

Celebration News

March, 2014 - Volume 24 - Issue 2

REACHING OUT

The 1960's have been analyzed and written about by so many that my observations can seem unimportant to anyone but me. But, they are mine, and here they are. I was there for so many of the cultural and historic events that we still refer to today. I was experiencing them in a little town in Ohio that was in many ways idyllic. While my home life was difficult, even its difficulties led me to a better place.

Teenagers are curious creatures. No, I mean they are *naturally curious*. In my case I was so very curious about the aspects of my life that were missing. I knew they were missing because I watched television and I read magazines. So many today like to put down the TV shows of the 60's. Did father REALLY know best? Dare we leave it to Beaver? Who was Donna Reed anyway? For me they were a lifeline; a way of seeing the "possible". I was smart enough to know that probably no one actually lived the way lives were portrayed in those shows. That didn't matter. What mattered was the way people in those shows treated each other.

What they provided was much more important to a young man trying to make sense of the world of abuse and secrecy he was living in. I saw what others took for granted. It was a revelation that people could simply be kind to each other! I observed that the principles in the Bible and the church I attended for six months could actually be applied to my own life. Most importantly, that the choices I made would eventually make a difference in my life.

In those years I was consistently curious about God. I questioned and looked for Him in my life. I became keenly aware that the people I chose to emulate would help me make sense of God and His world. I became an avid observer of people around me. When I was seventeen, two young men moved to my town with their families. They were Dave and Al to me, and we were all on the same athletic team. They were new in a town that did not get too many move-ins. Both were immediately popular and out going. What I didn't know then was that both came from families where the father was a minister. That meant that they moved around a lot and you either got good at making friends fast in a new place or you chose to be miserable. Happily for me and many others in my high school class, they chose to make friends.

It is doubtful that either one of these guys was at all aware of how completely they lived their faith. It must have been like air to them. They included me in their lives in ways that changed the entire direction of mine, and they were oblivious. To them, if you were going out to a sledding party with church friends, you invited your school friends. Why wouldn't you! If you were going to prayer service on Wednesday evening, of course, you invited your pal.

For the first time at seventeen I saw that life could indeed be different than the one I was born into. Life held endless possibilities if you had the right focus, an unyielding faith and good friends. Thanks Dave. Than you, Al.

Your friend, **Jim Deering**

Coming Together

Church members living in the Venice, Englewood, Northport area have begun meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm for fellowship, scripture study and prayer. The focus is on reading the New Testament together and discussing how these scriptures can be applied to our lives. The small group meets in the home of **Sylvia Hancock**, 1318 Still River Drive, Venice (in the new Grand Palm subdivision). Call Sylvia for directions (941.497.1237). All are welcome.

A Word of Wisdom

You cannot stay where you are and go with God. You cannot continue doing things your way and accomplish God's purpose in his ways. Your thinking cannot come close to God's thoughts. For you to do the will of God, you must adjust your life to him, his purposes and his way. --Henry Blackaby

Equip Individuals for Christ's Mission

We in Bradenton/Sarasota will be using the following as a starting place to Develop Disciples to accomplish all of the Mission Initiatives.

Developing disciples is a key concern for congregational leaders. It is a primary function of a congregation to prepare disciples to live out Christ's mission through the first three Mission Initiatives. According to President Veazey this preparation is for all ages and occurs "through spiritual practices, community experiences, and educational curriculum for disciple formation". In short, it is critical that we are intentional in what we study, share, and experience in our congregations.

Where do congregational leaders begin?

◆ Provide leadership to the congregation's Christian education. What the congregation studies and experiences should lead to a clear and compelling understanding of Christ's mission! What the congregation studies makes clear to members and visitors the congregation's priorities for mission.

◆ Be grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? What was Jesus' message and mission in the first century Palestine and how does that inform us about mission today?

◆ Use resources that help disciples view contemporary problems and issues through the lens of the gospel. Whether studying scripture or world poverty, we want to continue to press the issues and challenges of our neighborhoods and world up against the message and mission of Jesus Christ. Failure to do so reduces the gospel to private spirituality and limits its transforming influence.

