her and her work.

Praise God with teachers. Praise God with students. Praise God with school. Praise God with work. Praise God with curious eyes, and with creativity. Praise God with beautiful images. Praise God with poetry. Praise God with nouns, and with verbs, and maybe an adjective. Praise God with language.

You may remember from your own English classes that sonnets have a particular structure: fourteen lines, iambic pentameter, and four-line ABAB verses with a rhyming couplet at the end. There's a clear structure to a sonnet.

Likewise, many of our Psalms fit within the common structures of their day. We have acrostics, where the first letter of each line or stanza spells out the Hebrew alphabet. We have psalms of lament that very often, about two-thirds of the

way through, flip from being about sadness to about praise. Then we have several other types of psalms following their own predetermined rules and structures according to their genre and their day. But Psalm 150 has none of that. It's erratic, it's chaotic, it's gleefully disorganized. Look again, it says:

“Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise God in his fortress, the sky! Praise God with the blast of the ram’s horn! Praise God with lute and lyre! Praise God with drum and dance! Praise God with strings and pipe! Praise God with loud cymbals! Praise God with clashing cymbals! Let every living thing praise the Lord!”

It's as if the author is reaching for everything he can think of, almost like a grocery list of praise: “We need to praise God with a ram's horn! And strings! And we need pipes! And cymbals! In fact, let's get two types: loud and crashing!” You can imagine the author reaching for everything he could possibly use to praise God, because the message is simple: you can praise God with just about anything.

I know of a woman who praises God with her camera. Ellen had a rough childhood to say the least.

She had abusive parents, she was in and out of the foster system—you name it, she's experienced it. Growing up, Ellen had very few reasons to smile. When she became a little bit older, about 12 or 13, she was adopted by stable and loving parents, and those stable and loving parents took her to a Christian summer camp every year, without fail. With those parents, and at that camp, Ellen learned what it meant to smile again. When she graduated from high school and aged out of being a camper, Ellen arranged it so that she could spend every summer as a staff member at this camp.

Her job was to take pictures. To capture smiles and little unexpected moments of joy and of peace. Each night, after all the campers had gone to bed, she'd log on to the camp's only computer and upload those pictures to the camp's website. She did this so that worried and curious parents could log on the next morning and see the absolute delight on their children's faces, and so that the children, when they left the camp, could look back and

remember those feelings they had, when they knew they were loved and when they felt moments of absolute bliss.

Ellen's older now, and she no longer works at the camp. But, she still takes pictures. And this woman, who for a long time had no reason to smile, has made it her life's work to capture and to celebrate the smiles of others.

Praise God with smiles. Praise God with cameras and photographs. Praise God with technology, even if your camp only has one computer. Praise God with goofy summer camp games. Praise God with little moments of joy. Praise God with stories of triumph. Praise God with new beginnings. Praise God with adoption. With children. Praise God with selfless work. Praise God with art. Praise God with your heart.

There's a group that meets on the church campus in a building known as Holly House. These women, and some men, mostly retired, gather together week after week. They check in with each other, laugh together, and look out for one another. They have created a fantastic support system for each other, and when one of these ladies is sick or misses a day, I'll be sure to hear about it from at least one of them. That's just the sort of community they are. Together they knit, they stitch, they sew, they bead and make jewelry, and they craft. Everything they make is either donated or sold, and the proceeds are then donated to worthy causes. You don't need me to tell you that their work is incredibly important and meaningful and a form of praise. But it all hit me a little differently this





past month, when I unexpectedly found myself on the receiving end of a Holly House craft.

Many of you know that Lissette and I are expecting our first child, a baby boy, in October. What we weren't expecting was a hand-knitted baby blanket in the mail from Holly House. I cannot begin to express how much this blanket means to us, with each stitch prayed for with love and knitted together with purpose, given generously to my child, to someone who is not even born yet. This blanket was lovingly made for no other purpose than to make his life a little bit easier.

