



# Celebration News

March, 2015 - Volume 25 - Issue 2

## Lent: To the Cross and Beyond

The struggle to become is what life is about. It may be religiously/spiritually motivated or more earthly in just trying to get ahead, whatever that means to one personally. We are forever and always confronted with choices. There is no escape from having to choose, even minute by minute. What our choices are and why, determines our life-style. What is our focus? What is our purpose? Or do we even think that specifically about it?

We are on the journey to the cross and beyond this Lenten Season. It is a journey toward deeper divine relationship with God. It is a spiritual journey and involves daily choices. Lent, by its very nature, is surrendering something for something else. It is sacrificing something for something better. Choosing the better way, the way to the divine, is the path of the disciples, not only during Lent but daily. Lent just brings us to intentional focus in ways that might just slip on by at other times.

Every commandment of Jesus was and is designed to bring us into harmony with eternal truth. Surrendering the self that is, in order to find the self that can be, is the path of the disciple. Sharing time, resources, love and compassion is the path of the disciple. If the desire of our heart is to become a blessing of God's love and peace, then we will make choices that will bring transformation into our lives that will make it a reality.

The 40 days of Lent encourage us to spend quiet time with God. It calls us to prayer, meditation, study, silent presence, the practice of journaling, etc. These all grow us in transformative ways that invite the Holy Spirit into us and Christ's presence to live in us and flow from us in our daily living.

Easter will come and go whether or not we think about it in any significant way. But living it by living in the story, imagining the emotions of the disciples as Jesus went to the cross, the tomb and the coming forth in resurrection, will help us appreciate and feel the depth of God's sacrificial love for each of us personally.

Do you want to be a Spirit-filled disciple of Jesus Christ to a greater degree than ever before? Then daily do the spiritual disciplines that will bring the transformation you have dreamed of in your heart. This is the only way we give God permission to change us. And the only way that change into the image of Christ can happen. The invitation from God is there. "Come, journey with my Son on the road to the cross and find new vision, new promise, and new hope. And feel the King coming ever closer." Amen.

Remember, God rejoices in each small step taken. The Lenten journey is one step at a time. Let's do it!

Evangelist **Bob Slasor**

## Coming Soon

Coming soon to the Bradenton/Sarasota *Community of Christ* -- **Community of Christ Youth Club!** Starting March 3, 2015, we will unveil our new club that will meet the third Sunday of every month in our Fellowship Hall during the 10:55 am service. Who's invited? Children of all ages up to 18 years old are welcome and encouraged to invite friends. Come and worship together! We will sing and play games together while learning about God. All youth will have an opportunity to share their ministry with one another. I hope that all our children will join us, and I welcome your input.

**Heather Devine**, Youth Leader



## Get to Know Pauline and Patrick

I, **Pauline Kelly**, was born in Winfield, Kansas, to a farming family. I grew up in the country on working farms to include at one time a Grade-A dairy. Now that was hard work! My mother was a nurse and worked odd shifts so us girls learned from an early age to cook and clean. I guess these lessons served me well as I still like to cook and love to bake!

I was raised and baptized in the First Baptist church and attended regularly. I was married to my first husband, Phil Davis (who is now deceased) in 1969. I was a "child bride." Brent, our son, was born in 1970, and I was baptized into the RLDS church 1972. I also have a daughter, Laina, who was born in 1975. Brent and his wife Maureen have blessed me with three wonderful grandchildren: 24 year old Alyssa, Brandon 19, and 15 year old Connor.

I was ordained an Elder in the church in the late 1980's while living in Palm Bay. We then moved to Orlando where Phil and I were both very active in our own way. I sang with the "Jubilation" band for over 25 years and loved every minute. I always say I can worship the Lord through a great song as easily, and sometimes easier, as through a good sermon.

After being married over 30 years, Phil passed away in 2004, and my new life began. Life was very tough the first few years and, needless to say, I was glad to have the support of my family during those hard times.

