



Celebration News

February, 2014 - Volume 24 - Issue 1

Love Your Neighbor

Last Friday the most wonderful things happened to me. First, one of my favorite Baristas at Starbucks used her free coffee on me. I thought it was a thoughtful thing to do for me. On my way out of the store a gentleman came back to the door to open it for me! I thought "wow" that is kind and does not happen too often anymore. Then as I was trying to back out of my parking space, the drive-thru line was blocking me in. The gentleman behind me backed his car up with room for me to get out. At this point I am popping with joy. I have to be honest, I was smiling all day and it started from three random acts of kindness within two minutes. How often does this happen? How often do we take the time to notice the little things? Too often we find ourselves focusing on the wrong things. We put our focus on the small and sometimes big things people do that offend us. This focus pulls the joy out of our lives.

Last weekend at the Leading Congregations in Mission (LCM) retreat, I learned two very valuable pieces of advice.

♥ **Everyone Needs Validation** - We need to take the time to say thank you. Lets point out that we love a new haircut rather than just thinking it. Do you remember the last time someone said something nice to you out of the blue and how wonderful that felt?

♥ **Choose Not to Be Offended** - Anytime someone says something that we feel is wrong or unkind we make a choice to either take offense to the comment or not. If we make an effort to not be offended, how much happier we would be and how much happier the people around us would be.

This year it is my goal to take the time to notice the small and kind gestures and return them to others. I am going to choose to *Love My Neighbor*. I challenge all to do the same. I believe this small gesture will help us to share God's love. I look forward to hearing about all the joys that everyone will begin to feel.

Jesus said to him, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37-39 (NKJV)*

Melinda Creel

Fund-Raising

The dates are not yet set, but several fund-raising events for the first quarter of 2014 are in the planning stages.

Our Annual Yard Sale is expected to take place sometime in March. Start gathering items for the yard sale now. Any and all volunteers for the Yard Sale are welcome and will be greatly appreciated.

Also in the works are a "chili cook off" and a potato/salad/dessert bar. The latter event will also feature a "silent auction".

Very soon we will have available for purchase or donation the "Hymns of the Saints" as well as the smaller supplemental hymnals. Plan now to purchase several of these "old" hymnals because in addition to adding to your library, we will offer a class or two with several of our "master craftswomen" who will teach us how to transform a hymnal into a functional work of art!

As soon as the dates are set, we will get the word out so all can share and fellowship in these important opportunities to serve and reach out in our *Community of Christ*.

2014 Directory is Being Distributed

Bradenton/Sarasota's 2014 Congregational Directory is in the process of being distributed. If you do not receive your copy within the next couple weeks, please contact **Elaine Gregg** (941.351.1072 or efgregg@msn.com).

Introducing the Kramers

"Hi, we are the Kramers, Dick and Vera, from Independence, Missouri. We moved to Sarasota last June and are loving it, even more so when we talk to our friends back in Missouri and listen to their tales of woe about the cold weather!"



Dick and Vera actually met when they were quite young. They went to the same elementary school and church, but it wasn't until they were both in Zion's League (church youth group) that they started dating. They were married in 1963 at the Stone Church in Independence. They have attended several congregations in the center area, the last one being East Alton since 1978.

The Kramers have two children. A daughter, Kim Laeupple, lives in Madison, AL (Huntsville) with husband Dan and son David. Their son Wes lives in Kansas City, MO with his wife Laurie and stepsons John and Keegan. Vera enjoys baking (see one of her most requested recipes below). Dick enjoys doing odd jobs and retirement.

Dick retired in 2009 from the Estate and Financial Planning Dept. of the World church. Vera retired in 2006 from coordinating intern/residency programs at Medical Center of Independence. Dick holds the office of Elder and Vera the office of Priest. They are looking forward to worshipping, fellowshiping, and serving the Lord in whatever way they can in their new church home.

Vera's Pumpkin Bars

2 cups sugar	
1 cup salad oil	
4 eggs (or egg substitute)	
2 cups pumpkin (or 15 oz can)	Frosting:
2 cups flour	1 8 oz. pkg cream cheese
1 tsp cinnamon	3/4 stick of butter
2 tsp baking power	3 cups powered sugar
1 tsp baking soda	1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp salt	2 tblsp milk (optional)
1 tsp vanilla	

Mix together and pour into 11 x 17 jelly roll pan which has been sprayed with regular cooking spray or a baking spray. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 - 30 mins.

Praise Be to God

All that I desire to say today is "praise be to God" for the eventful things that have happened in my life recently. He puts such wonderful opportunities before us if we just continue to look for his presence in the people and places we meet on our journey.

This past weekend, those involved in the Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT) and Leading Congregations in Mission (LCM) were able to sit and listen to Apostle Ron Harmon and Rob Borkowski, the coordinator of the LCM pilot project, as they were able to teach us some of the methods and tools available to us to help all of us discern what the mission of Jesus Christ is all about. This was our third retreat together. Many others from the International Church have met with us as we have gathered together before. It is at these meetings that I begin to really appreciate those people that serve us at the World Church level. They are committed. They are smart. They are full of the spirit which moves them forth in faith, confidence, and mission.

We will be sharing many of the things we have learned over the next few years in our Mission Initiative teams. Please join at least one of the teams and share your skills and ideas with others. On February 9th the PLT will be in charge of the worship service. At that time, we will attempt to share with you the direction we feel we need to pursue for the coming year. We would also like you to share in the Mission Prayer every day. It is:

*God, where will your Spirit lead today!
Help me be fully awake and ready to
respond.
Grant me the courage to risk
something new
And become a blessing of your love
and peace.
Amen.*

Nanette Dizney, Pastor

Exploring the Teachings of Jesus

The Epiphany season began on January 6 and ends on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The Epiphany theme of "appearance" usually includes the story of the Wise Men, the star, and the flight into Egypt. Another major focus of this season is on the growth, life and teachings of Jesus. The scripture lessons for the four Sundays in February are all from the 5th chapter of Matthew.

February 2

Matthew 5:1-12

Blessings of Community

The Beatitudes, found in these verses in Matthew, introduce the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gives eight blessings as he teaches the good news to the newly recruited disciples and the crowds of believers. Elders **Elaine Gregg** and **Dick Kramer** will share with us the good news that Jesus introduces through the Beatitudes.

February 9

Matthew 5:13-20

Let Your Light Shine

Jesus continues his teaching in these verses immediately following the Beatitude blessings. In these verses he uses salt and light to teach the lesson. High Priest **Nanette Dizney** along with the Pastoral Leadership Team will present opportunities where we can let our light shine in the coming year. Youth Ministries Day will also be observed on this Sunday.

February 16

Matthew 5:21:37

Be Reconciled

The focus of Jesus' teaching in the next verses of Matthew 5 reflects the new way of life people are called to live in the kingdom of God. A higher righteousness is expected of the followers of Jesus. Elder **Charyn Walker** will preside during this service with Evangelist **Karen Palko** speaking.

February 2

Matthew 5:38-48

Love beyond Boundaries

Followers of Jesus were subject to the powerful Jews and Roman occupiers. In these verses Jesus teaches an alternative view of resistance. He teaches us to find nonviolent ways to nurture the kingdom of God. We are to find peaceful and loving ways to contend with our enemies. Elder **Rick Jones** will bring the message on this Sunday with Priest **Vera Kramer** presiding.



Wednesday Prayer and Praise services begin at 7:00 pm. You are

encouraged to join the faithful core of worshipers who enjoy fellowshiping, praying, and praising together each Wednesday.

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team

Help Abolish Poverty and End Suffering

Do you ever think about helping children who don't have enough to eat, women and children who are victims of slavery, vets who are homeless, and many others who are disenfranchised, suffering from the dramatic effects of poverty or suffering in any other way? While it is impossible to help everyone, with many hands pitching in on one or two projects, we can make a difference in the lives of people.

If you are passionate about helping those who are in poverty or suffering, join in the first meeting on the Mission Initiative **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering on Tuesday, February 18th at 6:30 pm**. See further information below.

How can we make a difference? How can we help? Join me as we study this mission. Find out what the scriptures say about Christ and his disciples as they worked to help all people. Let's learn and discern what we can do to help our brothers and sisters in need.

We plan to meet monthly to learn what needs there are, what others are doing, and discern what we as a congregation can do. Then we will put our plan into action. Let's learn, discern, and practice together. We can abolish poverty and end suffering one step at a time.

You are invited to join me, **Jo Willetts**, on Tuesday, February 18th in the Fellowship Hall. We will start at **6:30 pm** with a light meal and coffee or tea. **Please** call me at 941.724.4220 or email me at jo_dan_us@yahoo.com if you are interested in being a part of the Abolish Poverty, End Suffering Mission.

In a Setting that Invites Trust

Note: Richard Allshouse is a former member and pastor of our congregation. A few years ago Richard and his wife Edie moved to Uruguay which is in South America. They began this adventure knowing no one and not speaking the language. He has shared his experiences and thoughts with **Bona Lee** and other friends. Recently he posted the following and was asked if it could be shared in our newsletter.

Sundays in Colnia always seem particularly nice. Since there is no *Community of Christ* congregation here, every morning coffee (6 AM) is my quiet time, think time, worship time, prayer time. That doesn't change on Sunday, but the community changes.

I walk the dogs along the Rio de la Plata. Even at 9 AM there are very few people out. The river and sky are blue. The temperature is 25C (77 F). The water is calm. The beach is smooth. In a way it's like going to church without any effort and without any time slot or traffic that so often was the way of past years. All together, it's a setting in which to listen to that inner voice that teaches me to undo



things anchored in fear, and invites me to trust the Source of peace and joy that is promised.

In big ways and in small ones, I am learning that the promises are true and always have been for each one that is sent to "Earth School" (my term). The power of choice is, indeed, my own. I know I'm not alone in this. I look forward to the tipping point when there are enough people that radiate the light that gently dismisses darkness and subdues the egos that would separate and judge others.

Unity is on my mind today. Oneness is certainly not a new idea. It is contagious and the kind of miracle to which all are entitled. I think it is intended.

Love from here, Richard

Questions to Ask Myself

At the end of the day the questions I will ask myself are:

Did I love enough?
Did I laugh enough?
Did I make a difference?



Experience Congregations in Mission

We are poised to become a congregation that is the true and living expression of Jesus Christ, woven together by the Spirit, and sent into the world as evangelistic witnesses, compassionate ministers, and justice and peacemakers.

What do these words mean to our Church in general? What do these words mean to our Congregation? What do these words mean to you personally?

If these words intrigue you, please consider joining my team. What is my team you ask? My team is focusing around **Experience Congregations in Mission**. As we form this team, we will build a deeper understanding of experiencing congregations in mission. Once the team has built a true understanding of the mission, we will begin to discern on the mission. We will build small and long term goals. Our discussions will be open and safe of criticism. The sky is the limit. We can discuss all of the great things we are currently doing in our congregation and in our lives. We can discuss possible ways to improve some of our current processes or we can find a new process that will lead us down a path of experiencing congregations in mission. This is a great opportunity to make a difference in our congregation and to build everlasting friendships. I truly look forward to venturing out into this mission with as many of you who will come along.

Melinda Creel, Member of Pastoral Leadership Team

Don't Forget

Ink cartridges are wanted by **Elaine Gregg**. The cartridges received are recycled and the church receives credit that goes toward paper, ink, and other supplies.

Prescription bottles can be brought to the church and placed in the designated container in the office which will be recycled by **Carolyn Deering**. You may also take those bottles directly to Publix for recycling. If you have questions, contact Carolyn.

Alumnum cans are still being recycled by the youth. Place your cans in the designated containers on the covered porch located on the south side of the church building. Monies received are used to supplement items for their Shoe Box project and some fun activities.

Spiral binders from the "old" church directories, if in good condition, can be recycled. Give to **Elaine Gregg**.

Food Pantry Numbers Continue to Increase

Volunteers for **Our Father's Cupboard** have been very busy in recent months. Client numbers have steadily increased since November. Open on the third Saturday of every month, our volunteer teams are vital to the overall operation of our *Community of Christ* food pantry. Even though we have greatly increased the amount of food we order each month, we end up with nearly bare shelves when the doors are closed after distribution.

On Wednesday, **Brad Martin** picks up the preordered food along with government commodities, if available, and delivers it to the pantry located in the building behind the church. A group of about seven volunteers is waiting to unload and open the *many* boxes of food loaded on pallets. They then organize and shelve the food. By 10:00 Thursday morning, another group of six or seven volunteers assemble to pack 80 large paper grocery bags (donated by Publix Supermarkets) completely full of enough food to feed 3-4 people for about three days. Families receive bags proportionate to the number of people in their household.

Saturday is our distribution day, with another team of six or seven volunteers. **Lynn Bryant, Jo Fenn-Martin** and **Jeanette Harris** take care of our registration, sign in and record keeping. Because of their team effort, our client guests are checked in quickly and efficiently. The bags are so heavy that we get another group of usually three strong volunteers, **Calvin Long, Dave Robertson and Jonathan Robertson**, who collect the clients' cards, load their groceries on small carts, and take the food to their vehicles. We all must give credit to **Brad Martin, Jim Brougner** and **Dave Robertson**, our Pantry task force, for creating this organization concept a few years ago. It has worked well. I would like to add that there is always a need for volunteers for our food pantry. While we have a phenomenal group of regulars, we can always use extra help. We also need donations of staple food items like cereal, peanut butter, jelly, boxed meals and sides, canned meats, vegetables and fruits; anything not requiring refrigeration. **Money donations are also welcomed!** Our food pantry funds are *not* a part of our congregation's yearly budget. We have a separate self-sustaining account. While we have been able to secure grant money, it is important to remember that we have the ultimate responsibility to fund **Our Father's Cupboard** with our donations. Please remember that every donation goes directly to feeding the hungry in our community. Your continued support is needed now more than ever and is so appreciated by those who receive the food.

Ginger Robertson, Our Father's Cupboard Coordinator



Love Conquers All

The love for equals is a human thing - of friend for friend, brother for brother. It is to love what is loving and lovely. the world smiles.

The love for the less fortunate is a beautiful thing - the love for those who suffer, for those who are poor, the sick, the failures, the unlovely. This is compassion, and it touches the heart of the world.

The love for the more fortunate is a rare thing - to love those who succeed where we fail, to rejoice without envy with those who rejoice, or the love of the poor for the rich. The world is always bewildered by its saints.

And then there is the love for the enemy - love for the one who does not love you but mocks, threatens and inflicts pain. The tortured's love for the torturer. This is God's love. It conquers the world.

--Frederick Buechner



Smile!

It is time to update photos for **Our Church Family** board! Beginning **Sunday, February 9th and continuing the 16th and 23rd**, pictures will be taken **between 9:30 and 10:00 am and then again after the morning worship service**. Pictures will be taken in the Fellowship Hall. Individuals and families are encouraged to have their picture taken. So get practicing that smile and be ready for the camera!

Short Love Stories

In keeping with February being the month of love and romance, a few couples were interviewed about how they met and how long it was before they married. The short version of their courtship was given by the first person listed. The story may vary somewhat if the other member of the duo was given a chance to give their take on their love story. Much love and happiness to these couples and the many other couples in our congregation.

Ginger and Dave Robertson - Ginger's best friend was dating Dave, and they asked Ginger to go with them on a double date, but they really didn't have anyone in mind for Ginger. So Dave found one - a hitchhiker he didn't know but thought looked like a good guy! The double date was okay, but a week later at a party Dave and Ginger began talking and ended up going for a drive. One week later they were engaged, and one year later to the day, they were married. They'll be celebrating their 40th anniversary this August!

Larry and Patti Bell - Larry eyed Patti while at a roller skating rink. Shortly thereafter he asked her to go for a drive with him. They then began dating, and one year later they married. It was a good match as they celebrated their 60th anniversary last year.



Mervin and Barbara Smith - There was a lot of work involved in Mervin and Barbara's romance. Barbara was in a work mode and was ripping out old carpet in her home. Mervin was at Barbara's neighbors doing some work on their home when he spotted her carrying out the carpet to the trash pile. The neighbor introduced them and soon Mervin was over helping Barbara at her home. He then he asked her to go to an art show with him that weekend. Eighteen months later they were married.

Lynn and Wade Smith - While at a college after leaving Graceland, a friend of Lynn's knew she was looking for a ride to Graceland Homecoming. The friend found her a ride with a guy who turned out to be Wade. Wade was going with another girl so there were no evident sparks during that trip. Wade saw Lynn a few months later at a movie theater with another guy. Was it jealousy or curiosity, as he called her and asked her out. Three years later they married and have enjoyed many adventures including living in other countries.



Lisa and Joel Rodriguez - Their story is quite short. They met at work and began dating. Two years later they married.

Jason and Karla Van Beek - Jason was playing basketball. Karla brought a patient to watch the wheelchair basketball game. After noticing Jason, she asked one of his teammates who he was who then mentioned to Jason that she was inquiring about him. They met and talked alot that evening, but a year passed before their first date. They were married a year after their first date!

Jerilyn and Dick Chlebina

They met at church (Bradenton/Sarasota congregation) many years ago. A few years later they went on a date and had fun but the timing was wrong. Four years later Dick was desperately searching for a date for his company's banquet. Lucky for him Jerilyn said "yes". Three years later they were married and have been so for 31 years. Second chances can be a winner!

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ **Richie Creel** recently ran his first marathon race - that is 26.2 miles?
- ◆ **Bona Lee** is a facilitator for Lighthouse for the Blind's support groups?
- ◆ **Kaitlyn James** has passed her Driver's Ed course?
- ◆ **Jacob Rodriguez** has started his spring baseball season?
- ◆ **Patrick James** celebrated his 18th birthday the 19th of January?
- ◆ **Zoe and Cole Van Beek** both earned their black belt in Karate?
- ◆ **Children's Church**, for children grades 1 through 5, is held the third Sunday of each month ?

On-Line Giving

Life these days is very busy. We have many things going on all the time. It is common to not make a church contribution because we forgot our checkbook or cash, or we couldn't attend the Sunday morning service. Unfortunately, the church, both the World Church and our local congregation, relies on our contributions to fulfill the mission of the church worldwide and locally to maintain our church program and facilities.

The World Church has a way to help you save time and make your contribution regularly. Pre-Authorized Transfer (PAT) is a way to make regular contributions through electronic funds transfer from your bank or financial institution to the church on the 15th of each month. This program is easy to setup and to use and allows you to give to the same categories as you would mark on your envelopes. You can easily start, stop and change your electronic transfer at any time and all changes received by the World Church before the first of each month will be in effect beginning that month. For example, if you set up your PAT anytime in February and before February 28, your contribution will be withdrawn from the designated account on March 15.

If you contribute quarterly, semiannually or annually, you can use on-line World Church banking through your financial institution. When you set up the transaction with your bank, you will need to have the mailing information for the mission center and your local congregation. You can also use on-line banking for the World Mission Tithes.

Finally, you can make an on-line contribution using your debit/credit card information as well. All contribution information will continue to appear on your quarterly and end of year statements to help you with your budget and with your taxes. All electronic and on-line banking information, applications, and the immediate debit/credit card options are available at the *Community of Christ* website which is www.cofchrist.org/give/default.asp#onlinebanking.

Think about simplifying your life and helping our church maintain the mission in the community around us and the world by making sure your contributions are received. **Bob Beers** has forms and additional information if you have questions. Please call him (941.751.2993) as he can help you through the process.

Baby Blessing

Zander Avery Scholl was blessed by Elders **Ginger Robertson** and **Jim Deering** on Sunday, January 19th. Zander was surrounded by family and friends as his great-grandmother gave the prayer of blessing. Zander's mother, **Frankie Scholl**, as well as grandparents **Tim and Heather Devine**, great-grandfather **Dave Robertson**, uncles **Jonathan Robertson** and **Matthew Devine** along with Zander's father and family members were witnesses also. Point of interest, Zander was wearing the same white suit that his Uncle Jonathan wore for his blessing. We, as Zander's church family, pray that he will always know God's love and our support in the years to come.



February Birthdays

- 1 Carolyn Deering
- 2 Jasmine Rodriguez
- 11 Dan Willetts
- 12 Nancy Brougher
- 14 Barbara & Mervin Smith (anniv)
- 19 Karla & Jason Van Beek (anniv)
- 22 Linda Mount
- 26 Dick Kramer
- 27 Margie Geiger Boettger