Praise God with your heart. With your hands. With blankets. With what you knit and sew. Praise God with what you create. Praise God with whatever it is you do with love. Praise God with gifts. Praise God with charity. With tithes and donations. Praise God

with community. With people who care about each other, and with people who notice when you're missing. Praise God with laughter. Praise God with babies. Praise God with life.

The farmer, the teacher, the photographer, the knitter...what do these stories have in common? Nothing in particular. And that's kind of the point, isn't it? I could have told you about the pizza delivery driver who prays over each pizza before delivering it to the home. I could have told you about the manager of a fast-food restaurant who treats her mostly teenage staff with kindness and with patience, and who pours into them not only job skills but also life skills. I could have shared with you the story of the house painter who does good, honest work at a fair price, because that's his way of making the kingdom of God a little bit brighter. I could have shared with you the story of the principal

who uses Christian values to lead his schools and to better equip parents. I could have shared about the mover who is currently traveling from hospital to hospital transporting ventilators to the facilities that need it most. I could have shared about the blind albino rapper who raps about seeing with your heart rather than your eyes, and who travels the world preaching songs of freedom and hope. I could have shared about the classically trained vocalist who performs every Sunday morning week after week in her church. We have a few like her here with us.

So, what about you? What are some of the ways you can praise God, and what are some of the ways you already praise God? What are your stories, both those already told and those yet to be written? Friends, these stories are beautiful and they are not all that unique. The world is full of these stories, and the world is full of praise. You need only look to find them. Amen. ●

SESSION REPORT

During the months of February through September, the Session approved new members and several baptisms. However, their major focus during that time was how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision was made to close all in-person programs and to continue to provide worship services through the livestream. Recognizing that there would be financial impacts to members of the congregation, a Member Support Fund was established. At the recommendation of the Mission Outreach Committee, Session approved a special Our Great Hour of Sharing offering to be collected to replenish this fund. In August, Session felt that it would be safe to reopen for in-person worship, with several safety guidelines in place. In addition, the Session took Nathanael Hood under its care as a pastoral inquiry candidate as he pursues a Masters of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. ●

CHURCH OPERATIONS SUMMARY THROUGH AUGUST

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Members' Pledge Payments	\$484,589	\$454,730
Other Operating Receipts	175,800	153,909
Investments Used	308,140	321,551
Operating Reserves	—	23,091
Funding Sources	\$968,529	\$953,281
Operating Disbursements	\$968,529	\$953,281

GIFTS TO OUR CHURCH

Food for the Needy from Les and Ann Heilakka, in loving memory of their parents and grandparents.

General Fund from Spencer and Ellen Everett, in loving memory of Dan Gimbel; and from Robert Paris, in loving memory of Robert H. Paris.

Memorial Garden Fund from Don and Karen Carter, in loving memory of John and Janet Loennecker.

Music Fund from Mike Bellamy and Kim Watts, Conrad Damian, and Al and Ellen Perlman, in loving memory of Frances Damian.

Remembrance Fund from Bradford and Joanne Boyd, in loving memory of Jim Wennerholt; from God's Grace Charitable Fund, in loving memory of Thomas Purdo; from Roger and Julie Klein, in loving memory of Carl Fedde's mother, Opal Fedde; from Lois Moore, in loving memory of Robert Howard; from George and Phyllis Kramer, Paul Lewis, William and Patricia Tew, and Richard Weagley, in loving memory of Bill Earnhart; from Gerald and Betty Seegers, in loving memory of Bill and Nancy Earnhart; in loving memory of Judy Mullennix from her family; from Mirta Viamontes, in loving memory of her husband Frank; and from Ken and Patty Years, in loving memory of Jim Wennerholt, Kathryn Buhle, Mary Anne Thompson, and Mabel Wimer. ●

2019 CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING UPDATE

You probably haven't driven to church in the past few months, and so you probably haven't seen the truck purchased for Kirk of the Pines in Marsh Harbour, Abaco through our Christmas Eve Offering this past December.

