

celebration News

Bradenton/Sarasota Community of Christ

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Move Forward with Joy!

On one hand, writing something for the New Year can sound easy; on the other hand, it can be daunting to find anything "new" to say. In considering what I might say it has occurred to me that "new" has little to do with it!

I have now been a part of this congregation longer than any other in my life. My heart is here. You might be interested in what I say about you, this congregation, when in my travels around the country I am asked about my "home" congregation. Whenever that happens, I immediately swell with pride and go to my "happy place." Words such as loving, warm, compassionate, hard working, open, and many more of the same type, come out very quickly. You have indeed become my family in every way.

It occurred to me in looking at the year ahead that it would be good to look at who we are as a congregation to the world at large. It seems to me that we have sturdy shoulders to stand upon because of what has been accomplished by those who have come before us. Even more reason for us to be grateful and also anxious to build upon that foundation. Let us move forward together in a spirit of cooperation and good will toward the goals the Lord has set for us!

Let our first thoughts be that of service and giving of our time and energy and resources in a way that will enhance what has come before and fulfill our destinies. Let us move forward with JOY!

Jim Deering, Administrative Pastor

Predictions for 2008

1. The Bible will still have all the answers.
2. Prayer will still work.
3. The Holy Spirit will still move.
4. God will still inhabit the praises of His people.
5. There will still be God-anointed preaching.
6. There will still be singing of praise to God.
7. God will still pour out blessings upon His people.
8. There will still be room at the Cross.
9. Jesus will still love you.
10. *Community of Christ* will be working for peace.

Christmas Eve Service

Three young children waited patiently during the Christmas Eve Service. When their cue came, they walked quickly and proudly to the nativity scene and laid "baby Jesus" in the manger. Shown in the photo are **Matthew Devine, Zoe Van Beek, and Dani Cosgrove** kneeling in front of the manger.



A New Opportunity

There is something special about the New Year. A clean calendar, old disappointments behind us, new possibilities ahead of us calling us to the frontier of new life not experienced before. We are not the same as we were in January 2007. Growth has taken place. Yes, there were struggles also and things left undone or perhaps done badly. But all of that is in the past. Forgiveness has come if we have asked for it from the God who is quick to forgive. And his arms are outstretched toward us inviting us to move into his presence in deeper more life changing ways.

God doesn't wait for our perfection before he blesses us. If he did, we could never be blessed. No, it's not perfection that God wants from us but rather a willing heart, a humble spirit, and openness to the Holy Spirit. We sing, "*Just as I am without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me...*" (Hymns of the Saints #119) and know that all we need to do is bring who we are, as we are, into his presence and accept his grace, love and acceptance. The Cross of Christ, the blood of Christ shed for you and for me, the victory already won, what else do we need to know that we are both the beloved and the needed of God to assist in bringing forth the kingdom of Zion?



revitalized, outreaching, and one of winning and nurturing souls yet unsaved, than any year in our past individually and as a congregation? Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may see whatever glimpse of truth you have for us. That is our New Year's prayer. Amen.

Bob Slasor, Evangelist

This is our unique moment in 2008, our new beginning, and our new day. A calendar of clean pages waiting to be written on by the decisions we make to serve Christ and his hurting world. Can you, will you commit yourselves to new commitment so that this year is the most spiritual,

Parlez-vous francais?

No Trans-Atlantic flights...No Dollar to Euro exchange!

An Evening in Paris

Mark your calendars now.

Our next fund-raiser dinner sounds like fun!

5:30 PM, Saturday Evening, February 16th, 2008

Come and share in the atmosphere of good fun and wonderful French cuisine.

So, until then, Au revoir and Bon Appetite!

Your Fund-Raising Committee

New Year's Prayer

Lord Jesus, we seek your presence to strengthen our spirit, to receive a blessing from you. I know each of us is precious in your sight. Each one brings to the table a gift that only they can offer. Each one has a testimony of God's love for them. Each one is on a spiritual journey that only they can take with you. Love is the healer of all - whether it is pain and suffering from guilt or illness, relationships, or failure to meet the expectations of the world. Only love can offer us freedom to be the person God wants us to be.

Lord Jesus, you are more than the brightest star on a Christmas tree or in the sky. You are more than a cross that symbolizes your love and sacrifice. Life is more than days and years. It is an offering of love from you and we are given the opportunity to respond by showing your love to others. Let the angels rejoice and the trees and all nature shout out their praises to you, O God. There is a spirit that calls us to be your people and to respond to the love that you have blessed us with, overflowing love that has no measure. Feelings of inadequacy must be set aside. Let our eyes, hands, feet, and mind be your tools, an example for the world to see. Let us bless you in the blessing of others. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Charyn Walker, Outreach Pastor



in New Beginnings

The start of a new year brings new and exciting worship opportunities. The

focus for the year 2008 is "*Passionate for Peace.*" Worship with us at the following opportunities.