In 2010, I met Patrick through Match.com. Praise the Lord for technology! We married on April 13, 2013, on Hutchinson Island, FL, and remain very happy. The good Lord blessed me twice with two good men. Patrick has two sons from his first marriage, and we are very close. Pat lives in Alaska and finishes graduate school in May. We will be making that trip, needless to say. We are looking forward to the adventure. Jake is the youngest and graduated from FSU in 2013. He is now living and working in Jacksonville. They are both wonderful men, and we are very proud of them.

We moved to our current location of Ruskin in 2013 to accommodate Patrick in his new position. We are very thankful for the congregation welcoming us into the fold.

**Pauline and Patrick Kelly**



## Annual Yard Sale

It's that time of the year already. Our thoughts are turning to spring, and it's time for our **sale**. So take time now to gather any and all items you can for our 2015 **Annual Yard Sale**. It is time for a little work and a lot of fun!

The date is set, and we are ready for action.

The sale will be at the church on **Saturday, March 28th from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm**. During the yard sale there will be a car wash, a bake sale, sandwiches, and drinks available for

purchase. Make plans now to clean out your house and garage and donate the gently used/clean items you don't need anymore to the yard sale between now and the 26th of March. Then on the 28th bring your car to be washed, a healthy appetite, and your wallet to the sale!

Many volunteers will be needed so look for the sign-up sheet in the Information Center. Donations of water, soda, and chips for the food sale are needed and appreciated. Contact anyone on the fund Raising Committee if you have any questions.

**Stuart Skene** for the Fund Raising Team



## Congregational Disciples

The **Congregational Disciples** will continue to meet on the fourth Sunday of the month. Our next meeting is **March 22nd at 12:15 am**. We will be discussing the much needed work on our playground equipment. The discussion of possible new Sunday School course material is also on the agenda. We will also be discussing plans for the summer and the fellowship hour. Please plan to attend and bring ideas. All are welcome. If you would like a topic added to the agenda for a future meeting, please reach out to **Dan Willetts** or **Melinda Creel**.

## Pot Luck

Come join us in fellowship on March 8th as we share our noon meal together. **Carolyn Deering** will be in charge. Please bring a main dish and one other item. All are welcome!

## Journey to the Cross

During the month of March, we continue our journey to the cross and the resurrection. Last Sunday was the first Sunday in Lent, and the next four weeks bring us to Palm Sunday. During this Lenten season, we are invited to journey with Christ. This is a time to pause, to think, to pray, and to just be with God. Joining with us in worship at the coming services will help guide you in your personal Easter preparation.

### March 1                      **Be a Covenant People**                      **Second Sunday in Lent**

On this Communion Sunday, we come to eat at God's table. God has made a covenant to be our God, and this Sunday we will learn how to be a covenant people. Priest **Patty Day** will preside while Teacher **Jo Willetts** brings the message. This is also World Hunger Emphasis day.

### March 8                      **Revive My Soul**                      **Third Sunday in Lent**

During the season of Lent, we are reminded we sometimes need to rest in our journey of following Jesus. God refreshes and revives each of us in different ways according to our needs. Bishop **Fred Keenan** and guest speaker Evangelist Leonard Young will share their ministry on this third Sunday in Lent.

### March 15                      **Confess our Impatience**                      **Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Are we there yet? How does our impatience show? Are you murmuring like the people following Moses? It may be time to confess our impatience and turn toward a waiting God. Elder **Sandi Hunt** will deliver the message on this Sunday with Priest **Nancy Skene** presiding.

### March 22                      **We are Forgiven**                      **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

As disciples of Christ, we are invited to confess and repent, with the assurance of God's promise that we will be forgiven. Priest **Carolyn Deering** and Evangelist **Glenn Day** will share with us about forgiving, as God forgives us, so we can walk together in unity and love.