Marsh Harbour was devastated by Hurricane Dorian in 2019. Kirk of the Pines expressed the need for a truck where rebuilding materials can be safely stored for use by the community. A local muralist painted the truck, and we hope to be able to have it shipped to them soon. ●



Two new resources will be available by January for personal spiritual growth: *Nurture Faith, Volume 2* by Doug and Nathanael Hood and *Confronting Life's Challenges: Sermons on the Struggles We Face*, sermons by Doug Hood, Greg Rapier, and John "Skip" Randolph.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

A Movie Review by Nathanael Hood, MA, New York University

If there's one moment that best summarizes Jeff Fowler's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, it's a scene near the very beginning of the film that doesn't even feature its eponymous blue hedgehog of video game fame. Instead, it involves the secondary hero Tom Wachowski (James Marsden), the boring human sheriff of Green Hills, Montana who eventually gets roped into a cross-country road trip with the film's CGI hero to save the world from the evil mad scientist Dr. Robotnik (Jim Carrey). (Confused? Don't worry—there's barely any plot in this film. Just remember: blue video game mascot = good; Jim Carrey in a ridiculous mustache = bad.) In it, Tom discusses potentially moving to San Francisco with his wife Maddie (Tika Sumpter). In the middle of their conversation, Tom leans over and looks at Maddie's computer and asks what she's looking at.

"Oh, I was just checking Zillow for apartments in San Francisco," she chirps.

The camera cuts to her computer screen and lovingly lingers there long enough to show that, yes, she has indeed been using the real-life online real estate website Zillow to apartment hunt.

When I saw this in the movie theater I could feel my soul leaving

my body. Product placement is nothing new in Hollywood movies: ever since Steven Spielberg cut a deal with the Hershey Company to feature Reese's Pieces in *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), just about every major blockbuster features some form of corporate shilling. But this Zillow moment was so transparently obvious, so obnoxiously sinister in its casualness, that watching it was like getting slapped. And from there the pain only got worse. Olive Garden gets name-dropped, as does DC Comics, Disney, and Olive Garden a second time. It never ended—it was an endless cavalcade of name brands and logos.

Sonic the Hedgehog isn't a movie, it's a ninety-nine minute monstrosity made by corporations for other corporations. It's the definition of by-committee storytelling, perniciously milking every story cliché, every tired punchline, and every overworked emotion in the name of pushing brands on impressionable children. There's not a single joke that works, not a single physical gag that isn't telegraphed miles away, not a single comeback or quip that hasn't been featured in at least a dozen trailers, let alone movies. It shamelessly relies on nostalgia for the original Sega video game franchise to suck viewers into seats so it can bombard them with the cinematic equivalent of a handful of jangling keys. That this is what

passes for children's entertainment in 2020 is embarrassing; that it's already turned an impressive profit is horrifying. It's the commodification of human emotion for corporate gain.

Compare this instead to another recently released animated film, Will Becher and Richard Phelan's *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon*. A spin-off of the wildly popular *Wallace and Gromit* stop-motion film series by Aardman Animations, it's everything *Sonic the Hedgehog* isn't: heartfelt, sincere, inviting, and sidesplittingly hilarious. The story of a mischievous but kind-hearted sheep who helps a lost alien child find its way back to its home planet, there's not a drop of cynicism or sinister corporate intent anywhere in it. Whereas *Sonic the Hedgehog* features groan-worthy speeches about the importance of friendship—no doubt all approved by a boardroom somewhere—*Farmageddon* makes us feel and empathize with our fellow living creatures and the universal need for companionship and family. Much like Pixar or Disney at their best, we leave the film earnestly wanting to be kinder and gentler to those around us. These are positive, character-building lessons for young children, and the sprightly physical comedy and pacing ensures that parents will enjoy it too. It's streaming on Netflix right now. Your kids will love it, and you will too. And hey, there are no Zillow commercials in it either. ●

CELEBRATE WORLD COMMUNION BY PROVIDING FOOD FOR A FAMILY IN NEED

On October 4th, we open our doors for in-person worship and will be celebrating the Lord's Supper on World Communion Sunday. Rejoicing in this, the Mission Outreach Committee is asking you to bring a bag of food so that we can provide supper to those who are in need.



