



APRIL 2024

ISSUE 24-4

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

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Leadership

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH

From Pastor Mackay

Your pastors have enjoyed some spirited discussion in recent months regarding what we call the “spirituality of the church.” This concept includes the nature of the church according to the Bible, and specifically how the church’s nature dictates the way that the church interacts with the world around it. What role does the church play in politics, state, and family? As you may have experienced, Christians can vary widely in their approach to these matters. Myers and I both have been encouraged by the recent book written by Dr. Alan D. Strange, *Empowered Witness: Politics, Culture, and The Spiritual Mission of the Church* (Crossway). I’d like to share a few of my thoughts, and a few of Dr. Strange’s summary comments that have gotten me thinking.

Let’s start with a summary of the mission of the church. Our Confession of Faith states that God has given the “...visible Church...the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world...” (XXV.iii). These are important words. The visible church (i.e., all people who profess faith) is to be, as the Bible defines it, a Gospel-centered entity. The church exists by God’s grace through his revealed authorization in the Bible. All that the church does is spelled out in Scripture.

God’s revelation in the Bible is what spells out the “spirituality of the church.” The makeup of the church is a spiritual makeup (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2). The mission of the church is a spiritual mission (Matt. 28). The authority of the church is a spiritual authority (Matt. 16:19). The tools of the church are spiritual tools (Eph. 4:11-13). This is in distinction from, for example, the authority of the state (Rom 13:1-3).

We can put all this together to say that the mission of the church is inseparably connected to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever the church does, if it is not expressly connected to the Gospel, then the church probably should not be doing it. Consider the pillars of our

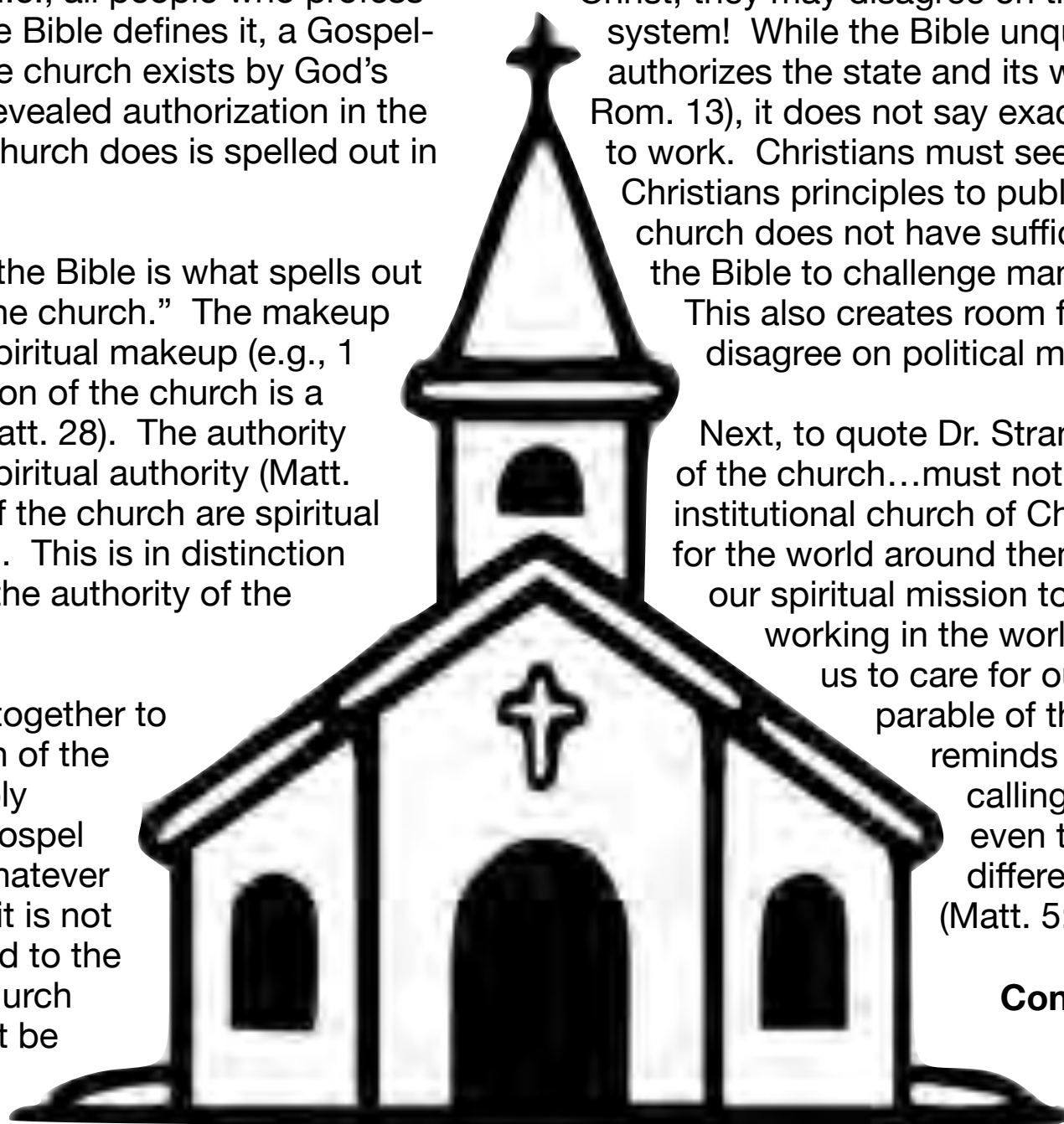
own mission here at First Presbyterian: Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism, and Servanthood. All these are intimately connected to the Gospel and the Biblical working out of that Gospel among his people.