◆ Equip and develop disciples to serve. If our efforts don't lead to concrete actions, we have missed the mark. Our studies and experiences should lead to confidence and skills to make a difference!

◆ Building community and promote healthy relationships. We are in this together! We are not individual disciples trying to find our way, but a community of Christ's followers supporting each other on the journey. Creating experiences and opportunities to strengthen relationships creates a foundation for everything else we do.

See the "Disciple Formation Guide" at www.CofChrist.org/dfg for ideas on creating experiences, practices, and curriculum that lead to mission. Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in helping to explore this new and exciting avenue of being grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Dan Willetts, PLT member

Good Food and Good Company

Enjoy good food and company and share your favorite dish with your church family on the second Sunday of each month. **Potluck** starts after the morning church services. All you have to do is drop off your dish with instructions prior to the Worship Service, and join us after the service to taste some of the best cooking anywhere!

Help is needed to set up and clean up the monthly Potluck dinner. The Potluck is open to all and is held every second Sunday of the month except June, July and August. The sermon can be heard in the Fellowship Hall while you are working on the set up, and the memories you make while working in the kitchen will last a lifetime.

If you are interested in helping set up for Potluck, please contact **Jo Willetts** at 941-724-4220.

Fund-raisers

March 16 - A Potato Bar Dinner will be held in the Fellowship Hall following church services. Come join us for good company, great food, and to help raise funds for the various repairs needed in and around the church.

March 29 - Annual Yard Sale will be held on the grounds of the church. We will be selling hot dogs, brisket sandwiches, pulled pork sandwiches, chips, drinks and bake sale goods. We will be collecting donations of items for the yard sale, sodas, and baked goods. More information concerning the time of the event, the need for volunteers to sort and price items, and how to donate sodas will be made available in the weekly church bulletin.



We Are Saving a Place for You

Join us on Wednesday nights from 7 - 8:00 pm for our weekly **Prayer and Praise Service**. We have light refreshments, coffee and great company. We spend our evenings in prayer, praise and discussion.

Approaching the Lenten Season

We are approaching the Lenten season in the Christian calendar. During this Lenten season we are invited to journey with Christ. When we spend time practicing spiritual disciplines, it draws us closer to God. Ash Wednesday is on March 5th, and it begins a time for personal reflection, soul-searching and repentance as we remember Christ's sacrifice. Holy Week begins on April 13 with Palm Sunday. The worship services in the month of March will lead us through Lent to the celebration of Easter on April 20.



March 2

Choosing the Cup of Faith

"Do Not Be Afraid!" Jesus said as recorded in Matthew 17. The lesson on this Sunday is the story of the Transfiguration which can be found in verses 1 - 13 of Matthew 17. Bishop **Fred Kennan** will be the speaker on this Communion Sunday with Elder **Jo Fenn-Martin** presiding. This is also World Hunger Emphasis day.

March 9

Emptying the Cup of Distraction

First Sunday in Lent

We read in Matthew Chapter 4 that Jesus was "Led by the Spirit" as he went into the wilderness and prepared himself for his ministry. As we empty the distracting clutter from our minds, we invite the Spirit to lead us in our preparation. Elder **Ken Colburn** and Priest **Nancy Skene** will share their ministry with us on this Sunday.

March 16

The Cup of Generosity

Second Sunday in Lent

What does it mean to "Believe in Christ"? Nicodemus, a leader among the Jews, goes to talk to Jesus one night. He has questions, and he wants to see for himself who this Jesus is. The message to Nicodemus is a call to generosity. Hear the rest of the story on this Sunday when Evangelist **Bob Slasor** brings the message. Priest **Charlie Walker** will lead the worship.

March 23

The Cup of Compassion

Third Sunday in Lent

During his ministry, Jesus showed compassion by breaking down barriers that separated society. He offered living water to all. You will be challenged to "Share Your Story" by Evangelist **Glenn Day** and Teacher **Fay Beers**.