Unopened, non-perishable items are needed and include:

- Peanut Butter
- Canned Meat – Tuna, Chicken, Ham
- Boxed Pasta
- Bagged or Boxed Rice
- Dry Beans
- Canned Beans
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Soup
- Canned Spaghetti Sauce
- Canned Tomato Sauce

If you prefer not to shop during this time, you may choose to donate in the form of a check, payable to *CROS Ministries*, and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office. The suggested cost of a bag of food is \$30.

Throughout October we will continue to receive bags of food on Sunday mornings. Thank you for caring about the under-resourced in our community. ●

As part of our Nurture Faith column we asked members to share their personal daily spiritual practices for nurturing faith. If you feel inspired to share your own daily practice in a future publication, please email Doug Hood at doughood@firstdelray.com.

by Yvonne Martinez Thorne, Ed.D., M.Div.

*Counseling Psychologist and Founder of
Cultivating Wholeness Counseling Associates, INC.*

MY DAILY PRACTICE FOR NURTURING FAITH

When I was asked by Dr. Hood to contribute to his new column I immediately said, “Yes!” A daily nurturing of our faith is vitally important for a deeper walk with God and for living life with greater purpose and value. Yet, many of us have not established a consistent daily practice to accomplish this goal. Early in my faith walk I struggled to keep a regular routine. Through trial and error and often laughing at myself, I am today more comfortable with my daily practice.

What is your daily practice for spending time with God?

My current daily practice begins early each morning at 5:20 a.m. I get up, brush my teeth, and make the bed if it hasn’t already been made by my husband, often already awake ahead of me. By 5:40 a.m. we are sitting in the

quiet of the living room and begin our daily devotions that include quiet, prayer, and reading from a daily devotional, a practice we started at the beginning of our marriage some 28 years ago. We allow the chosen biblical text and the accompanying reflection to individually speak to us, then share what the Spirit has placed on our hearts. I also keep a personal journal of insights gleaned from our time of reflection. We end by sharing a prayer out loud with each other. Through these daily encounters we have discovered that our love for God and for God’s word has strengthened, as well as our marriage.

Following this time of devotion, we continue nurturing our faith with a daily 30- to 45-minute walk in our community or along the shore and surrounding beach areas. As we walk, we sometimes extend the sacred connection with God in silent prayer or in worshipful response to the amazing beauty of

creation on display in the glorious Delray Beach sunrises. I deeply enjoy these walks and daily contemplative times. They take me to deeper spiritual places with God, and God energizes me and lifts up my soul.

Throughout the day I will offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise. And more often than not at bedtime, I will either review my journal entry from the morning or enter into a contemplative/breath prayer where I invite God’s peace for the gift of blessed sleep that lies ahead.

What Bible passage is most meaningful to you and why?

I have two favorite Bible passages that continue to shape and nurture my walk in faith. Psalm 139 has special meaning for me. Several years ago, during a time of great loss and as I clung to God for answers and guidance, I believe that I was divinely led to

this passage. This Psalm spoke then and still speaks to me about the promise of God's eternal and abiding presence with me through His Spirit no matter what condition I find myself in. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" the Psalmist rhetorically asks in verse 7. God's constant presence and His perfect and complete knowledge of me allow me and inspire me to draw closer to Him as I seek to deepen my walk in faith.

The second passage of great spiritual significance to me is the Gospel of John 5:1-15. This passage speaks about an infirmed man's encounter with Jesus as he sought healing by the pool of Bethesda. Here was a man who was said to have been stricken with an illness for 38 years! Yet, Jesus confronts this sick man with a question: "Wilt thou be made whole?". Nurturing my faith requires that I continually cultivate a life of wholeness. Am I really ready to give up that "thing"? I desire to live a life of balance and wellness through my daily commitment to a deeper connection and wholeness with God. ●

by Dr. Ken Janson

WHAT IS YOUR DAILY PRACTICE FOR SPENDING TIME WITH GOD?

First I like to start the day with a cup of coffee, followed by a few minutes of meditation to feel the sense of a quiet mind. Then I will read a few pages of The C.S. Lewis Bible. The remarkable insights of C.S. Lewis have a powerful ability to translate the many powerful messages of the Bible into practical applications for daily life. I make a regular attempt to reflect on these Christ-inspired insights daily, and especially when circumstances of life become difficult. The Bible, and also for me the writings of

C.S. Lewis, have the ability to bring honest truth and clarity to the spiritual messages of the Bible. And, as a physician trained in physics, chemistry, biology, and advanced mathematics, I am continually impressed with the synergy between science and spirituality, not the opposite. I see no conflict. Virtually every advanced scientific discipline ultimately leads to a point of "something beyond".

How long have you followed this practice?

I have followed this practice for several years. Previously

I felt that I had no time beyond the personal and professional challenges of the day. In retrospect, I feel that if I had started this spiritual journey earlier, it would certainly have helped with making better personal and professional decisions, and with being able to find peace and perspective in the midst of daily stress.

What time of day do you do this?

I try to begin and end the day in this manner, and to keep some appropriate Biblical thought in mind to apply throughout the day.

***What are you now reading
for spiritual inspiration
other than the Bible?***

I enjoy Doug Hood's Weekly Meditations and other Christian commentaries. I strongly recommend everyone to read C.S. Lewis's great book *Mere Christianity*, which I initially read many years ago and enjoy re-reading.

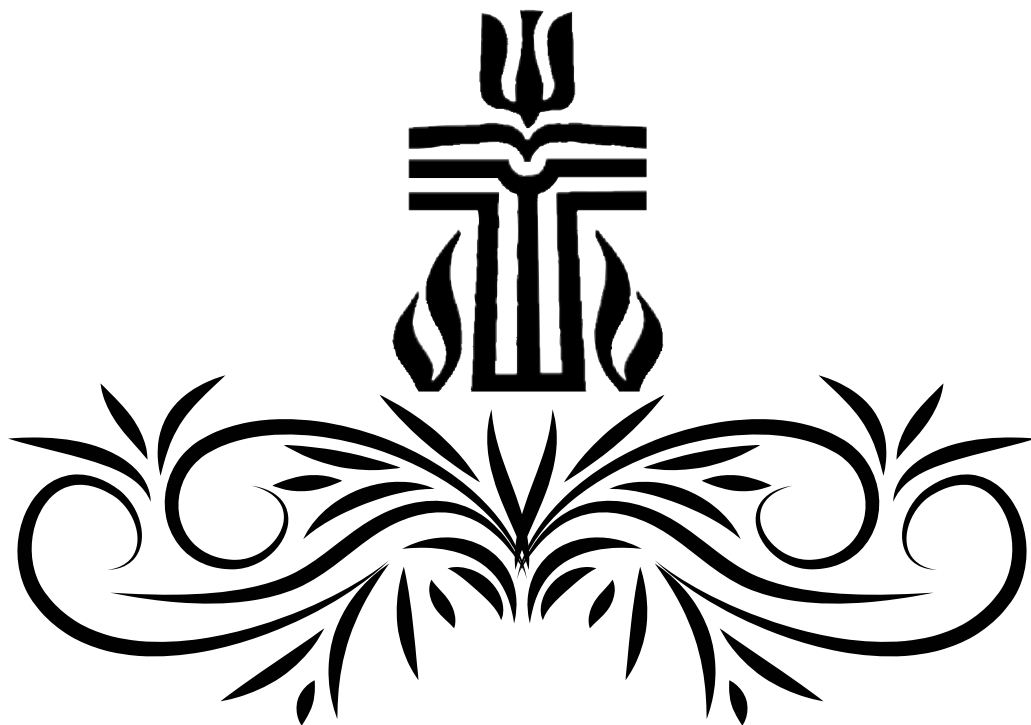
***Which Bible passage
is most meaningful to
you and why?***

I wouldn't know where to start. Every day brings new discoveries and fresh insights.

