



FEBRUARY 2026

ISSUE 2-26

# 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

## WHAT WILL CONVINCING THE WORLD?

### From Pastor Mackay

*Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." Exodus 4:1-9*

If there is a more remarkable conversation than the one between God and Moses, I haven't found it. At this point, God has revealed His covenant name from the burning bush and has summoned Moses to go to Egypt. God has given Moses the remarkable assurance that, "I will be with you," (3:12).

Yet, Moses protests. He raises an objection to which we can all relate: "I can tell them about you. I can do what you say. But they will not believe me." What would it take for people to hear and believe God?

God responds by equipping Moses with signs. The first is the business with the staff and the snake. The physical transformation is amazing, and there is probably an embedded message to Moses. Moses had to deal with Pharaoh: the most powerful man in the most powerful nation on earth. Moses' mission seemed nothing short of impossible (don't forget that Moses had run out of Egypt after killing an Egyptian) due to the incomparable majesty of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's power was often symbolized by (you guessed it), a serpent. So, with this first sign, God was telling Moses, "You do what I say. I can handle the threat of Pharaoh."

The second sign is leprosy. Moses does not think he is the right man for the job. He has objected once and there will be more objections. This sign communicates to Moses, "Your weakness is not a threat to my mission through you. Do what I say!"

The final sign, Nile to blood, is a foreshadowing of the first plague, and a powerful statement of God's sovereignty over Egypt. The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt; it's central agricultural and spiritual vein. That God can turn it however he wishes shows both Moses and Egypt that all power belongs to Him.

Do you wish that such signs were available to you? How much more effective we would be, we might think, if we could just pull off a few tricks like these! However, part of our trust in God is to believe the Bible's message that we now have something even more sure.

In the closing chapters of the Gospel of John, Jesus prepares his apostles for their ministry after He leaves. He tells them that He is going to bless them with the long-promised Holy Spirit. Specifically, the Holy Spirit will bring to their minds all that Jesus said and did.

By God's grace, that divinely inspired message of the Spirit has been written down in the Bible. Today, the Spirit testifies by the inspired Word to the greatness of all signs. In the Bible, there's a bigger snake. Revelation shows him as a great red dragon. He is Satan, the enemy of God. In the Bible, there's a bigger illness than leprosy. This dread condition from which there is no man-made cure is the sickness of sin. But, praise the Lord, there is a greater sign of the victory of God than water turned to blood.

The greatest of all signs is Jesus risen from the dead. As the Word of God which testifies to the Work of Jesus is used by the Spirit of God, the world will know, by God's power, that Jesus is Lord. Our calling then, is to be witnesses. Let us show the world this greatest sign and trust that the God who rules all will save many. ■

# SAVE-THE-DATE

Our Worship Committee and Session have approved a professionally produced and printed Church Directory. **The dates for family pictures are Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21.** Each individual or family who sits for a picture will receive a free 8x10 photo and a directory. There is no cost to the church. Families will be given the opportunity buy additional photos.

**To register visit:**

<https://schedule.ucdir.com/>

**Log In Code: FL1104**

**Password: Photos**



## MARCH into MISSIONS

MARCH 2026

The Missions and Evangelism Committee invites you to join us next month to learn about God's work here in Lake Wales and around the world.

WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 5

Rock on  
Wednesday

JEFF & SUZANNE  
ALLERS

Work Witness  
Missionaries

SUNDAY  
MARCH 8

Sunday Worship

REV. LEE SHELNUTT

Missionary  
SEED MINISTRY  
Training Pastors  
in the global  
South

SUNDAY  
MARCH 15

Small Group Hour

REV. DAVID GRIFFIN

Field Director of  
ARP work in  
Pakistan

SUNDAY  
MARCH 22

Small Group Hour

Zoom Meeting with  
NAINA MALL

Pak7

WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 25

Rock on  
Wednesday

Local Service  
Fair

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders met in Session on January 27th.

- The Session continues it's study of Harry Reeder's book, *From Embers to a Flame*
- Prayers were made on behalf of the congregation.
- The Missions and Evangelism Committee reported a tentative schedule for "March Into Missions" (see below).

- Session approved a recommendation from the Worship Committee for a new Church Directory.