March 30

The Cup of Revelation

Fourth Sunday in Lent

John's account of the healing of the blind man is the lesson for this Sunday which will be presented by Elder **Jim Brougher**. The eyes of the witnesses of the healing were opened as well as the eyes of the blind man. The message for us is to "Open Your Eyes."

A variety of cups will be used in our worship center from now until the Sunday after Easter. Be present each Sunday to hear the lesson presented through the cups.

A special Wednesday evening service will be held on Ash Wednesday at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary. The remaining Wednesday evening Prayer and Praise services will be held at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Come each week and share with others who are travelling the Lenten journey.

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team

Ash Wednesday Anointing Service

All are invited to come and receive an anointing blessing at the **March 5th Ash Wednesday Service**. This special service will be held in the Sanctuary and will begin at 7:00 pm. We first read about the practice of anointing in the book of Exodus, chapter 29, verse 7. The occasion was the consecrating of the priests before entering the Tent of Meeting. Throughout biblical history, anointing was a common practice among the faithful. While consecrated oil was most often used in this sacred rite, it is noted that Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and later with expensive perfume by a woman who came to see him at the house of a Pharisee. Today in our own faith tradition, we use anointing with oil as a sacred sacrament.

Traditionally, on Ash Wednesday, some Christian faiths anoint the forehead with a sign of the cross using the ashes of the palm branches used to celebrate Palm Sunday the previous year. This is a beautiful and sacred way to remember why we set apart the Season of Lent prior to Easter Sunday. As we gather that evening, we will share in the preparation of Lent. Each family or household will take home a daily devotional to read and share during this time of holy reflection on the ultimate price that Jesus paid for the salvation of humankind. Plan to join us for this special service, where children are also welcomed to come forward and receive their blessing of anointing.

Ginger Robertson

Change the Story

What if we could change the story about Christianity? What if we change the story about *Community of Christ*?

Currently, the story I hear around congregations is one of death and concern for the future. One that talks about times gone by when there were lots of people in the pews, three services on a Sunday and our youth groups had 50 kids in them. Those times were good times. We talk about them with fondness, remembering the pinnacle of our success as a church body. In this story, we regularly mention the names of great patriarchs passed. We recall testimonies of their visionary contributions. In comparison, we look at the state of our congregations today -- small numbers of youth, buildings closing their doors and reunions getting smaller and smaller.

This is the story I hear, but what about the other stories that we have?

Like the story of a young adult who lost his way in life, walking a fine line between jail and death. This man, through the simple act of a caring question, felt accepted and freed to tell his story. He changed his life in a way so drastic that even his family couldn't believe what was happening. His changed life enabled him to have a stable job, a roof to live under and a caring community. This is our story.

We hear a story about how Christianity is withering like a fig tree, where no one goes to church and Christians are seen in society as conservatives who exclude, rather than include. Christianity is seen as organizations that abuse power and tax laws rather than as generous and compassionate givers.

What if we have become the story we hear? What if we have lived in that story without even knowing it? What if we write a new story?

Jesus wrote a new story for his people. He created a new life that threw tables, saved a single sheep and hugged an erratic runaway. He changed the story of religion, moving it from places of exclusivity and power to a place of refuge for the poor and the mistreated. Being a place where religion was not about sacrificing goats but sacrificing the pursuit for short-lived glory.

What if we changed the story?

What if (when we meet to plan our mission and ministries) we talked about how we were making a difference in the lives of people rather than talking losing people? What if we were to talk about how to include people rather than mandate against certain life choices? What if we harnessed our power for love and compassion by taking time to talk with someone about their spirit rather than the weather? What if we dismantled a patriarchal legacy and embraced the simple, profound vision that God calls us to actualize? What if you, nay, what if "I" chose a path to transformation by simply choosing to think about what *I have* rather than I lack? What if instead of telling the story of congregations closing due to lack of numbers, we chose to tell the story of generosity that congregations continue to give to the community and beyond?