### March 29                      **Walk the Via Dolorosa (Way of Grief)**                      **Palm Sunday**

Evangelist **Karen Palko** will remind us of the story we have heard so many times -- how Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey with people shouting "hosanna" and waving palms. Teacher **Fay Beers** will lead us in worship as we hear the story of Jesus, the miracles he did, and the lessons he taught.

### April 2                      **Maundy Thursday**

More of the story will be shared at the Maundy Thursday service at 7:00 pm; how Jesus broke bread and drank wine with the disciples - how Jesus washed the feet of the disciples - how he was betrayed and crucified the next day.

Traditionally, Lent is a season of confession and penance, a time to empty ourselves so we can be ready for the good news of Easter. Each week in the morning worship service an additional candle will be extinguished, leaving the table darker and darker. The promise of Lent reminds us the day will come when the shadow of the cross will be replaced by the light of new life.

Wednesday evening Prayer and Praise services will be held at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall each week except April 1. Come and share with others who are travelling the Lenten journey.

**Jo Fenn-Martin** for the Worship Team

## Greeting 101 - aka, Welcome People to Christ

On Sunday mornings I like greeting people at the front door of our church. It is there that I see and feel the love of Christ in action.

It is 9:30 am, and our church is coming to life. I see parents and their children walking toward the door. What an image of life and energy! It assures me of our present and future walk of faith. I see the older members approach and remember our previous times together beyond the front door where I wait. Even when they were my age, their youthful smiles reminded me of Christ's love.

When we have visitors, I take great pride in

welcoming them and assuring them that Christ loves them very much. It is often exciting, because I hear from them what brought them to our church on this particular Sunday. The level of greeting raises as the fellowship builds. Some people go to Sunday School classes while others congregate to talk and others go into the sanctuary and enjoy the quiet before the worship service begins.

Well, it is 10:55 am, and the doors are closed. Now I am excited, for when I enter the sanctuary, the love of Christ is fully manifest in our church. Our name *Community of Christ* says it all - what matters most is the mission of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jesus, for our congregation and the love it represents.

**Marcia Brouger**

If you would like to be a "greeter", contact Marcia at 941.752.5856.



## What Matters Most?

In 2007, we as *Community of Christ* were challenged to become a people who are characterized by devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The section goes on to say, "There are many issues that could easily consume the time and energy of the church. However, the challenge before a prophetic people is to discern and pursue what matters most for the journey ahead." (163:11) What matters most became a searching cry for me. This particular year followed a "bad" year for me, and as I began thinking and discerning about what matters most I realized how blessed I really was.

Then in 2010 we received more counsel from the First Presidency. The very last statement in that counsel said, "The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead." (164:9f) I began to understand those words with a clearer vision. I ask myself every day as I recite the Mission Prayer what God has for me to do that day.

What seems so interesting lately is that same phrase has been picked by other people over the past year. There is a BrightHouse commercial that asks What Matters Most. I have heard others use it outside of the confines of the church. Who knows! If we can show people that the mission of Jesus Christ matters most, maybe we can be instrumental in creating some action or reaction in this crazy world.

**Nanette Dizney**, Pastor

### Prayer Request

Please pray for the students in our area that will be taking their Florida's State Assessment Test beginning the week of March 2, 2015.

## Luck

With the celebration of St. Patrick's Day this month, we hear about the "luck" of the Irish. Do you believe in luck? Where do luck and blessings meet? I had a recent experience that made the answer clearer to me. Just before this past Christmas I came extremely close to tragedy. I drove home and pulled into our garage as I normally do. I was about to get out of the car when suddenly the huge, extremely heavy double garage door came crashing down to the floor with tremendous force. The noise was so loud that Jim came running to see what had happened. The spring that helps to lift the door had broken and our 30 year old door collapsed. If this had happened seconds earlier, it would have dropped on the car with me inside. On the other hand, had it happened just seconds later, it would have come down right on top of me as I walked around the back of the car to enter the house.

To say I was frightened is an understatement, but our immediate response was how "lucky" I was because I could have been seriously injured or worse. When I calmed down and had a moment to reflect, my response was "thank heaven" it didn't happen a few seconds earlier or later. That would have been disastrous. That was truly the key! Thank HEAVEN!! It wasn't luck, it was my Heavenly Father blessing me yet again! He watches over us continually and blesses us more times than we can imagine or count. As we celebrate all things Irish this month, let us remember the Irish Blessing: *May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and the rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of His hand.* He ALWAYS does!

We knew it was a blessing and not just luck. When something good happens, is it lucky or do we recognize the blessing? Let us strive to always give God the credit and remember to count our blessings!

**Carolyn Deering**, Editorial Staff

## Reach In and Reach Out

What is that big bucket with change in it which is in different places in the sanctuary each month? It has the sign, "Reach In and Reach Out" on it.

The Abolish Poverty Team has come up with a way for each of us to go on a "mission trip" every three to four months. Yes, we will be going on a mission trip and not only are you invited to join us, but you are invited to provide us with ideas for each trip. In addition, to fund our missions, we will continue to ask you each Sunday to "Reach In" to your pocket so we can "Reach Out" by dropping your loose change in the bucket. If you would rather not bring your change to the bucket, one of the youth in the congregation will be happy to take your donation to the bucket. These are your loose change donations, and we are not asking you to take away from your regular tithing for the church. Remember, we need to be able to pay the bills for our congregation and to provide much needed funds to the World Church for their continued operation.

Our next mission trip will be closer to home. So read the article from the Abolish Poverty, End Suffering team next month to see what we plan for our April mission trip.

**Jo Willetts** for the Abolish Poverty, End Suffering Team



## What Can We Do?

At the last Congregational Touch Base meeting, we took the last portion of the meeting to begin brainstorming the

question "what can we do to be more of a presence in our neighborhood?" We plan to continue this brainstorming process on **Tuesday, March 10 at 7:30 pm.**

Here are some questions and answers that have been discussed:

### Who are we?

-The "we" is our church family congregation.

### What does presence mean?

Presence in the dictionary can be defined as follows:

- The fact of being in a particular place: the state of being present.
- The area that is close to someone.
- Someone or something that is seen or noticed in a particular place, area, etc.

### What are we referring to as neighborhood?

Neighborhood in the dictionary can be defined as follows:

- Neighborly relationship.
- The quality or state of being neighbors.
- The people living near one another.

Why are we discussing this, you ask? We want to be a presence in our neighborhood. We know having a presence will help us share Jesus' love with others. We are hopeful that by being a presence or "the neighborhood church," we will increase our attendance. Many great opportunities will arise if we can find a way to be more of an existence in our neighborhood.

You may be asking how does brainstorming work? Brainstorming is the process of gathering ideas centered on the topic. The sky is the limit when it comes to brainstorming. We should not be concerned with limitations such as budget, governing, man power or logistics. Now is the time to generate ideas. All are welcome; none are too small or too big. Once we have finished the brainstorming process, we will prioritize the list and then begin to dig deeper and focus on items like cost, county laws and man power. We look forward to seeing all of you at our **Neighborhood Presence Meeting on March 10th.** If you are unable to attend or if you think of an idea prior to the meeting, please feel free to jot your idea on a sticky note and add it to the board located in the Fellowship Hall.

**Melinda Creel**

## Community of Christ to Host Church Women of United

We are excited to announce that the Bradenton/Sarasota *Community of Christ* will be hosting the Manatee Church Women United Friday, March 6th at 9:30 am. All women are invited to attend and/or participate in this World Day of Prayer program.

This year, the program was planned by the women of the Bahamas. We will celebrate this event with fellowship, food, music and prayer. This is an opportunity for you to meet a diverse group of women from churches throughout Manatee County who believe in the power of peace and justice ministries. We currently offer financial support to 13 different area nonprofit agencies that strive to make a positive impact in our community.

Some of us will meet early Friday, the 6th, at about 8:30 am to set up our fellowship tables with food and drinks. The fellowship will last from 9:30 until 10:00 am. We will then convene to the Sanctuary for our World Day of Prayer meeting. This will last about an hour, so we will be done by about 11:00 am. Please mark your calendar, and let's come together to represent our congregation at this very special event. For more information, please contact **Ginger Robertson** or **Nanette Dizney**.

### **Ginger Robertson**

Church Women United Manatee Corresponding Secretary

## A Potluck of People

Many congregations enjoy gathering for potluck dinners - meals largely unplanned, when people bring food to share. Usually, the main dishes, salads and desserts balance out. The fun is the variety mixing together on a plate and the surprise factor of what's contributed.

Churches and communities -- even families -- are potlucks of a sort, too. When groups assemble each person contributes something unique and sometimes unexpected. When all is mixed together, the whole is truly greater than the sum of the parts. A beautiful balance often results: One is a good singer, the other writes well; some are strong leaders, other dependable team members; some are traditional, others innovative. Together, it's delicious!



Potlucks are sometimes called covered-dish dinners. But don't keep your gifts "covered"! Share them because you're a valued part of the whole.

# Florida Mission Center Welcomes New Mission President

High Priest Craig Lenfestey will begin serving as the Florida Mission Center President effective March 1. He will also continue to serve as the mission center president in the Southeast Mission Center where he lives. Craig already participates on the FMC Ad Hoc Team which is creating a new shared-leadership model that will provide support to members, priesthood, and congregations. He will lead this Leadership Team with Debbie Bartlett, our competent and talented administrative assistant.

On **Saturday morning, April 11**, Craig will be set apart at the **Florida Mission Conference** to be held at the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation. Former mission center president/financial officer Bob Watkins will be honored also. Three calls for the priesthood will be presented and be ordained at the conference. Come and learn about the new missional leadership model and envision the future for FMC.

Circle the date, the morning of April 11, on your calendar and greet our new and former mission center presidents as well as others from the Florida Mission Center.

## Abolish Poverty, End Suffering First Fund-raiser

"Let's buy a goat or two. How many chickens can we buy? Toothbrushes? What about toothbrushes? Do we have enough for two hens, a rooster, and a piglet? How much does it cost to provide meals for an orphan for a month? Shoes! We need to buy shoes. How much money do we have left to spend?" These words were heard as young and old poured over the catalog of Outreach International.

On Sunday, February 15th, a lunch was held by the **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering** initiative team to raise money to send to Outreach International in the first quarterly "Reach In and Reach Out" mission. Contributions of loose change had been collected during the previous three months in the "Reach In and Reach Out" bucket each Sunday. In addition, contributions were received on Sunday before the lunch, bringing the total to approximately \$1,335.00!

After sharing a simple meal of beans and rice, the participants got down to the business of deciding how to spend the money raised. Each table had \$325.00 to spend on items they thought were important to the lives of people who live in poverty. There was much discussion, passionate conversation, and compromise as the lists were finalized. It was a blessing to hear our children passionately proclaim how we should help other children in the world who lack such basic needs. Not only did our children learn, but so did we!

Here is what was chosen:

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 - Mosquito Net                     | 30 - Toothbrushes and Dental Hygiene Lessons |
| 3 - Pair of Chickens                 | 1 - Fishing Kit                              |
| 1 - Stock a Clinic and Immunizations | 1 - Goat and Chicken                         |
| 2 - Pair of Goats                    | 1 - Girl's Education                         |
| 5 - Pair of Shoes                    | 2 - 2 Hens, 1 Rooster and 1 Piglet           |
| 1 - Share of Water Well              | 1 - Orphan's Meals for a Month               |

In addition, we had an undesignated contribution of \$93.03. While Outreach International cannot promise that the contributed funds will be used to purchase these specific items, they do promise that the money will go toward a project that is desperately needed. This was a fun project, but also a project with an important lesson for all who participated.

Thank you to each of you for your contributions of the heart. This was a great way to practice mission and outreach to those in need.

**Jo Willetts** for the Abolish Poverty, End Suffering Team

## Spring Fever

Four high school students afflicted with spring fever skipped their morning classes. After lunch, the boys told their teacher they'd had a flat tire.

Much to the boys' relief, the teacher smiled and said, "Well, you missed a test, so take seats apart from one another and take out a piece of paper."

Still smiling, she waited for them to sit down. Then she said. "First question: Which tire was flat?"



## Anniversaries and Birthdays

- 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
- 19 Steve Farris
- 26 Sydney Evans

## Our Father's Cupboard: We Are Family

Each month after our third Saturday food pantry distribution, I fill out a report sheet with the statistic information of how many families we served, how many persons that equates, when, where and other minimal information. I then send it, along with our next food order to the Manatee Food Bank. Although that sounds fairly routine, our congregation's food pantry is so much more.

Our volunteer staff that faithfully comes in on Wednesday delivery day must unload a truckload of food boxes, open them and then shelve the contents. This requires much physical labor. We have been blessed to have **Amber Hart-Cooper** and **Tobin Cooper** join our team. Tobin, a fifth grade student at Manatee Charter School, works side by side with our adult crew, and has been a tremendous asset to our team. On Thursday mornings when we bag the food, yet another team comes in to fill the donated Publix paper grocery bags. Each bag (75-90 total) is filled completely full with enough food to make several meals. **Rick and Randi Primrose** are a welcome addition to our team. Both are full time Publix employees and have much experience! Along with **Calvin Long**, a former retiree from the US Postal Service who spent many of his retirement years as a Publix employee, we can say we have quite a professional team.

Now we come to our distribution Saturday. This is when our big, extended family joins us. The Saturday team dons their name tags, and prepares the sign-in registration tables. The distribution crew sets out the traffic cones, gets the carts ready, and prepare to greet the waiting clients. Did I say clients? We greet them with hugs and smiles. We inquire about their health issues, family concerns, and welfare. We greet them by name. We laugh with them, cry with them and pray with them. We notice who *didn't* come and make sure anyone new is made to feel that they are welcome. Oh, the food? Delivered to and loaded into their cars by our staff.

Yes, we are a family; a big community family bound by a God who loves each and every one of his children equally. You are an important part of our family, too. Each can of food, box of cereal and dollar you donate to our food pantry will make a difference in the lives of our sisters and brothers throughout our community. Thank you for being a member of our family!

**Ginger Robertson**, Food Pantry Coordinator

## All of Our Efforts are Appreciated

Inukshuk, pronounced in-ook-shook, are stone monuments erected often in the image of humans. One of their purposes was to communicate direction in the harsh and desolate Arctic. As such, they were a tool for survival and a symbol of the unselfish acts of a nomadic people - the Inuit- who built them as signposts to make the way easier and safe for those who followed.

The hands of many and the effort of an entire group were required to build these massive stone sculptures. The Inukshuk celebrate our working together. The Inukshuk act as a reminder to all of us that our efforts are appreciated, and the difference we make today, does count in all our tomorrows.

The Inukshuk on this day, picture to the right, was built by **Cole Van Beek** with **Karen Palko** as the cheerleader. Watch for these stones somewhere around the church. Maybe you will be asked to build your version of the Inukshuk.

## Save the Date

Save the date of August 3 - 7, 2015, for this year's Vacation Bible School (VBS). The theme will be "Everest". Please plan to embark on an icy expedition where kids overcome obstacles with God's awesome power. This will be an opportunity to anchor kids in rock-solid Bible truths that will guide them through life's challenges. If you are interested in taking part in this adventure with us, please contact me, **Melinda Creel** as I will be the director for this year's VBS.

## Easter Breakfast

Join us on **Sunday, April 5th, at 9:00 am** as we begin this glorious day, Easter, in celebration of our risen Lord. Volunteers are needed to help with setup, food preparation, decorations and cleanup. If you can help, please contact **Vera Kramer**.