With that in mind, a few thoughts on how such a spiritual entity relates to the world. First, *there is a Biblical difference between the mission of the church as an institution and the mission of individual Christians*. Christians are called to engage in all sorts of pursuits in life (Col. 3:22-23). The cooperative mission of the church is certainly one of them! However, Christians should work in areas where the organized church as an institution has no business. For example, a Christian may run for public office, serving in the highest levels of government. However, her political labors do not imply that her church must share in those labors. The church does what God charges it to do through His Word. The elders of her church should not spend their time developing public policy. Her church must remain focussed on its spiritual mission.

Second, to paraphrase Dr. Strange (and many others), *the Bible does not contain sufficient details to establish civil society*. Christians may not only disagree on political matters and maintain unity in Christ, they may disagree on the entire political system! While the Bible unquestionably authorizes the state and its work (see again Rom. 13), it does not say exactly how that state is to work. Christians must seek wisdom to apply Christians principles to public policy, but the church does not have sufficient revelation in the Bible to challenge many political ideas. This also creates room for Christians to disagree on political matters.

Next, to quote Dr. Strange, “The spirituality of the church...must not mean either that the institutional church of Christians fail to care for the world around them.” We do not use our spiritual mission to excuse us from working in the world. The Gospel frees us to care for our neighbors. Jesus parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that we have a calling to be neighborly even to those drastically different than ourselves. (Matt. 5:44)

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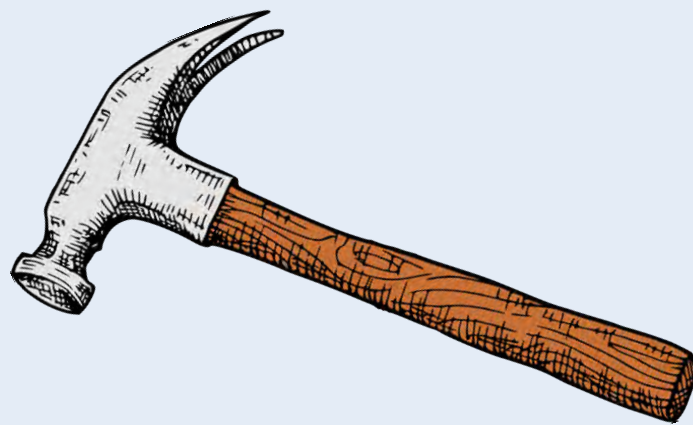


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Finally, *the church affects public policy chiefly as God uses the church to sanctify saints who live as Christians.* Again, the church does not have Biblical authorization to be politically active in a direct sense.