**The Stewardship and Finance committee reported final numbers for 2025:**

- Operating Income (Member Contributions and other): \$939,490 vs a budget of \$945,805
- Operating Income (Escrow Reserves and House Sale): \$288,022
- Total Expenses: \$1,107,223 vs. a budget of \$1,161,552 ■

## PRAYER FOCUS

**FEB 7** - Obedience

**FEB 8** - Increase in Knowing God

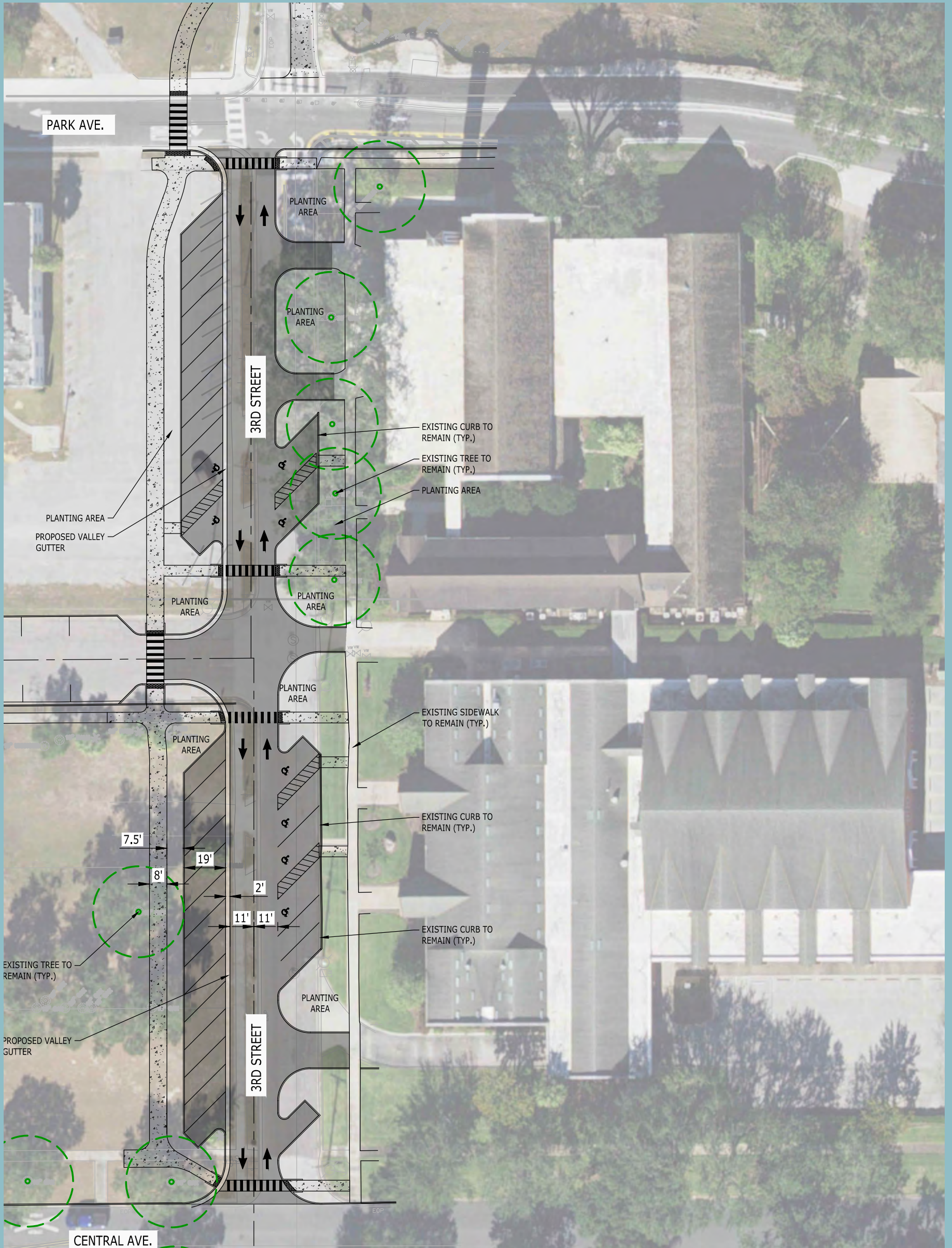
**FEB 21** - Christmas - Family and Salvation

**DEC 28** - Keeping Our First Love

Dear Church Family,

Your church officers continue discussions with the City of Lake Wales regarding the extension of the city trail system along 3rd Street next to the church campus. Both the city and the church have indicated a commitment to fair compensation for any use of church property and for a clear, neighborly agreement to be in place. Renderings indicate that the church will gain better and more convenient parking (disabled and standard); safer crosswalks from parking to the campus; and refreshed, more attractive road frontage. No start date for the project has been shared. Stay tuned to church communications. It is a gift from God to do ministry in downtown Lake Wales.