"Here in this place a new light is streaming. Not in the dark buildings confining, not in some heaven light years away, but here in this place the new light is shining: *now* is the kingdom and *now* is the day."

You are not too old, too young, too shy or too busy. You can ask someone how they are. I can respond by telling the truth when someone asks me how I am. Tell a new story.

By Ben Smith, taken from the World Church publication, "Conversations", and submitted by Nanette Dizney.



Temple School Courses

Tarpon Springs will be hosting Temple School Course TE230 *Spiritual Disciples* on Saturday, March 22, 9am - 7pm. Lunch and snacks will be provided, but you must order your own books. To register call Bill Postlethwait at 727.923.0487. For directions go to www.cofchristfmc.org/ocaltarpon-springs.html

The **Ocala Congregation** is offering a Temple School class on the *Transforming Power of Prayer* on Saturday, March 15th from 8:30 am - 7:00 pm at the church. Individuals are encouraged to bring snacks for the day. Pizza and salad will be ordered for lunch. Contact instructor Carol Young at carol66young@gmail.com if you would like to attend. For directions go to www.cofchristfmc.org/ocala.html.



Looking Back at Change

As our congregation is entering a time of change, we have been asked to pray and give our support as we journey forward. I was reminded of another time when our congregation did a lot of praying and searching. It was a big decision for us to decide to leave our comfortable place of worship and build a new facility in a new area 25 years ago. We were scared but excited about the big change we were making. The above picture was taken after services at our former church. Many of those pictured are no longer with us although their support is a living testimony to where we are now. We are thankful for those in the picture who are still with us and continue to be an active part of our congregation. We, as a congregation, are again needing support and prayers as we journey ahead. Twenty-five years from now when we look back on a picture taken of our congregation today, what will we look like? Again we would probably say it was a time of change and we were asked to pray and give our support as we began a new journey. Let us embrace and give change a chance - great things could be ahead of us.

Come and Join Us

Come and join new and old friends every Sunday morning from 9:30 till 10:00 am for light snacks and friendship in the Fellowship Hall. Each month we offer a **Pancake Breakfast** on the **fourth Sunday** of the month. Chatting with old friends and making new friends is a great way to start your Sunday mornings.

We are looking for volunteers to help set up and clean up for the weekly **Fellowship**. We provide coffee, milk, juice, boiled eggs, cheese, pastries, cereal, and fresh fruit each week. We need volunteers to help set up and clean up afterward and to ensure the coffee pots stay full. Set up time starts at 9:00 am each Sunday except the fourth Sunday when there is the pancake breakfast. If you are interested in the hosting a **Pancake Breakfast**, set up starts at 8:45 am to prepare the bacon and sausage, start the pancake batter and prepare the eggs.

All are welcome to join on a Sunday morning, and if you are interested in helping set up and/or clean up for the **Fellowship**, please sign in on the list located on the door in the Fellowship Hall or contact **Jo Willetts** at 941.724.4220.

Financial Update

For Year Ending December, 2013

Budget	\$60,699
Income	<u>55,105</u>
Balance to Budget	<u>(5,594)</u>
Income	\$55,105
Expenses	<u>(50,324)</u>
Balance	<u>\$ 4,781</u>

Special Note: Through November, 2013, we were running \$4,100 short. We had two Special Offers in December to help offset this short fall. The income for these two Sundays totaled \$8,972 which cleared our deficit. We also had a Special Offering for Deerhaven Campgrounds on December 29 to help clear up part of their deficit and received \$1,756. This was a wonderful feeling for me as we all shared God's blessing to us with others. May God continue to bless each of us as we strive to do his will and make the world a more loving and peaceful place.

Bob Beers, Congregational Financial Officer

DID YOU KNOW ???

Karla Van Beek was recipient of the Florida Occupational Therapy Education Consortium 2013 Award of Excellence? She has been a mentor and instructor for the State College of Florida Occupational Therapy Program for the past 10 years. Congratulations, Karla!