Christians must not have their consciences bound in areas to which the Bible does not speak (and this encompasses many areas of public policy).

However, the church does participate in politics as it sends out mature Christian people who can wisely apply Biblical principles to all areas of life. As we worship, disciple, and pray, God will use us as citizens in this world, even as we learn more and more that we are citizens of another world. ■



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The scaffolding currently in the memorial garden is being used to straighten, repair, and stabilize the gutters around the facility for better water management. This process will continue in different areas on our campus, so please be mindful.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on March 26, 2024.

- Prayer was given for our the needs of our congregation and the ministries of our church. Elders prayed particularly for members on their Shepherd Lists.
- The Property Insurance Ad Hoc committee plans to have a quote for property insurance for the Session's consideration very soon.
- The Director of Music Ministry Search Committee is active. Several candidates have contacted the church, and interviews are taking place. Please pray for this process!
- Discipleship Committee reported on efforts to spruce up the church playground. A recommendation was approved for a children's Sunday School hiatus in June and July.
- The Evangelism Committee reported on the World Witness dinner we are hosting on April 5th. Multiple missionaries and the World Witness director will be present.
- The Stewardship and Finance committee reported that as of Feb 28, budgeted income is at 16% of the annual budget. Expenses are at 15%. The operating account balance is \$188,696. ■

PRAYER FOCUS

- APRIL 7** - World Witness
- APRIL 14** - Faithful Stewardship
- APRIL 21** - Florida Presbytery
- APRIL 28** - Widows/Widowers

Mission & Outreach



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE

WORLD WITNESS

Fellowship Dinner

Friday, April 5
FPCLW Fellowship Hall
6:30 Reception
7:00 Dinner

RSVP and More Info
<https://worldwitness.org/dinner-fl>

Discipleship

WITNESS AND INSTRUMENT, NOT SUBSTITUTE

From Pastor Myers

If you were to visit the office of Karl Barth, the famous 20th century Swiss theologian, your eyes would be drawn to a painting which Barth had prominently framed over his desk. The painting was a rendering of Christ's crucifixion by the artist Matthias Grunewald from 1513.

While the depiction of Christ is interesting enough, Barth's interest in the painting had to do with John the Baptist. In the painting, John the Baptist is also portrayed very prominently, pointing his finger to the cross of Jesus in the center of the painting.

When friends, colleagues or students would visit Barth in his office, legend has it that Barth would direct them to John the Baptist in the painting, and he would say, "I want to be that finger." In other words, Barth wanted to be nothing except one who pointed others to Christ, one who was a witness for Christ.

Now regardless of where one comes down on Barth's theology (both Barth's personal life and his theology are not without serious problems), one can't help but resonate with Barth's desire to be a witness to Christ, a finger pointing to Christ.

Why does the image of a witness resonate so much?

The reason is not just because it is artistically poignant. It is also because it is biblically accurate.

When Jesus preached the gospel to Philip, what was the first thing Philip did when he saw his friend Nathaniel? He became a witness for Christ.

He pointed Nathaniel to Jesus, saying "come and see"(John 1:46).

How about the woman at the well? What was the first thing the woman at the well did after Jesus preached the gospel to her? She went into town and pointed others to Jesus, saying "Come and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"(John 4:29).