- Mackay



# Discipleship

## FEASTING AND BASKING: WHY THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS IS A BLESSING, NOT A CURSE

From Pastor Myers

Perhaps you remember the question that Pastor Mackay left us with in the last sermon of 2025. Pastor Mackay asked us, “What do you think of as coming in 2026 as regards to following Jesus and think ‘alright here we go again’?”

What is it, in other words, that is coming in 2026, which you fear will drain you? What Christian duties, what callings, what opportunities to worship the Lord and love our neighbor do you look at with something akin to dread?

Pastor Mackay gives the example of reading the Bible and particularly the example of reading the book of Leviticus.

“Gonna try to read the bible again. Genesis, Exodus great, Leviticus, things get a little shaky. But I’m gonna try it again.”

Well there is no need to fear! Leviticus need not drain the average Christian believer. Leviticus is a gift from our Father in Heaven that gives us, I think, two of the greatest images and metaphors for the Christian life that we find in all of the Bible.

What are those two images? They are the images of feasting and basking. All Christians feast with the Triune God in communion and all Christians bask in the light of God’s blessing, favor and beatitude.

How do we see this play out in Leviticus?

Leviticus is centered around a journey, a holy and therefore dangerous trek into the center of a reconstituted Garden of Eden. This Garden, also known as the Tabernacle, requires a sacrifice of blood and fire in order for the God’s priests (the representatives of God’s people) to enter.

Why must sacrifices of blood and fire be made in order for God’s people to enter God’s presence? Because God is holy and we are not. God is perfect and we are sinful.



But God in his grace has provided such a sacrifice. That is what the book of Leviticus is all about. God has provided a perfect sin offering to take away the guilt of our sin. God has provided a perfect burnt offering to take away the pollution of our sin. And God has also provided a peace offering. He has established a positive relationship with His people and for all who believe in Jesus, God no longer calls us enemies but friends, even his sons and daughters (John 1:12).

And where does that leave us, according to Leviticus? It leaves us where we find the priests in Leviticus 24, feasting on the holy meal in God’s holy place (the reconstituted Garden of Eden) and basking in the light of God’s blessing, signified by lampstand which sits in the Holy Place as well, lit with pure unblemished olive oil, signifying the Holy Spirit, poured out on us by the pure unblemished lamb of sacrifice Jesus Christ.

What good news! What a privilege we have as God’s people to feast and to bask. Let us give thanks to our Father in Heaven for giving us the book of Leviticus. ■

# VBS 2026

SAVE THE DATE  
June 1-5 | Mon- Fri

QUESTIONS? Reach out to  
Rachel Smith or Pastor Myers

## WELCOME Sara Grace Freeland

We welcome Sara Grace Freeland as our new Nursery Coordinator! We are grateful for Kim Duncan as she transitions to nursery attendant. Please pray for Sara Grace, Kim, Kalaya and all of our nursery volunteers who demonstrate Christ's love for our little ones!



**2ND**  
ANNUAL  
**CHILI**  
COOK-OFF  
**DESSERT**  
BAKE-OFF  
**WED**  
FEB 4<sup>th</sup>  
*Come enjoy!*

## Sunday Small Groups

### -THE MEN'S 8AM-

Led by Andy & Frank Hunt  
Where: Library - What: The Quarterly

### -EAGLE'S WINGS YOUNG ADULTS-

Led by Fox Rawlings  
Where: Room 296 - What: Mark

### -THE SEEKERS-

Led by Laura Hunt & Tony Woods  
Where: Lecture Hall A - What: Romans

### -THE UPPER ROOM-

Led by John Dubois & John Steensma  
Where: FLC Classroom A - What: John

### -FAITH WORKS-

Led by Doug Pace  
Where: FLC Classroom C - What: Sermon Review

### -THE HUB-

Led by David Nelson, Vince Treadway, Mackay, Myers  
Where: Fellowship Hall - What: *The Holy Spirit* by John Owen

## Women's Circles

### -MARY MARTHA CIRCLE-

Led by Lori Woods, Meets every 3rd Thursday, 6:00pm  
Where: Weaver's Home - What: *The Full Armor of God* by Iain Duquid

### -TUESDAY MORNING CIRCLE-

Led by Jane Terry & Laura Hunt,  
Meets every 2nd Tuesday, 9:30am  
Where: FPCLW Game Room - What: *Psalms: At His Feet* by Hope Blanton and Christine B. Gordon

## ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

Join us for our weekly mid-week Discipleship Program

6:00pm - Family Supper

6:30pm - Announcements

Dismissal of Children & Youth on 2nd/4th Wednesdays

6:45pm - Program

7:25pm - Dismissal

Weekly Rotation

1st Wednesdays - **Potluck and Fellowship** (meat and dessert is provided; bring a side dish to share!)

