

Celebration News



December, 2014 - Volume 24 - Issue 4

Greetings

Greetings to all of you as we approach the season of Advent. This is a time of expectation and awe; a time of Joy, Hope, Love, and Peace.

I spent this evening at the church with our Bible Study group sharing Luke's story about what happened in the days following the birth of Jesus. We were trying to put all the pieces together of all the birth narratives and enjoying the miracle of those stories.

Then I came home to the news of Ferguson, Missouri, and the rioting, the looting, the fires, and the dangerous situations going on in front of my very eyes.

I then turned on my computer to get some information for our November 30th worship service and I see a big title: *Christians Behaving Badly*. I am sure that there are many Christians out there doing just that and not just in Ferguson. It made me think about how I may have behaved badly lately.

At this moment I wonder, where is the hope, joy, love and peace? WE have been told in recent counsel to the church the answer is found in the mission of Jesus Christ. There are lessons to be learned here. How do we react to situations like the ones we are facing in the world today? I feel that as long as we remember the message of Jesus Christ and move to serve in that direction, we will feel the joy, hope, love and peace that this season brings to us. We have an obligation to help prepare the way.

Nanette Dizney, Pastor



Remember Christmas Eve

Join us on Wednesday, December 24, for a Christmas Eve worship service starting at 6:00 pm. The Christmas story will be shared with us through personal testimonies of Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, the innkeeper, a shepherd, and a wise man. We will listen to the scriptures, and we will sing carols. All are invited to leave the hustle and bustle behind for a little while and be moved and blessed by the testimonies of the participants in **The First Christmas**. Bring your friends and neighbors to this service of worship.

A Team Endeavor

The Teams of Develop Disciples to Serve and Experiencing Congregations in Mission are now meeting together the fourth Sunday of each month right after the worship service. You do not have to be a team member to attend a meeting. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. This is not a meeting you are required to attend regularly, but your input would be greatly appreciated. We would love for you to drop in and share your ideas on what you would like to see when it comes to developing disciples to serve and/or experiencing congregations in mission. If you would like to see new classes on the schedule, drop by and share your ideas. If you would like to see a new activity going on in the church one or multiple times, stop by and share your ideas. We look forward to your joining us at our next meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Oh yes, we will be providing a light snack also!

Melinda Creel and Dan Willetts

The Christmas Heart

Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart, a wide open heart that thinks of others first. The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all of history because it meant the pouring into a sick world medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost 2,000 years. Underneath all the bulging bundles is this beating Christmas heart.

-George Matthew Adams

Christmas Surprises!

In this age when none of us seem to be able to WAIT for anything, Christmas can still surprise us. In a time of microwave popcorn, timed defrosting and instant messaging, it is amazing that we can still be amazed by the unexpected.

When I was very small, I remember moving my little chair very close to the Christmas tree. I could sit there in the living room where no one sat and stare for the longest time into the tree at all that glittered. It seemed to be an actual *place* I could go and imagine all that was to come. The anticipation seemed to be made more bearable by all of the lights and their reflections in the "land of the tree". In fact, I think in many ways I wanted Christmas to never really come because then all of this beautiful wonder would have to be put away for another year.

No, I simply loved the anticipation of all the possibilities that Christmas seemed to make real. After seeing so many Christmases come and go, it makes me wonder if that is how God feels about us, every day of every year. He gave us a creation and lives filled with so many possibilities, and we have but to claim them. When I remember the joy that the little boy felt looking into that "tree world", it gives me pause. It helps me to sense more fully the joy our Father feels when we accept His love and step up to the life He wants for us!

In this season filled with so much anticipation and so much hope, let us share the life God wants for us with everyone we meet. Let us remember what it felt like to wonder and to ache for the possibilities in life. Let us celebrate a love like no other sent to us in the form of the child, Jesus!

Jim Deering, Pursue Peace Leader



Our congregation was asked to bring new or gently used items for the New Port Richey congregation. There are many in that congregation who are homeless. We were asked to bring items to keep them warm and make life a little better. The collection of the items was part of our Thanksgiving worship service. Our congregation responded with thanksgiving and love!





Join Us in Our December Journey

We are still in the spirit of Thanksgiving as we move into the season of Advent. The church has been decorated and everywhere we look we see evidence of the coming Christmas celebration. We are in a time of waiting. November 30 was the first Sunday of Advent with an emphasis of hopeful waiting. For three more weeks we eagerly await the birth of Jesus.

If we could ask God, what would the answer be to the question, "What is on God's Christmas list?" The answer will be revealed in the morning service on December 21. You don't want to miss it.

The Second Sunday of Advent - December 7

Prepare the Way

Today we focus on *LOVE*. Mark's Gospel lets us know who the good news is about. The life and ministry of Jesus is a journey, which leads to Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross. We, like the early disciples, are called to join Jesus on the way that has been prepared for us. We come today to hear the good news of what is to come. Elder **Ginger Robertson** and Evangelist **Glenn Day** will be sharing the good news with us on this Communion Sunday.

The Third Sunday of Advent - December 14

Rejoice in the Lord

Today we focus on *JOY*. The promised Messiah is God's agent of change to bring joy and righteousness into a suffering and oppressive world. We rejoice today that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed. Under the leadership of Elder **Charyn Walker** and Priest **Charlie Walker**, we will discover how we are called to make a difference in our troubled world.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 21

His Name is Jesus

Today we focus on *PEACE*. The scripture text for this Sunday will remind us that God is always surprising people, disrupting our lives, just when we think we have things planned. There are only four more days left for us to slow down and make room in our lives for the Savior. What is on God's Christmas List? Are you prepared to offer it to God as your gift? Elder **Jim Deering** will bring the message, and Priest **Nancy Skene**, as presider on this Sunday, will be opening the big box. Can you guess what is in it?

Christmas Eve - December 24

The First Christmas

The First Sunday after Christmas Day - December 28

Guided by the Spirit

The guiding of the spirit is evident throughout the Christmas story. After the birth of Jesus, as was the custom, Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to God. The Spirit guided Simeon and Anna as they became instruments of God's blessing to Jesus and his parents. Guided by the Spirit, Priest **Melinda Creel** will preside over this service as Evangelist **Bob Slasor** brings a message challenging us to keep our lives focused on the One who was sent to redeem the world.

Wednesday night Prayer and Praise services offer opportunities to renew and refresh your relationship with God during this busy season. Take time to attend and see what it can do for your week.

Merry Christmas

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team

Hanging of the Greens

On Saturday, November 29, a crew of people gathered at the church with a purpose in mind - to make our church home beautiful for the Christmas season. The decorations were brought down from the attic, and the task was begun.

Over the years the willing decorators have settled into a pattern of doing the jobs they like best. An energetic group began the morning by bringing the boxes down for the decorators to go through. For a while, it looked like chaos struck when the boxes were opened and their contents spread out. A group of children tackled

decorating the tree. That may be because they got to climb the ladder to place that one special ornament on that one special branch way up high.

Another person carefully placed the nativity scene on the table in the narthex. Another person hung all the banners in the Fellowship Hall. He usually finds a assistant or two to help him. Through the generosity of a local grocery store who has shared their used banners with us, we now have enough banners to line the classroom hallway as well. The wreaths were hung by one person while another stood back to make sure they were straight.

It was a team effort, and gradually the decorators left to take care of their own tasks in preparation of the coming season. But their work made a difference to all the worshippers who were blessed by their handiwork on Sunday morning, the first Sunday of Advent.

Thank you to all those who participated. If you missed the fun and are looking for a way you can help, join us on January 10, 2015, at 10:00 am for the taking down party.





The other day I saw an article where a woman was approaching her birthday and decided to ask her friends on Facebook to actually give her the gift of a wish for something that they could do WITH her, and the time it would take to make that wish come true, instead of just the typical typed phrase of *HAPPY BIRTHDAY*. In this age of technology, meaningful communication seems to have taken a back seat. A quick sentence on the computer saves so much valuable time is our rationale.

The greatest thing happened yesterday, my husband Jim received an ACTUAL letter in the mail from an old friend! Imagine that....an honest to goodness, on

paper, letter! He was so thrilled to get it and the contents took him back in time to a wonderful place of memories.

As we near the holidays, memories seem to come out of the woodwork!! Beautiful memories of Christmases past; traditions and special times spent with family and friends. With the days flying by and time getting short, our attention turns to the age-old problem of gifts, and what do I get for those on my list. We all want to find the "perfect" gift for those closest to us to show how much they mean to us, how much we value them. By George, I've GOT it!! What could be more valuable than sitting down and actually writing a letter to someone who is important in your life? Taking the time to express how much they mean to you or recalling the memories that you have shared that have helped to make you the person that you are.

And what about Jesus? We can't sit down and write Him a letter that could be mailed, but we can certainly take the time to sit down and tell Him what He means to us, especially at this time of the year. We have just celebrated Thanksgiving and hopefully taken the time to reflect on those things in our life that we are most thankful for. In my life, ALL of those things have been blessings showered on me by my Heavenly Father.

I know that I will try to do something more meaningful for Jesus to celebrate this year; I will take the time to put on paper what His birthday means to me, and then I will sit down and share it with Him.

I want to take this opportunity to share with all of you, my precious church family, that you are among my greatest blessings and I have given thanks for the gift of you. May we enter this joyous season with a spirit of thankfulness for the greatest gift of Love we will ever receive, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Carolyn Deering, Editorial Staff

There is no ideal Christmas; only the one Christmas you decide to make as a reflection of your values, desires, affections, traditions. -- Bill McKibben

Updates Needed

The **2015 Bradenton/Sarasota Congregation Directory** is in the beginning stage. Your help is needed if you have changed your address, phone or cell number or your e-mail address. Please contact **Elaine Gregg** by the first week in January, 2015, with your updated information.



A Gift that Keeps on Giving

If you are struggling over what to get that special person(s), please consider **Outreach International**. You can give two chickens for \$25 or a goat and two chickens for \$100! Two chickens can provide a family with a steady supply of protein-rich eggs! There are also the goats, fishing kits, school supplies, carpentry tools, clean water bucket filters, and many more. There are gifts for \$15 and up (1/4 acre of land costs \$1,000)!

Spread your joy of giving around the world this Christmas. Go to outreachshop.org or call 1.888.356.777 which is a 24 hour toll-free call, for more information.



Opportunities to Serve

Whoever brings blessings will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. Proverbs 11:25

Have you heard the saying it takes a village to raise a child? Well, the same can be said for a church. It takes a family of many to run and maintain a church. There are many opportunities available for those who are willing to serve. If we could find a way for all of us to share the responsibility of running the church, we could ensure that it is always a blessing to serve. It is our hope to hear all say "I get to serve today" rather than "I have to serve today." If we all share the load, our serving will become the blessings they should be rather than the burden they can become. Please review the following list to see if there are one or two opportunities you would like to take part in. Please don't feel you cannot take part in a responsibility because you are not available every Sunday. Volunteering one Sunday a month or one Sunday every couple of months is a value added to our church. Please note we are willing to train or mentor anyone willing to serve.

OUTDOOR SIGN - A person or a group of persons is needed to update the sign every Sunday after church. This is an opportunity to make an outreach ministry of your own. If you are interested, please contact **Nanette Dizney**.

SUNDAY SCHOOL DIRECTOR - We are looking for someone to oversee our Sunday School classes. This would entail making sure we have teachers and curriculum. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact **Dan Willetts**.

KITCHEN - There are many opportunities available in the kitchen. A person is needed to build the schedule and organize the work that takes place in the kitchen as well as someone to do the shopping for the kitchen supplies. Many new and old faces are needed in the kitchen for fellowships and potlucks. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact **Melinda Creel**.

NURSERY - Persons are needed to play and entertain our two to five year old children during the 10:55 am Worship Service. You don't have to do this alone but can ask to assist someone else. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact **Lisa Rodriguez**.

GREETERS - We are looking for individuals or groups of individuals to greet those entering the church on Sunday morning. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact **Nanette Dizney**.

MAINTENANCE WORKERS - People are always needed to assist with the maintenance of the church facility. If you are willing to assist with maintenance or to be included in a church workday, please contact **Brad Martin**.

MUSIC - We are looking for musically talented individuals to assist with our church service music ministry. If you have a talent you would like to share or if you have piano or vocal skills you would like to strengthen, please contact **Nanette Dizney**.

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galations 5:13-14

MahJongg

A group of ladies are meeting at the church on Thursdays at 1:30 pm. They are playing the game MahJongg. If you are interested in learning to play, please contact **Fay Beers** at 941.751.2993 or faybeers@aol.com for more information. All are welcome.



Thank You - Thank You - Thank You -

Many thanks to those who have offered their quiet ministry by tending to the bushes and landscaping around the church these past months. Some have been faithfully weeding the garden in the front of the church. Several others have been trimming the overgrown bushes and bagging the trimmings. Your efforts are noticeable and appreciated.

Brad Martin,
Facility Management Facility

Kids Have a HayDay at Weekend VBS

What could be better on a beautiful October weekend than a visit to the farm? This year we tried something a little different and planned our Vacation Bible School as a weekend of harvest fun where we learned that through Jesus Christ, God is our forever friend.

The fun began on Friday evening of the third weekend in October. As the children came in to register, they were greeted by staff members in their "farm attire", with lots of pumpkins, bales of hay, corn stalks and fall leaves to add to the festive theme. While they gathered for the opening ceremony, a fun hay ride, provided by **Lonnie Cooper** awaited them. **Charlie and Charyn Walker** provided a campfire with hot dogs, s'mores and songs as their final evening destination.

Saturday morning a special guest welcomed the children; Sunflower Sam (also known as **Ryan Hollenbeck**) shared his story about how much God loves us and wants to be our friend. The children, who ranged in age from three years to 13 were then treated to a full day of Bible Stories, Crafts, Games, Music and, of course, a delicious "farm" lunch! During the craft class, children decorated little flower pots with handmade flowers and a Bible verse as a service project. The pots were then given to residents of Arden Court nursing facility.

We ended our weekend VBS with the children, led by **Ginger Robertson** and **Heather Devine**, sharing their HayDay experience with the congregation during the Sunday morning worship service. The big surprise came at the end of the service when Sunflower Sam revealed himself as Jesus. We had a incredible staff of volunteers who made the weekend amazing. Many thanks to those mentioned above along with **Leah Jones, Vera Kramer, Amy Smeralda, Lisa Rodriguez, Nanette Dizney, Kaitlyn James, Jonathan Robertson, Dave Robertson, Rick and Randy Primrose, Elaine Gregg, Melinda Creel, Margie Boettger**, and the congregational support that made this ministry possible. The entire weekend "moooved" us all closer to God!

Ginger Robertson



How Are We Doing?

Actual Income	\$40,479
Planned Budget Income	<u>48,316</u>
Difference of Actual Income to Planned Budget	<u>\$(7,837)</u>
Actual Income	\$40,479
Actual Expenses	<u>39,320</u>
Difference of Actual Income to Actual Expenses	<u>\$ 1,159</u>

As you can see, we need everyone's support if we are going to meet our Planned Budget for 2014.

Bob Beers, Congregational Financial Officer



- 07 Daryl Quinn
- 09 Bob Slasor
- 13 Rosalee Long
- 22 Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina
- 26 Jim Brouger
- 29 Shirley Clow
- 30 Carol Law
- 30 Nancy & Lee Peters (anniv)