Epiphany is the day commemorating the visit of the wise men to bring gifts to the child Jesus. It is celebrated on January 6. In 2008, January 6 is also the first Sunday of the year. High Priest **Nanette Dizney** will preside over the Communion Service with Elder **Jo Fenn-Martin** bringing the message. Thoughts of new beginnings bring us hope as we eagerly move forward into the new year with the theme *Follow the Light*.

The theme for January 13 is *Be Baptized*. Elder **Bona Lee** will preside and Priest **Scott Cramer** will speak at a service of baptism. The scripture lesson is the story of Jesus' baptism from the second Chapter of Matthew. We will rejoice together as **Mark Bee** enters the waters of baptism.

The two newly-elected members of the Pastorate, Elder **Jim Deering** and Priest **Stuart Skene**, will be set apart for their new responsibilities on January 20. Along with this special observance, the service will center around the concept of Racial Justice and the theme *Gifted with the Holy Spirit*. Elder **Elaine Gregg** will preside over the service with members of the pastorate participating.

On the last Sunday in January, the 27th, we will consider the beginning of Jesus' ministry as he calls others to come and follow. Evangelist **Bob Slasor** will speak to us on *Call to Proclaim*. Elder **Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina** will preside over the service.

Now is a good time to evaluate your goals for your spiritual growth in 2008. What will help you reach your goals concerning your relationship with God? Have you been thinking about attending the Wednesday evening Praise Service? Join the group meeting on Wednesday; your attendance would be beneficial to you and to the group.

Jo Fenn-Martin Worship Coordinator

End of the Year Action

The final Congregational Conference of the year was held on December 16th with several items being considered. The first item on the agenda was to elect people to fill two vacant offices. The first office considered was the Publicity Director for which there was a motion to eliminate this elected office. The motion passed. There were two vacancies on the Facility Management Team for three year terms. **Basil Long** and **Elaine Gregg** were elected.

The Proposed Budget for 2008 was reviewed and amended after some discussion.

Five names were presented to the congregation for priesthood calls. Each call was accepted with a motion, a member of the pastorate speaking to the call, the candidate's statement of acceptance, people sharing their confirmation of the call, and a vote. The following calls were accepted by a vote of the members of the congregation: **Charyn Walker** to Elder, **Stuart Skene** to Elder, **Heather Devine** to Priest, **Megan Chlebina** to Priest, and **Melinda James** to Deacon. As their appropriate required preordination training is completed, we look forward to the ordinations. We rejoice and look forward to sharing in the ministry of these five willing servants.

The Congregational Conference was adjourned with anticipation of those elected to offices fulfilling their responsibilities and of the new budget with possibilities of greater outreach. We look forward to sharing in the ministry of the five willing servants in the years ahead.

Caring Ministries Being Offered

The Temple School class "*Caring Ministries*" is being taught at the church for three consecutive Sundays in February. This class is one that every member should take as it makes us aware of the caring ministry that each one of us can bring to our family and friends, as well as anyone we meet. The class is being taught by **Nanette Dizney** and will be offered at **2:00 PM February 10, 17 and 24**.

If you are interested, please sign up on the bulletin board in the Information Center. There is a fee of between \$10-15 which will cover the study material. It is hoped that many will take advantage of this opportunity.

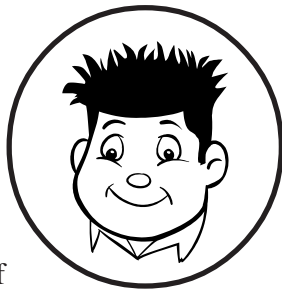
The Gift of Sharing

"Blessed is he that considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." Psalms 41:1

"Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou has, and give to the poor, and thou shall have the treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Mark 10:20

Welcome 2008! We welcome in a new year with great anticipation and hope. Before I left for the holidays I experienced a wonderful gift; the gift of sharing. As I was drinking my coffee at the Sunday morning fellowship time, **Matthew Devine** came up to me, reached into a small plastic bag he was carrying that had several pennies in it and handed me two pennies with a big smile on his face. I took the gift, thanked him and told him that I would put it in the offering plate. He walked away contented. Matthew continued going around the room and sharing his pennies until he had none left.

I thought that this was a very sweet gesture but did not realize the full significance of his acts until I talked with his mother. I asked **Heather** if there was a plan behind the pennies. Her response was that this was something he decided to do on his own; he wanted to give people his money so that they could give to the poor (...and a little child shall lead them)!! Unfortunately, some people tried to give his pennies back to him, and he didn't understand. Sometimes we don't know what the reason is behind someone's acts, especially when it comes to little children.



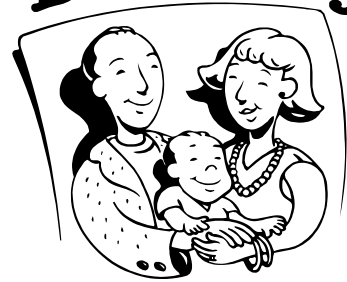
Matthew was very proud of what he was doing, and it was important to him to give away his money. He had learned that the Lord wants us to share with those less fortunate, and, in his own way, Matthew was doing what he could with what he had.

May we all take this lesson to heart and make our own plan for the coming year to do what we can with what we have. In this way we can share generously, bring blessings to those in need, and take up our cross and follow Him. May God bless you all abundantly in the New Year is my prayer.

Carolyn Deering, Pastoral Pastor



Church Photo Directory



Many have posed before the camera in preparation for our **2008 Congregational Photo Directory**. Some pictures still need to be taken, but the 2008 directory has begun. Check on the bulletin board in the Information Center for your name and place a check by your name if the information is correct or make any changes in the space by your name. This will help the process of getting the directory published. Thank you.

Coming - "seize the day"

For many months there has been information going out to young adults regarding the event to be held **March 28-30** at Deerhaven Retreat Center. The time is now quickly approaching to "*seize the day*", the theme of the retreat. The guest speaker is Doug Pagitt an author, speaker, and entrepreneur from the Minneapolis, Minnesota area. Some of his favorite speaking topics include church and culture, emerging church issues, Christian faith development, leadership, and new sciences and theology.

This event is open to all young adults in the Southeast Field. Class options include Creative Worship, Net Smartz, Generations, Listening Circles, Theology of Ecology, Finance 101, and Spiritual Disciplines. There will be dialogue with Apostle Linda Booth and a campfire as well as games, good food, and relaxing. Child care is being provided.

Registration forms are on the bulletin board in the Information Center. The early registration deadline is March 14 so don't wait too long. It is hoped that all of our young adults will be able to attend the **Young Adult Event** and "*seize the day*". Financial help is available; see **Bob Beers**.

Talented Women Work

On Thursday nights during the month of November, there were times when the laughter from the group working on the figures for the Nativity scene rivaled the laughter coming from the Girl Scout meeting. A group of talented women worked every Thursday, and sometimes Tuesdays as well, to create the Nativity scene we enjoyed during the holidays.

Nothing phased these ladies. When they couldn't find a pattern to make the figures like they wanted, they made their own pattern. They used scraps of fabric and their imaginations to make the camel, donkey, sheep, angels, shepherds, star, Mary, Joseph, baby, and the wise men. They really enjoyed the challenge and the final figures were amazing. Thanks to **Coral Blackmore, Bettie Chlebina, Nanette Dizney, Nancy Peters, Ginger Robertson, and Nancy Skene** for sharing their talents with us. **David Martin** and **David Robertson** also helped by building the stable and hanging the stars and angel. Our worship was enhanced by the offering of these people.

Jo Fenn-Martin, Worship Coordinator



The above photo shows the complete nativity scene as created by those mentioned in the article.

"Is God in You?"

A Junior/Senior High Retreat will be held at Deerhaven Retreat Center on February 1-3. The youth are invited to go and enjoy the outdoors, learn about God, and spend time away from "it" all with friends old and new. There will be campfires, interactive classes, creative worship, and plenty of fun! It is a time to experience the joy of camp in the winter. The theme for the retreat - "*Is God in You?*" Learn more about the theme. Bring a friend and share the experience!

Registration forms are on the bulletin board in the Information Center or you can register on-line at www.cofchristfmc.org. If you need help with transportation or finances, see **Jim Deering** or **Bob Beers**.



Surrounding the gingerbread house centerpiece at the Christmas Fellowship held before the Children's Christmas Program are Kayla Morgan, Frankie Scholl, Brittney Morgan, and Kaitlyn James.

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 2 Roberta Hamilton
- 2 Bob Vaughan
- 2 Lonnie Cooper
- 5 Jean Botelho
- 6 Nancy Skene
- 9 Lee Peters
- 13 Kaitlyn James
- 13 Nanette Dizney
- 17 Heather Quinn
- 19 Patrick James
- 20 Cynthea Roberts
- 20 Elaine Gregg
- 21 Heather Devine
- 22 Kay & Dale Budd (anniv)
- 24 Danielle Johnson
- 26 Bill Caudle
- 26 Dustin Stevens
- 26 Patti and Larry Bell (anniv)
- 27 Betty Simpson
- 30 Dawn Kolquist

Are we -
 copiers,
 choosers, or
 changers?

Reaching Out

Our congregation was represented by **Bob Slasor** and **Charyn Walker** at Harlee Full Service Center at their Christmas luncheon held December 21st. Attending were students from Harlee Middle School's teenage pregnancy program. Our congregation donated gift bags and \$25 Publix gift cards for 13 moms. Another church in the community donated toys for the children. A thank you card is posted in the Information Center. Please keep these students in your thoughts and prayers.

Charyn Walker, Outreach Pastor

A Thank You Letter from Iraq

The following letter was written by Ryan Hollenbeck to the Bradenton/Sarasota Congregation, his church family.

Dear Family, I'm sorry that I haven't been able to reply to all of you individually. So, I want to write a letter to thank all of you together. Having all of you as a family is truly a blessing. I am thankful for all of your thoughts and prayers. It has been a very long year, but we are all making it through okay. God has taken good care of me, and I know that He will continue to do so. There are a lot of things in this world that are doubtful and unsure, but we can always count on God to be there leading us in the right direction.

I also love reading the church newsletters. It is so great to hear about what the church and all of my family are doing each month. I especially love the pictures. They are always so adorable and even make me laugh and smile.

My unit should be getting back to New York sometime in November. My beautiful and wonderful wife Pamela and I are planning to come to Florida for the holidays. I am definitely looking forward to seeing all of you again soon. I miss you all, and you all are in my thoughts and prayers. I thank God for blessing our family, and keeping our family safe, no matter where we are. I look forward to the days that we can all be together again, praising God and telling our stories. I'm sorry that I have to make this letter so short, but guess I should be getting back to work.

I wanted to thank you for everything. I appreciate all of your support. They say that having a great family is the best blessing of all. So I am definitely and truly blessed because I sure do have an amazing family filled with truly amazing people.

Lots of love, Ryan Hollenbeck

Ryan has since returned from Iraq and continues to serve in the Army at Fort Drum. His new address is 10921-D Anzeio Loop, Ft Drum NY 13603, phone number is 315.405.8721, and e-mail is beachbound216@yahoo.com. Ryan was able to recently worship with us.

JANUARY

- 6 Potluck Dinner, 12:10 PM
- 8 "The Way of Transforming Disciples" class begins, 6:30 PM
- 10 Leadership Meeting, 7:00 PM
- 11 Craft and Chat Night, 7:00 PM
- 12 Journey with the Holy Spirit class at 9:30 AM
- 12 FL Mission Center Conference in Ocala, 9:30 AM
- 19 Game Night, 6:00 PM
- 20 Priesthood Meeting, 6:00 PM
- 26-2/01 Winter Reunion at Deerhaven Retreat Center
- 27 Pancake Breakfast, 9:30 AM
- 27 FMC Meeting, 6:30 PM

Each Sunday morning:

- 9:30 AM Fellowship Time with coffee, juice and light snacks
- 10:00 AM Classes for all ages
- 10:55 AM Community Worship

Wednesday:

- 7:00 PM Praise Service

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Properly understood and applied [prayer] is the most potent instrument of action. - Mahatma Gandhi

The person who creates or leads or labors will inevitably make many mistakes. But at least those who strive to accomplish something of worth will not make the mistake of doing nothing. - Anonymous

DID YOU KNOW ???

- ◆ **Christmas Caroling** was an enjoyable and festive time for the eight carolers (ranging in age from 5 to 70 something) and the listeners in the five homes that were visited?
- ◆ **64 copies of the Bradenton/Sarasota Cook-books** have been sold as of the end of the year?
- ◆ **Soup labels and other education point coupons** are not being collected any longer because the school we were affiliated with is no longer accepting them?
- ◆ **Eleven people** attended the first of seven "The Way of Transforming Disciples" class?
- ◆ **Eighteen people** attended the "Journey with the Holy Spirit" experience?
- ◆ **Lent** begins very soon, February 10, 2008? Didn't we just finish Advent and Christmas?



"I know your ringtone is 'Rock of Ages,' David, but it's still a distraction during the service."

Community of Christ
% Elaine Gregg
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Address Correction Requested

THE
STEADFAST
Love
OF THE
LORD
NEVER
CEASES
LAMENTATIONS 3:22, NRSV



Wahweh