2nd Wednesdays - **Bible Study**

3rd Wednesdays - **Prayer Meeting and Singing**

4th Wednesdays - **Bible Study**

Rock on Wednesday does not meet on 5th Wednesdays.

### Want to help?

### Contact Pastor Myers

if you'd like to help with...

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

# Music Ministry

## A PLACE FOR SERVICE

From Dr. Teresa Irwin

Are you looking for **your place** in service to our Lord and His people? Here are two wonderful possibilities:

### Chancel Choir

Were you ever blessed to sing in a choir? The Chancel Choir invites you to sing with **us**. We rehearse on **Wednesdays at 7:30pm**, and would so welcome your fellowship and musical gifts. If you are interested, why not come rehearse with us **THIS Wednesday** in the Choir Room. If you would like additional information, speak to one of our choir members or email our Dir. of Music Ministries, Dr. Irwin, at [dr.irwin@fpclw.org](mailto:dr.irwin@fpclw.org).

### Handbell Choir

The men and women of our Handbell Choir meet on **Monday afternoons at 2:00pm** in the Handbell Room. If you have ever played Handbells, played a musical instrument, or read music, this would be a wonderful ministry for you.

# Youth Ministry

## WORDS FROM WALKER

### From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hey everyone!

What an incredible start to the year it has been for our student ministries! Over the past couple of months, we've had countless hangouts and gatherings that deepened friendships and our Middle School Winter Retreat where our students heard of the beauty of the Father's Music (The Gospel) that draws us to him.

We also want to celebrate the success of our Cookies in a Jar Fundraiser for this summer's mission trip. Thank you to everyone who supported, gave, and prayed! You are making a real difference in helping us live out the Great Commission together.

As we look ahead, there's so much to be excited about! Our High School Winter Retreat is right around the corner. This is a great time for students to get away, connect with God, and grow in community. And, of course, summer means camps, mission trips, and so much more!

I would love for you to join us in prayer in a few specific ways:

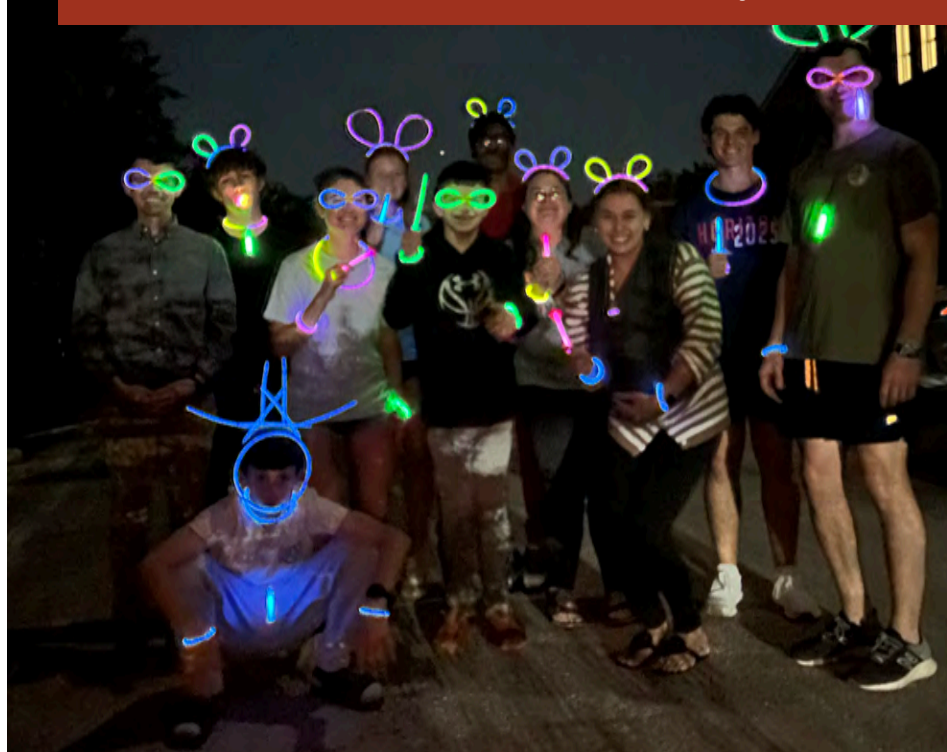
- **Mission Trip Direction:** Several doors for our summer mission trip have closed recently, and we're seeking the Lord's clarity on where He would have us go. Please pray that He will make His will known clearly and open the right opportunity for our group to serve Him and His Church.
- **Seminary Studies:** After taking a small break with the new baby at home, I am beginning a new semester in seminary—please pray for me to be able to better balance work, school, and life in the coming months. As well as wisdom and focus as I continue learning and studying.
- **Student Impact:** Pray that our students would continue to be a light for Christ in their schools, homes, and daily lives. May they live boldly for Christ.