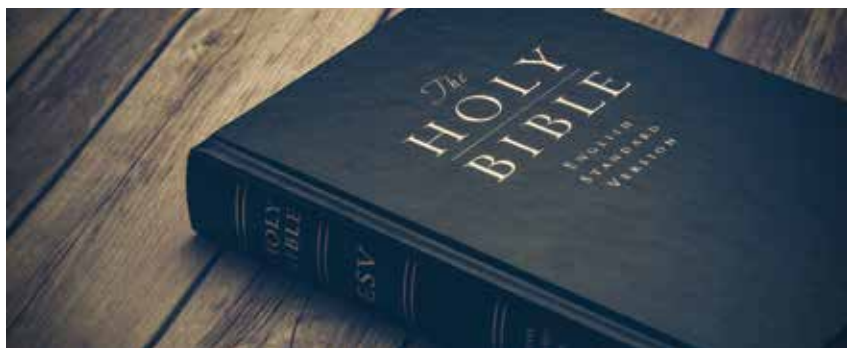
***What are the difficulties
you encounter as you seek
to nurture your faith?***

I find that stepping back from the imminent demands of the day to find spiritual perspective and balance is an ongoing challenge, but remains critically important. In a way, I feel that there is an analogy to the practice of starting a vigorous daily physical exercise program: it is hard to start, but once begun, and certainly when finished, these disciplines are found to be of undeniable value and can clearly make for a much better day. I still struggle with the "Why do bad things happen to good people?" dilemma. This is an area where we all need

the support, counseling, and expertise of trained theologians to help us find honest and accurate spiritual perspectives. Dr. Hood explained to me some time ago that a better way to rephrase the question would simply be: "Why do bad things happen?" Asking the question that way made a lot of sense to me. We do live in a broken world. I have come to understand that, in our role as Christians, we should accept this reality, but then do everything in our power to bring peace and healing to this broken world: praying and acting so that we can move toward "Thy Kingdom come, on earth, as it is in Heaven". ●



MONDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY



Neither the pandemic nor great distances have kept the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study from getting together to learn and socialize. Thanks to the magic of Zoom, we have been meeting virtually at 10 a.m. on Monday mornings from wherever we happen to be. Ladies call in from Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Connecticut, North Carolina, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and, of course, Florida. At first, our main goal was to figure out how to connect to Zoom, and then became how to not all talk at the same time.

Our proficiency has improved and our meetings consist of three parts:

First, Martha Smith plays a hymn on her piano and provides background information on when, why, and by whom the hymn was composed. It is a new way for us to understand our faith and sing together (although some of us have promised to sing with the mute function on!).

After our opening hymn, we move on to our weekly discussion topic. We are currently reading the book *What Is the Bible? How an Ancient Library of Poems, Letters, and Stories Can Transform the Way You Think and Feel About Everything* by Rob Bell. With insight and wit, he presents a new way to read the Bible. Breaking our former "no homework rule", we individually read three short chapters a week and then discuss them together on Monday mornings.

Finally, we share prayer concerns and weather reports from around the country. It is so good to see each other's smiling faces – even if it is only on a screen. If you aren't already on the list and would like to receive a Zoom invite, please email Maria Graham at mmg2352@gmail.com. All are welcome! ●

NEW MEMBERS

Beverly Chavez Jacobo
Birgit Fioravante
Rosemary Giesecking
Daniel Parkinson
Renee Parkinson
Molly Parkinson
Sandra Wertz
Steve Wertz