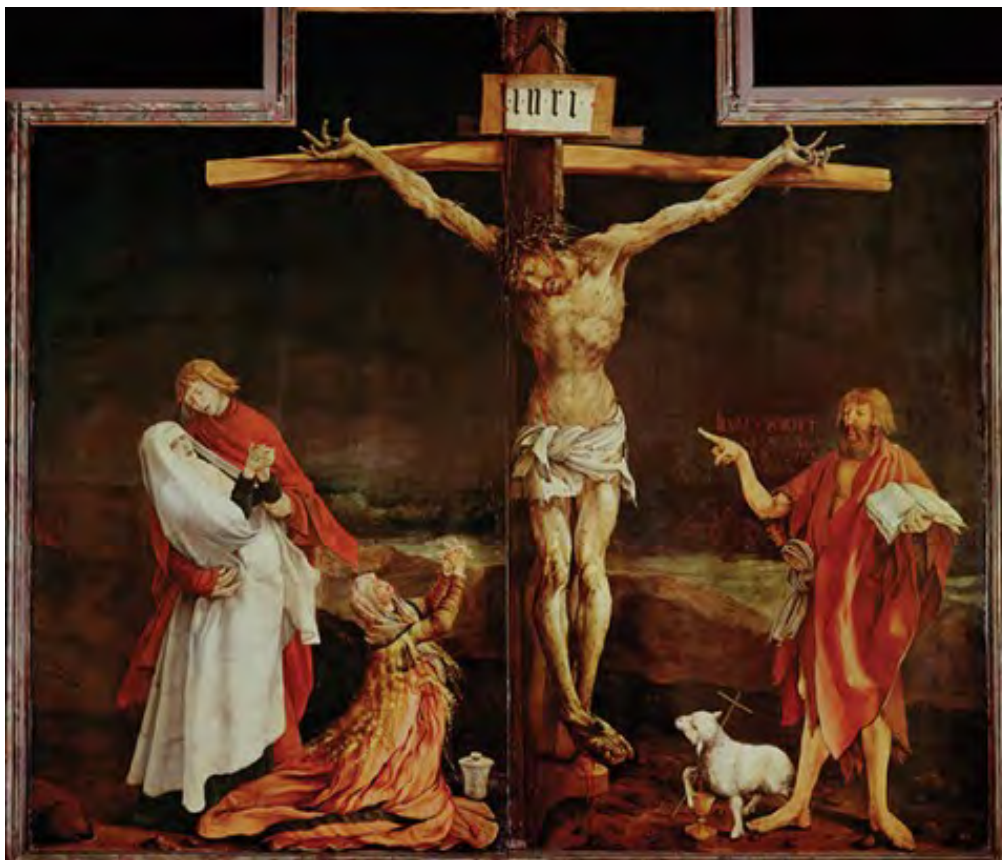
All throughout Jesus' earthly life and all throughout the life of the early church, the mission of the church and of the church's members was clear: to be a witness for Christ. Wielding the spiritual weapons of the word and the sacraments, the church was to be an

instrument in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to build up herself in Christ and to point others to Christ as well.

James Bannerman, a 19th century Scottish theologian, helpfully discusses the Bible's teaching on the Church's calling as witness in his seminal work *The Church of Christ*.

But Bannerman also sounds an important warning to the church, lest she experience mission drift. If the church ceases to be a witness for Christ or ceases to see herself as an instrument of the Holy Spirit for the sake of bearing witness for Christ, then the church will slowly start to see herself as a substitute for Christ and a substitute for the Holy Spirit.

This problem, the problem of seeing oneself as substitute instead of witness, is one which the church needs to be on guard about at all times, especially during election years. We need to beware of any rhetoric which implies that God only resides on one side of the political aisle over another. We need to beware lest politics starts to infringe on the church's main mission. We need to constantly be aware of the fact that we are not Christ in Grunewald's portrait, we are John the Baptist. ■



APRIL 3rd

Alex Pettett
World Witness Director



During ROW on Wednesday, April 3, we will be hearing from Alex Pettett. He will share his experience as a missionary to Israel, his most recent mission to Turkey, and how our church can be supporting and praying for him and all the missionaries of World Witness.