Please enjoy the pictures of what we've been up to these past months! ■



Above: Middle School Winter Retreat

Below: Youth New Years Eve Party



## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

# Church Family

### BIRTHDAYS

February 2, Lee Turnquist  
February 2, Mark Markham  
February 4, Katy-Grace Hixenbaugh  
February 5, Laura Pace  
February 6, Norma Schaffer  
February 9, Ann Cone  
February 10, Carl McCollum  
February 10, Randy Portwood  
February 11, Lori Loveless  
February 12, Janet Thullbery  
February 15, Maddie Lippert  
February 17, Ansel Buhrman  
February 17, Vince Treadway  
February 17, Gerald Lippert  
February 18, Betty Baust

February 20, Jim Smith  
February 24, Sharon Bevis  
February 27, Brenda Wise  
February 28, Abigail Wunker

### ANNIVERSARIES

Joe & Caroline Swanson, February 15  
Larry & Pearl Oliszewski, February 20  
Bryah & Joel Knepper, February 29

Dear Prayer & Care Group,

Thank you all for your very kind letters to Mom every month. She truly enjoys and appreciates them.

Mom is doing okay. She was hospitalized 4 days in November. But now she is fully recovered. She was featured in an article in our newspaper as a “thriving centenarian,” and still enjoys going to social activities, especially if music and singing are involved!

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and New Year,

Love, Marguerite & Jeanette



*The Following News story ran in the Villages Daily Sun on October 19, 2025*

By Maddie Cutler

More people in America are reaching 100 years old, with the centenarian population reaching 80,139 in 2020, according to recent U.S. Census data. That is a 50% increase from 2010, when the population was 53,000.

Pew Research reports that number tipped beyond 100,000 in 2024, and estimates the centenarian population will quadruple in the next 30 years to around 422,000.

Communities are embracing this aging population by celebrating those who reach the triple digit milestone.

Socializing with friends is important for Marguerite Bacon, who turned 103 years old on July 2. Marguerite lives in the Village of Collier with her daughter, Jeanette Bacon, who is her full-time caregiver.

**Marguerite Bacon was a member of our church. She sang in the choir for many many years.**

Marguerite moved in with Jeanette eight years ago after being diagnosed with dementia, and the two keep a full calendar of activities, participating in different clubs or visiting with friends.

Marguerite said music and games are ways she connects with people. She played the organ and piano for more than 40 years, and while she can't play from sheet music anymore, it still makes her happy to listen to someone else play.

“We have a tight group of friends and they come over to play games,” Jeanette said. “They all treat her like their own mom.”

While Marguerite lives with her daughter, she still does most things unassisted. She also attends social clubs like Our Moment Cafe and the Daughters of the American Revolution John Bartram Chapter.



First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales  
16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853  
Phone: 863.676.0711  
fpclw.org

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2026

Stewart Hurst  
Ed Lamb  
Jimmy Seay

#### 2028

Frank Hunt  
Scott Crews

#### 2029

Daniel Hunt

#### 2027

Chuck Loveless  
Willard Pearce  
Fox Rawlings

### DEACONS

#### 2026

Aaron Nelson  
Pat Frankenburger

#### 2027

Bob Hulen  
John Dubois  
Karen Steverson

**Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** Ed Lamb  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Aaron Nelson  
**Deacon Secretary:** Karen Steverson  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** David Nelson  
**Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst