

Faith's Happenings...

February, 2025

Happy Birthday

Nancy Smith	7th
Allan Thoren	13th
Barbara Hanson	14th
Gene Newlon	15th
Ruth Ash	18th
Anne LeVasseur	21st
Adrienne Bakker	26th
Lester VanAllsburg	27th
Linda Grosvenor	28th
Jeff Petersen	28th

Happy Anniversary

Thomas & Adrienne Bakker	11th
Sam & Susan D'Amico	24th

**If we missed your name/date, we're sorry.
Please notify Barbra in the church office
to have your special dates added.**

February at a Glance

Mark your calendars now!
Men of Faith Breakfast: February 4
Ladies Luncheon: February 12
Friendship Dinner: February 13



January Friendship Gathering

Our Friendship Gathering on January 16th was off to a good start with 34 people attending. We had plenty of wonderfully appealing appetizers, enough to provide a hearty eater with sufficient food. Thanks to all who attended. Now, everyone, sign up for the February gathering when we will again have a dinner at the church.

Long Term Prayer

This prayer list is for those who need continued, long-term prayer. We try to keep the weekly prayer list short, so people named may be moved to the newsletter after a few weeks in the bulletin. If you want to add someone to this list, contact Barbra in the church office (697-3313). Please keep these folks in your prayers: Kathy Kanak, John Schleede, Carl Jaspers, Gary Wilkins, Alex Hoops, Tom Jackling, Ginny Linsberg, Jack Myers, Rosie LaQuay, Doug Skolski

Thank You

Dottie Lamere called to thank the Chicks for the cards they have sent her. She will not be returning to Florida due to her age and her house has been destroyed by the recent hurricanes. However, she wants to let her Faith family know how much they have meant to her over the years. She said she has been attending Faith since its beginning. Everyone at Faith has been kind and friendly and she has appreciated meeting everyone. At the time Dottie called (December 13th) she said it was -3 degrees Fahrenheit in Minnesota where she is living.

Need Help?

The Work Crew is available to help the congregation with many needs, like packing, cutting trees, etc. If they can help, they will. Call Barbra in the church office (941-697-3313) and she will notify the work crew.

Men's Breakfast

Guys, you are invited to join us on Tuesday morning, February 4th, at Stefanos. We meet at 7:30 for some great food and fellowship. You can stay as long as you like and get to know your church brothers. No sign-up necessary.

Hear ye!
Hear ye!



Friendship Dinner at Church (note change in venue)

Sign up in the narthex. This is a great way to meet people you see in church and socialize. We will gather in the church for a dinner hosted at individual tables. If you are able to host a table, please check the box marked "able to host."

Host duties: prepare an entrée and contact your guests to let them know what they can bring for the dinner.

Anyone, member or not, is welcome to come. Bring yourself and a spouse, significant other, or friend.

Contact Ellen Lindhurst (941-681-5542) or Mary Lou Fitzgerald (609-713-8725) for more information. Don't miss this chance to meet your church family. Deadline to sign up is Sunday, February 2.

THE HOLY LAND CHRISTIANS ARE GOING TO BE OUR GUESTS

On February 2, 2025, during the services, we will be hearing about the Christians of the Holy Land. After each service we will be hosting a nice display of handmade olive wood religious articles from Bethlehem in the church narthex. All will be available for purchase. These carvings include olivewood Nativity sets, crosses, Christmas ornaments, candle holders, angels and many other religious crafts that could make nice gifts. The carvings are handmade by Christian families from Bethlehem who rely on these sales for their daily bread.

More than 70% of the Christian Community in the Holy Land depends on tourism as their only source of income. For decades those Christians have been enduring many hardships as tourism in Bethlehem has plummeted and access to other sources of income has been sharply restricted due to the ongoing conflicts: the 12-yard wall built around Bethlehem, the COVID-19 pandemic, and now the catastrophic ongoing war. Due to this, tourists are afraid and unable to visit the Holy Land. This made it very difficult for Christian families to find their daily bread, and forced them to flee their homeland. The Christian population of the Holy Land was 30% in the last century; today it is less than 1%. If it continues like this, in a few years we will find no Christians in the land of Christ, which could cause tragic consequences to our faith and holy sites.

You can help support our Christian brothers and sisters in Bethlehem, where Christ was born, by purchasing their carvings. A Christian family from Bethlehem will be telling us the story of the Christians of the Holy Land, and they will be presenting these carvings after the services. All proceeds go to support Christian families from Bethlehem. Let us tend to our roots and pray together for peace in the land where our Savior once walked to tell the world the good news of salvation.



*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
Romans 15:4*

This scripture teaches us about God's faithfulness past, present and future. "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction." The past, our history, is something to be studied so we can learn from it. This year's annual report is our history, the history of 2024. In this report we have a record of the activity of our congregation's ministry in worship, the study of God's word, in fellowship and in service. We recall God's faithfulness in all our activities.

But the annual report does not contain all history. I don't know if any report will mention Tropical Storm Debby or Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Yet these three storms did much more than reshape the coastline of Cape Haze, Manasota Key, Venice, Casey Key, St. Armand's Key, Siesta Key and points north and south. These storms reshaped neighborhoods, communities, and congregations. People, now with no homes, are moving. Seasonal residents may have no home to come back to. Others have felt it necessary to move from here to be closer to family.

All these things have affected our lives, yet God is faithful. After Charlie and Irma there were changes; we adjusted, we recovered. God is faithful, and we are faithful in doing

God's work building and rebuilding community. We have done this, and we will do this again drawing strength from God's faithfulness.

Remembering the past, we are persistent in the present. This happens as Paul says, "through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures." We continue to gather for worship. We gather around God's word for Sunday School and Mid-week Bible Study, and the power of God's word, and the moving of the Holy Spirit, gives us strength here and now. The past is behind us. We cannot look back, except to witness the faithfulness of God who is with us now. He grounds and strengthens us for the work we do today. We continue to find ways to help others in our community, neighbors, campers, kids, families, the hungry and cold. Even though we are challenged, we find ways to make a difference in other people's lives. That is our living witness and testimony to the faithfulness of God. What we do today will be the history people remember and look to, in order to see the faithfulness of God.

Paul finishes the verse, "we might have hope." When the past and present faithfulness of God converge in our lives, we have hope for the future. Not looking back at our history. Not looking down and around at our present circumstances. Now we look forward to the future with hope, because God is faithful.

This year we will celebrate our 50th anniversary, March 2, 1975 to March 2, 2025. We will celebrate on March 2nd at worship, and we will celebrate with a special worship service and dinner on Sunday, March 23rd. We will do our share of looking back and looking around, but if we learn anything from our past and our present, it is the faithfulness of God. With 4 Pastors (Carl Kaltreider, Carl Kelly, Pat Large, and myself), our congregation has been blessed with leaders who point to the faithfulness of God. And over our 50 years, how many

hundreds, seasonal members, community members and visitors have been blessed by our congregation's life together. The faithfulness of God carries us on into the future, even though we do not know what the future holds.

In Matthew 4.19 we read, *And he (Jesus) said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* In the modern translation the phrase is inclusive, but doesn't sound quite the same; *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."*

Regardless of the phrasing, the traditional language we grew up with or the modern version, the message is the same. Jesus is inviting us to join him in moving forward into the future and to fish for people with the message of Good News.

I invite you to remember what God has done, see what God is doing among us, and look forward to what God calls, inspires, encourages and strengthens us to do. As we trust in God's faithfulness, our hope is renewed. As we live out God's faithfulness in word and deed, our neighbor's and communities' hopes are renewed. And as we move into the future, it is with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit leading us to fish for people. Get to know people. Care for people. Tell people about God's love.

You see, we never really do anything new. Past, present, future, they are all bound up in God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. Remember: celebrate and live in the faithfulness of God and our lives will be that living testimony that brings other to the Hope we have in Christ Jesus. That is what Faith did back in 1975, and we have done faithfully through 2024. Let us move forward in 2025 with God guiding us and Jesus leading.

God's blessing,
Pastor Brian

The February Ladies Luncheon

The next luncheon will be held at 11:30 am, Wednesday, February 12th, at Big Bamboo Asian Fusion restaurant. It is located at 4104 El Jobean Road, on the way to Port Charlotte. (If you come to the Harley Davidson place you've gone too far.) Their menu offers something for everyone – Chinese, Thai, Poke Bowls, Sushi and vegan dishes. We will order off the menu with separate checks. Come for the enjoyment of fellowship and laughter! Sign up on the sheet in the narthex. Deadline is Sunday, February 9th. For more information, see or call Kathie Wiley (941-662-5383).



Looking Ahead...

Our 50th anniversary dinner will be held on Sunday, March 23, at 11:30 am at the Rotonda West Community Center. Cost will be \$15 per person and you will have a choice of beef or chicken. Sign-up sheets are in the narthex this morning. If you have questions, see a committee member (Larry and Linda Bennett, Ruth Ash, Cyndy Hoops, Bob Wormuth, Marcia and Gary Wilkins). Deadline for registration is March 9th.

Job Opening

For many years Marcia Wilkins has scheduled ushers for weekly services. She has come to a point where it is no longer a job she can do. Basically, you just ask the regular volunteers to sign up again and pick a week. Schedule changes twice a year and most of the work is telephone calling. If you would like to take over for Marci, see Jeff Petersen or call Barbra in the church office (941-697-3313).

Worship & Music Committee

Your next meeting will be next Monday morning, February 10, at 9:30. Please mark your calendars.

Got Plastic Bags?

The Chicks are once again making mats for our campers (homeless) and they need your help. Bring your plastic shopping bags (like the ones from Publix or Walmart) and leave them in the container in the narthex. The Chicks need hundreds of them to create unique plastic mats that are very sought after. This is a great way to recycle your leftover bags!