ETERNAL LIVES

Mary Brower – February 1, 2020
Robert Howard – March 12, 2020
Laddie Bondor – March 12, 2020
Frances Damian – April 3, 2020
Lynne Moss – May 15, 2020
James Wennerholt – June 4, 2020
Katheryn Buhle – June 19, 2020
Mary Anne Thompson – July 8, 2020
Mabel Wimer – July 10, 2020
Theodore Brophy – August 3, 2020
Judy Mullennix – August 23, 2020
William Earnhart – August 30, 2020
Joan Sopp – September 20, 2020

CHANCEL FLOWER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the time that the church was closed for in-person worship, the flowers that beautified the Chancel were donated as follows:

Sunday, March 15, 2020 from Bob and Natalie Van Brott, in loving memory of their daughter, Sanderson Anne; brothers, George and Buck; and sister, Anne.

Sunday, March 22, 2020 from Joan Sopp, in loving memory of her husband Al.

Sunday, March 29, 2020 from Judy Hodge, in loving memory of Betty and Mark Matthews and Jim Hodge.

Sunday, April 19, 2020 from the Earnhart family, in loving memory of wife, mother, and grandmother, Nancy Earnhart.

Sunday, April 26, 2020 from Robert Troup, in loving memory of his wife, Genevieve, and their son, Charles Griffiths Troup.

Sunday, May 3, 2020 from Mom and Dad, and sisters Paige and Carly, and Nana Coles, in loving memory of Cailee–Ellen Coles.

Sunday, May 10, 2020 from Tim and Becky Knapp, in honor of all mothers, but in particular in remembrance of Tim's mother, Beverly, and in honor of Becky's mother, Twyla.

Sunday, May 24, 2020 from Nancy Graham and Sally Bush, in loving memory of their mother, Eleanor Wheeler.

Sunday, June 7, 2020 given in memory of Abigail, with love from Mommy and Daddy.

Sunday, June 21, 2020 from Jerry and Dorothy Barding, in loving memory of Jerry's father, Ralph Barding; and from Marge Lanthier, in loving memory of her husband, Jack.

Sunday, July 5, 2020 from their children and their families, in loving memory of Howard and Ruth Smith.

Sunday, July 19, 2020 from Piper, Parker, Kendall, and baby Reid, and all the Mays family, in loving memory of their great Pop-Pop, Joe W. Mays, Sr.

Sunday, July 26, 2020 from Suzanne Morris, in loving memory of her daughter, Cynthia Platt; and from her family, in loving memory of mother, grandmother, and wife, Carol Lewis.

Sunday, August 2, 2020 from Richard Schaublin, in loving memory of his sister, Irene Solomito.

Sunday, August 9, 2020 from Gary Clark, in loving memory of his parents, Lawrence and Betty Clark.

Sunday, August 16, 2020 from the Smith family, in loving memory of Rob Smith, husband, father, granddad, and great-granddad.

Sunday, August 30, 2020 from Jay and Paula Post, in honor of the Post family.

Sunday, September 6, 2020 from the Lewis family, in loving memory of Carol Lewis, beloved wife, mother, and grandmother.

Sunday, September 13, 2020 from Jennifer Buce and Jamie Whalen, in loving memory of parents and grandparents, James and Margaret Bowen.

Sunday, September 20, 2020 from Paul and Andy Miller, in loving memory of Paul's father, Paul.

Sunday, September 27, 2020 from Robert Troup, in loving memory of his wife, Genevieve, and his mother, Elizabeth Rice. ●

The Community Church by the Sea

33 Gleason Street, Delray Beach, Florida 33483

(561) 276-6339

This church magazine is available online at www.firstdelray.com. If you are interested in receiving an electronic copy of this publication, please email Nancy Fine at nancyfine@firstdelray.com

Sunday Morning Worship Service

10 a.m.
for October

9 a.m. & 11 a.m.
for November

Two Worship Services

**On Sunday, November 1st,
we will resume two services
9 a.m. and 11 a.m.**

**Daylight Savings Time
ends on Sunday,
November 1st.
Remember to set your
clocks back one hour.**