Bill Williams, a spring training ticket holder, will be enjoying a picnic lunch with Tampa Bay Ray's Executive VP of Baseball Operation Andrew Friedman on Sunday the 23rd? The event includes a Q & A session with some players in attendance. Go, Bill!

A **three year error** has been discovered in our congregational directory? On page 9 under *Experience Congregations in Mission* the error says ..."expressions of Jesus Christ, women together by the Spirit, and sent into the world". Leave it to a man to notice that "women" should be "woven"! Thanks Dan W.

Corrections and Additions

Please make the following corrections in your 2014 Congregational Directory:

Page 6 - Jo Willetts' phone: 941.724.4220 and

Page 7 - Dan Willetts' phone: 941.376.3720.

We would also offer an apology to **Lynn and Wade Bryant** that their name was given as "Smith" in their story of how they met. Sorry about that, Bryants.

Please add: Lori Ann Graves, 1925 W 3rd Ave, Apt B, Palmetto 43221

and: Pauline and Patrick Kelly, 306 Delwood Breck St, Ruskin 33570, phone 407.921.2128, email: apdavid@gmail.com.

Soles to Little Souls

Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you didn't have shoes? Perhaps the shoes you had were much too small, or maybe the sole had come loose or worn out. While this scenario may conger up thoughts of the Depression Era thirties, today hundreds of children in Manatee County are desperately in need of shoes. As some of us look into our closets and see many pairs of shoes, students from Pre-K through the twelfth grade may be wearing the same shoes from last year. **Church Women United of Manatee County (CWU)** are determined to put new shoes on the feet of all these children.

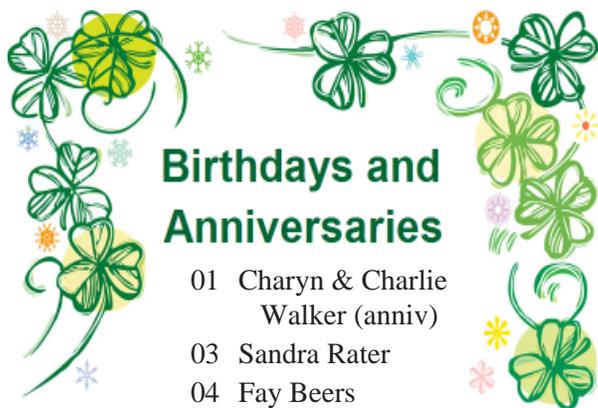
Last April, CWU began their **Soles to Little Souls** project to collect new shoes in all sizes, big and small, as well as money donations to purchase shoes. To date hundreds of shoes have been distributed. Working with schools and local agencies, we have begun to address the need for shoes among local children. Currently over 2,000 children are identified as homeless in Manatee County. Some are living with their families in shelters, others in camps and vehicles, still others with other family members. While clothing is frequently donated, shoes are not so plentiful. You can help! We have shoe distributions in the fall, winter and spring. Huge boxes of new shoes have been presented to Girls Inc., Turning Points (One Stop Center), Manatee Elementary and Daughtry Elementary. We plan to distribute new shoes to Ballard and Orange-Bullock schools in April, and other agencies serving the needs of children as well. I, **Ginger Robertson**, will be setting up a bin in the Information Center to collect new shoes, or, if you wish to donate money to purchase shoes, please make your check out to Church Women United, Manatee Co., and write "Soles to Little Souls" on the notation line. I, or **Nanette Dizney**, will see that your donation is turned in to CWU's treasurer for the purchase of shoes. We hope you will join other represented churches who have generously donated to our Soles for Little Soles project. Even one pair of new shoes will make one child very happy!

Ginger Robertson

Experience Congregation in Mission Gathering

If you are interested in the **Experience Congregations in Mission Initiative**, you are invited to meet and greet in the Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour (10:00 - 10:45 am) on **March 23rd**. This will be a casual meeting where we can gather with donuts and coffee. Please note there is not a lack of space in the Fellowship Hall so all are welcome! Eating the donuts does not obligate you to join the team, it only offers you great fellowship. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Melinda Creel, PLT member



Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 01 Charyn & Charlie Walker (anniv)
- 03 Sandra Rater
- 04 Fay Beers
- 08 Joan Wooderson
- 12 Fay & Bob Beers (anniv)
- 15 Karen MacDonald
- 16 Jason Van Beek
- 26 Sydney Evans

Leading Congregations in Missions



The *Community of Christ* is spreading the word and the gospel of Jesus Christ through the guiding principle given to the church - *The Mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead*. To help promote these missions and move the church into a new and exciting time, the church is working with a trial program, Leading Congregations in Missions (LCM), and the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation was invited to be part of the trial. The program's focus is finding ways within each congregation to fulfill the Mission Initiatives, grow the church and spread the word of Christ by utilizing the gifts and energy of the individuals within the congregation. The Mission Initiatives are building blocks of the Mission Statement, the foundation of We Share and the Enduring Principles of the *Community of Christ* which all are a part of the full mission of Jesus Christ. The initiatives are the heart of our mission statement - "We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love and peace."

Beginning with the previous pastorate of **Ginger Robertson, Fay Beers and Nanette Dizney**, a group of individuals volunteered to work for three years with our congregational leadership to learn about the LCM and to develop a plan for each of these Mission Initiatives.

As part of the vision for our congregation, five members of the congregation will form the Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT) reporting to the pastor, **Nanette Dizney**. These individuals are each responsible for one of the initiatives based on their passion and gifts and will work with volunteers from the congregation who are interested in promoting a specific Initiative. The PLT members will hold meetings to study the initiative and scripture related to that initiative and to develop ways to reach out to the members of the church and the surrounding community to spread the word. The five Mission Initiatives and your fellow saints leading them in our congregation are:

- **Invite People to Christ** - Christ's mission of evangelism led by **Glenn Day**
- **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering** - Christ's mission of compassion led by **Jo Willetts**
- **Pursue Peace on Earth** - Christ's mission of justice and peace (Open at this time. If you have a passion for pursuing peace on earth and would like to lead the initiative within our congregation, please see Nanette Dizney.)
- **Develop Disciples to Serve** - Equip individuals for Christ's mission led by **Dan Willetts**
- **Experience Congregations in Mission** - Equip congregations for Christ's mission led by **Melinda Creel**

In addition, **Bob Slasor** has agreed to be the spiritual advisor for the PLT. The members of the LCM will continue with the program and work with the leaders of the Initiatives to help create a sound program.

By working through the Mission Statement, we will be better able to pursue the whole mission of Jesus and be the beacon of light to all members of the community at large. So, come and join us in this exciting new movement within the church to spread the word of our Savior, Jesus Christ, as we continue our journey to Zion!

Contact information for each of the Initiative leaders:

Glenn Day	phone: 941.493.9525	email: glenn70@aol.com
Jo Willetts	phone: 941.724.4220	email: jo_dan_us@yahoo.com or jo.willetts@jtax.com
Dan Willetts	phone: 941.376.3720	email: jo_dan_us@yahoo.com
Melinda Creel	phone: 941.780.2486	email: creativemelinda@yahoo.com
Bob Slasor	phone: 941.756.3678	email: rsalsor2@verizon.net

Dan Willetts, PLT member

Learn About Jesus' Mission

The first meeting of the Mission Initiative Team, Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, was held February 18th. We spent time getting to know each other and talking in general terms about the five Mission Initiatives and specifically about the mission to Abolish Poverty and End Suffering.

We will be meeting again, **Sunday, March 23rd, at 12:30 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. We plan to have a light lunch, coffee and tea and go over the first lesson in the Mission Initiative Series, "The Mission Matters Most". The lesson can be found on the World church website under Resources/Mission Initiatives/Adult Lessons and includes watching or reading President Veazey's April 15, 2011, message. Please join us for a fun time learning and helping us brainstorm what we can do to help fulfill Christ's mission. Bring yourself and your excitement and desire to share your gifts! Please call **Jo Willetts** at 941.724.4220, if you have any questions or suggestions. See you March 23!