MAY 1st

Crystal Higbee
Circle of Friends, CEO

During ROW on Wednesday, May 1, we will be hearing for Crystal Higbee. She has served as the CEO of Circle of Friends in downtown Lake Wales for four years. She will share with us more how this ministry serves our community and provides opportunity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



APRIL 10th

ROW Bible Study
Led by Pastor Myers

We will explore what it means when we say "justification by faith alone"



APRIL 24th

ROW Bible Study
Led by Pastor Mackay

We will build off of Pastor Myers message and continue to discuss what it means when we say "justification by faith alone"

ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

FIRST WEDNESDAYS - Potluck and Fellowship

SECOND WEDNESDAYS - Breakout Night

- "Unbreakably His: Part A" Led by Pastor Myers
Pastor Myers will teach on bible narratives that illustrate tenants of Reformed Theology
- Women's Study led by Rachel Smith
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

THIRD WEDNESDAYS - Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing

FOURTH WEDNESDAYS - Lesson Series

- "Unbreakably His: Part B" by Pastor Mackay
Pastor Mackay will teach on the confessional/theological perspective of Reformed Theology
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

FIFTH WEDNESDAYS - Break

Want to help?

Contact Pastor Myers

(Discipleship Committee chair)
if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs

Music Ministry

KING'S SINGERS MUSICAL

From Vince Treadway

It's Cool in the Furnace

Every year the King's Singer perform a musical based on a Biblical story. This year they are performing the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace with the evil king, Nebuchadnezzar! The Biblical story is a wonderful example of God's faithfulness to his people, particularly those who obey His Holy Word and his Laws; even when persecuted and challenged.

The students will perform the musical on Sunday May 5 at 11:00 a.m. during the Small Group hour in the Family Life Center. I hope that you all will be able to join us and view this performance by the King's Singers! This is a great way for our students to store up God's Word in their heart and make it come to life! ■

Family Ministry

WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi Everyone!

With March behind us the Student Ministry here at FPCLW is only going to get busier. This past month we took the Middle School Students to their Winter Retreat, started a study in Isaiah, Began a new movie series, played even more games, had last minute hangouts, and ate a ton of pizza. It was a blast! Easter gave us a time to reflect on the person, work, and love of Jesus Christ, as well as a little rest.

Jumping into April we will continue Student Ministries as normal. We will meet each Sunday for Sunday School and Youth Group, as well as Youth Bible Study during the 2nd and 4th ROW. There will be countless other events to get involved with the our youth and the church as a whole.

I want to thank the many people who have helped serve our youth by providing breakfast during our Sunday School hour! It has helped on

so many levels and the youth have loved it! If you would like to help in this way in the future, please reach out to me and I can get you some more details.

Lastly, as we get closer to summer, we get closer to many youth camps. Please mark these on your calendars, encourage youth in and outside the church to attend, and be in prayer for each of these weeks and all of the students attending. See Below

HS Beach Trip: June 3-6

**Quest (Middle School Summer Camp)
June 17-21**

**Horizon (High School Summer Camp):
June 24-28**

**Care Center Work Camp – Week 3
July 21-26**

Thanks so much for your prayers and encouragement and God Bless!
Walker K. ■

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS

APRIL 3rd

ROW Fellowship Night

APRIL 5th

World Witness Dinner

APRIL 7th

Sunday School & Youth Group

APRIL 10th

ROW- Youth Bible Study

APRIL 12th

Film Friday

APRIL 14th

Sunday School & Youth Group

APRIL 17th

ROW Prayer & Hymn Sing

APRIL 21st

Sunday School

Family Fun Day - Frostproof

APRIL 24th

ROW Youth Bible Study

APRIL 26th

Girls Paint Night

APRIL 28th

Sunday School & Youth Group



MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

April 1, Gail Frankenburger
April 1, Jimmy Seay
April 2, Diana Smith
April 4, Bill Johnson
April 4, Mackay Smith
April 6, Debra Mullins
April 7, Carolyn Barnhardt
April 9, Paul Benner,
April 9, Matthew Crews
April 9, Sarah Owen
April 11, Stacey Butcher
April 14, Jayne Linton
April 15, Kay Clegg
April 16, Hunter Matteson
April 16, Heather Wilson
April 17, Evelyn King
April 18, John Steensma
April 19, Adrijana Hunt
April 19, Lori Woods
April 21, Lynne Hulen
April 23, P.J. Lewis
April 24, Joey Swanson
April 25, Emery McCartney
April 26, Kenzie Cockrell
April 26, Blake Wise
April 27, Willa Campbell
April 28, Natalie Kahler
April 30, Shelby Loveless-Cushing

ANNIVERSARIES

Sue & Ron Campbell, April 11
Cindy & David Nelson, April 20
Kathe & Tom Galloway, April 24
June & David Ullman, April 28

Church Family



*A huge Thank You
for all the prayers, well-wishes,
cards, phone calls and meals for the
past weeks and months. Our church
family is such a blessing!*

*Thank you again,
Jim & Nancy Ayers*



In honor of the 80th anniversary of D-Day coming up on June 6, *The Diligent* will be rerunning an article series first shared 10-15 years ago. Fox Rawlings collected the stories of several WWII veterans who were also brothers in Christ, Lake Wales citizens, and attended our church. May we remember their stories, honor their sacrifice, but mostly rejoice in their faith-made-sight as they are all with Christ in glory!

BREAKFAST WITH THE GREATEST GENERATION

From Fox Rawlings

A couple of months ago I decided to try out the Tuesday morning Men's Prayer Breakfast and discovered a thoroughly enjoyable time of fellowship, devotion, prayer time and of course a five star breakfast. I returned several Tuesdays over the next month or so before I began to put the pieces together in my mind regarding just who attends this weekly event. Some Tuesdays I am the baby of the bunch...some days there are two or three of us 'youngsters' in the crowd. The one morning that really got my attention was when I looked around my table and realized I was sharing breakfast with four World War II veterans.

We were discussing how awful the tsunami destruction was in Japan when one of the fellows began to compare it to the aftermath of the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima. He said he toured the area in October. I asked which October (thinking it may have been years later) to which he replied October 1945. I was awe struck as two others at the table then calmly told how their ships were shot out from under them in the Pacific theatre. Sitting to my left was a long range bomber crew member in the Army Air Force who also saw action in the Pacific. Now I am looking at the other tables and see more WWII veterans and others who are veterans of more recent eras.

I begin to wonder if it is a coincidence that these guys are regulars at a weekly meeting of Godly men. I think not ...and now want to find out more about these 'heroes' who made incredible sacrifices so we Americans can live as we do today. Knowing the modesty of these gentlemen may make it a challenge but I hope to share some of their stories over the next few months.

**BRIG. GEN. JAMES KEMP McLAUGHLIN, SR.
1918-2019**

Kemp McLaughlin is my first interview because I wanted to catch him before he headed back to his West Virginia farm for the summer. Kemp grew up in Charleston, West Virginia and graduated from West Virginia University where he entered and completed the College Pilot Training Program. After enlisting in the U.S Air Corps Kemp trained in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida before shipping out to England in 1942 as a part of the 92nd Bombardment Group.

I asked Kemp about his memories of the war and he proceeded to tell me of his first mission as co-pilot of a B-17 Bomber where his plane was hit with shrapnel over France. He was able to fly it back to England with an engine on fire and a wounded radio operator. He said it was then that he knew it would take a miracle to make it safely through the war. Kemp was in fact a recipient of such a miracle and following the war went on to organize the Air National Guard of West Virginia in 1947 which he commanded for the next thirty years.

I was curious how Kemp ended up wintering in Lake Wales to which he told me he was familiar with the area because of the Avon Park bombing range. He also shared that he liked living in an agricultural community because the folks tend to be closer to God because of their reliance on nature.

I believe I will figure out over the next few months that a close relationship with our Lord is the common thread which provided these "greatest generation" prayer breakfast men the miracle necessary to survive WWII. I also believe that our nation is a better place not only because of the sacrifices of these men and millions like them, but also because we get to live in the same community with them every day.

**NATHAN UNDERWOOD
1925-2015**

Okinawa, Iwo Jima, the Philippines, Guadalcanal,

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the Solomon Islands...a listing of islands you would find in a history book of major Pacific battles during WWII. It's also a few of the places that Nathan Underwood and the crew of the USS Alderamin delivered supplies and troops to during the war. As Nathan would tell it he never saw any enemy action during his tour of duty. However he would be leaving out the fact that his ship often delivered Army GIs and Marines to these and other islands within days of being "secured". In fact, the Alderamin brought Marines to Iwo Jima at the same time Duane Hull (long-time FPCLW member) and the Seabees were repairing runways on the island under enemy fire.

Nathan's naval tour began in the U.S. Army. As he was wondering where he should go at the Camp Blanding recruiting office in Jacksonville an Army officer signed him up. While this Army recruiter was attempting to finalize Nathan's paperwork a Navy recruiter grabbed him and voila...at the age of 18 he was official property of the US Navy. After eight weeks of basic training at Bainbridge, Maryland and three months of on-board training at Little Creek, Virginia, Nathan and a crew of 250 (mostly teenagers) boarded the USS Alderamin at Portsmouth, Virginia and headed for the South Pacific with cargo holds completely full of 6 ounce bottles of beer. "Probably won the war" Nathan said with a smile.

The Alderamin made its way to the Panama Canal via New York City and Cuba. Nathan chuckled when he told me the 500 foot ship could run at a top speed of a whopping 9 knots. While in the Atlantic they were constantly surrounded by Navy escort vessels as protection against German U-boats. Nathan said as soon as they reached the Pacific he never saw another escort. In fact after seventeen days at sea the Alderamin barely missed colliding head on with the only ship they saw between the Panama Canal and Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands by sounding general quarters and taking evasive combat maneuvers. Nathan remembers this really shook everybody up while putting most of the crew flat on their backs.

In addition to the islands mentioned above, supplies and troops were also delivered between other South Pacific islands including Guam, New Caledonia, and Fiji. When I asked

Nathan about particular memories he told me of several. His scariest moment occurred while he was the rope-man on the captain's launch when it exploded during refueling. The blast knocked Nathan unconscious and sent him off the deck into the Pacific below. He told me the only reason he survived was because several sailors dove in and pulled him aboard. Nathan also remembered the day the war ended while he was anchored at Okinawa. He said "You could walk on the bullets in the air" during the celebration. On a lighter note he remembered what a sad sight it was to witness 1400 Army troops seasick and leaning over the side of the ship en route to an island landing.

I am constantly amazed to hear of reunion stories all over the world from WWII vets. Nathan got to visit with his brother John in the Philippines and with his best friend from high school on an aircraft carrier in Espiritu Santo (which by the way is the fictionalized locale of the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, South Pacific). I dare say any had ever even heard of such places growing up in Frostproof, Florida. I think the most impressive image Nathan left me with as we talked was that of him and his three brothers serving our country at the same time during the war. O.V. landed on Okinawa and Iwo Jima, J.D. was in the Navy in the North Atlantic, John landed in the Philippines, and Nathan sailed the South Pacific. This is the stuff that made the Greatest Generation just that...every sibling in one family from a little town in Florida did their part to ensure our freedom...and I thank each one of them for it.

As has become the norm with my interviews of these prayer breakfast men, Nathan was much more interested in telling me how he met his wife Appie at the Church of God in Frostproof rather than what he did during WWII. They were married eleven months before he joined up and he told me he wrote her a letter every day he was gone...from November 20, 1943 until December 31, 1945. That was the day that he was discharged at Camp Blanding and headed straight for Frostproof to see her. I believe Jesus said it best in Matthew 23:11-12 "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." ■



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CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2024

Daniel Hunt
 David Nelson
 Andy Hunt

2026

Stewart Hurst
 Ed Lamb
 Jimmy Seay

2025

Tony Woods
 Jim Underwood

2027

Chuck Loveless
 Willard Pearce
 Fox Rawlings

DEACONS

2024

Leah Gibson
 Dan Miller

2026

Aaron Nelson

2025

June Ullman
 Cindy Turner

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: David Nelson
Chairman of Deacons: Dan Miller
Deacon Secretary:
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt