



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



Port Charlotte, FL

March/2024 E-GRAM



Greetings,

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

According to Proverbs 29:18 (KJV), “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” In the context of this Bible proverb — and I dare to say — in every other context, it simply means that those without a godly vision, live purposeless lives. Having vision in life is important, particularly in the younger years, but it’s true regardless of our age. It is also true for organizations, even churches.

Having said that, I want you to know that this month of March will mark the beginning of us searching for a vision that will bring meaning, momentum, fruit, and growth for us here at First Pres. Yes, church, it is time for us to dream again. It begins by us envisioning how can we serve the Lord and neighbor well, in this little corner of the world God trusted us to, by first understanding where we are and where we want ourselves to be. Once we comprehend these things, we will draw a concrete vision that will clarify our purpose. Finally, we should be able to draw a vision statement that communicates our church's values and commitment to achieving what God desires for us.

As your minister, I urge us, not to think of our church as a hub for socialization, but as a mission outpost. Yes, churches exist to evangelize. Always remember that “Church” is the people of God, united with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, who are sent to love one another and to proclaim to the world that the kingdom of God has come. There is nothing more hopeful and joyful than knowing that in Christ Jesus we are loved, redeemed and given the promise of eternal life. I hope that in our new vision, we will keep that in mind.

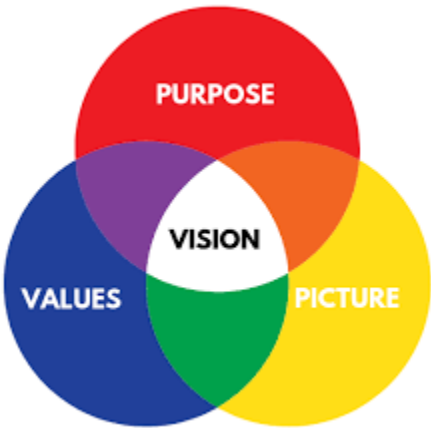
Finally, thank you for filling my heart with joy every Sunday. I don't know why, but I have been feeling tired for a while now. Now, I am starting to believe that "Pastor's burn-out" is a real thing. But know that as I walk by each one of you every Sunday, your smiles keep me motivated and eager to work more and harder. As long as you are smiling back at me, I know I will have what I need to keep doing ministry. And we have much to do, don't we?

Blessings to you all. Yours in the Lamb,

Pastor Syl

Visioning Workshop + Lunch

Join us on Sunday, **March 10, 2024**, at **10:15** (after the service) for a Visioning Workshop. This will be an opportunity for us to direct our efforts in the same direction. Remember, a vision is an idea of what the future can hold, but has not yet happened. Our Vision should be the fundamental building block for everything we will do. So, please come. Lunch will be provided.



**Pr. Saul de Melo
and his wife
visiting us from
Brazil. Welcome!**

Pr. Saul de Melo (one of pastor Syl's mentors in Brazil), together with his wife Neuzinha (sounding like "Naozenya"), will be visiting us on March 3rd and 17th. During their United States visit, Pastor Saul will preach in Orlando and Boston, but he is making time to be with Pastor Syl, Betania and First Pres. He will even oversee our church for a few days, while Pastor Syl is at the New PC-USA minister's convention, in Little Rock, AR. Let us welcome him and his wife.



Every year hundreds of pastors leave the ministry because they get burned out. CREDO is an in-person, weeklong conference focused on pastors' wholeness and well-being. Every PC-USA new minister is encouraged to participate and for this reason, Pastor Syl and other new PC-USA ministers will be meeting in Little Rock, AR, between March 12th and 19th and at the same time next year. We wish our minister safe travels and we hope he will find the tools he needs to take care of himself while he does ministry with us.



On Sunday, February 11, 2024, during our worship service, many donated cans of soup for our annual "Souper Bowl of Caring" soup cans drive. Together with First Pres, three other Presbyterian churches took a last minute call from Pr. Syl and decided to help. As a result, our numbers were better than last year's.



In the pictures above, from left to right, Pr. Syl is with Pr. Jaco Bester and Elder Kathy Tardy from Burnt Store Presbyterian Punta Gorda, Elder Bob White from St. Paul's Presbyterian North Port, and Pr. Scott Williams from Community Presbyterian in Englewood. In total, **915** cans were collected (First Pres contributed 668 cans, Burnt Store contributed 129 cans, Community contributed 118 cans). Also, **\$915** was donated toward our “**Souper Bowl**” (\$708 from First Pres, \$7 from Community and \$200 from St. Paul Presbyterian). Many thanks to you all for being cheerful givers and donating cans and dollar bills for the people in need in our community. The Food Pantry could not do what they do without people like you and the other Presbyterians who jumped in with us last minute for this wonderful project.

Let's hear it for our talented Bell Choir!

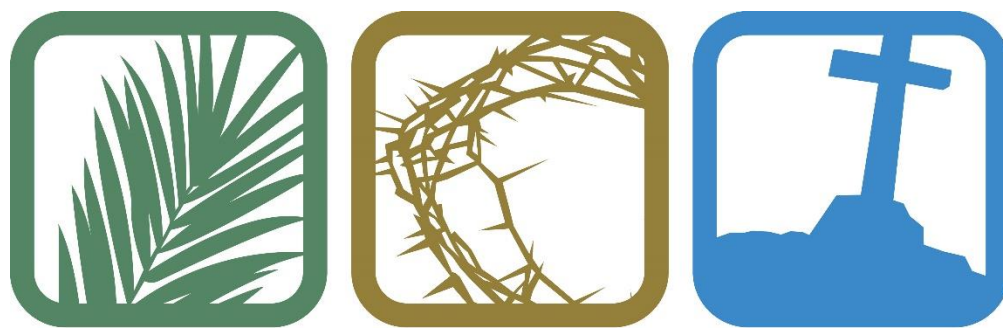


Our Bell Choir played beautifully on Sunday, February 18, 2024. Thank you to all who participated by sharing your special gifts. We are looking forward to the next music piece. Well done Amy, Ann, Barbara, Carol, Joan, Norma, Steve, Jazz and Sue.

That time of the year again. Don't forget to set your clocks one hour ahead on Saturday night, March 9. Daylight Savings begins



Sunday, March 10th.



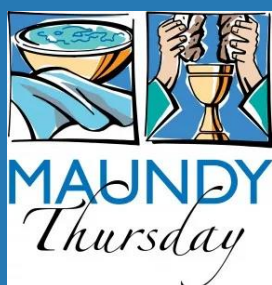
HOLY WEEK

*** Please note that some services will take place at First Pres and some at Wintergarden Presbyterian Church ***



- **Sunday, March 24 – Palm Sunday Service – 9 AM.**

To be held at FPCPC during our regular weekly service.



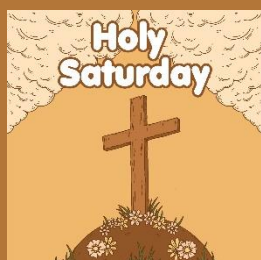
- **Thursday, March 28 Maundy Thursday – 6 PM.**

To be held at FPCPC along with the congregation of Wintergarden PC at 6 PM.



- **Friday, March 29 Good Friday – Noon.**

To be held at Wintergarden PC.



- **Saturday, March 30 Holy Saturday.**
No events are planned. In Silence and Contemplation, we wait.



- **Sunday, March 31 Easter Sunrise Service**

To be held at Wintergarden-PC at 7 AM.



- **Sunday, March 31**
Traditional Easter Service
To be held at FPCPC at 9 AM.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



On Sunday, February 25, 2024, our **Black History Luncheon** was a wonderful spread of great food and fellowship. Thanks to all who participated in putting on this event together, especially those who brought dishes to share. Pastor Syl said that Norma's Ox Tail and Hazel Mason's Jerk Wings were out of this world.

During each episode, Pastor Syl does a brief 5 to 10-minute commentary on the episode with some Bible & historical fun facts.

We will continue watching the "The Chosen" episodes every Tuesday of each month, at 6 p.m. Rides can be arranged for people that do not like to drive at night.



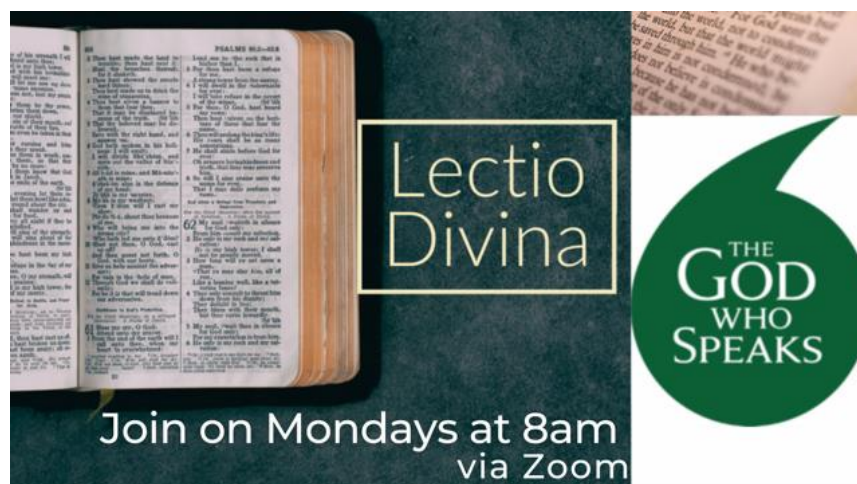
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Continental Breakfast



A continental breakfast is served every Sunday in the Gathering Room from 7:45 to 8:45 AM. Come and enjoy fellowship over coffee, juice, and pastries, just before our worship services. Also, our deacons are looking for people who would be willing to prepare our breakfast one Sunday of the month. That can be your own ministry here with us. Do you feel called to help? Talk with Deacon **Holly Parkins** or any other deacon for more info.



Lectio-Divina is a traditional Christian practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer, intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word.

Every Monday at 8 AM, we join the brothers and sister of Wintergarden for Lectio-Divina time.

This is a special event for those who are near and far, to see and pray with each other. At Wintergarden, most participants are snowbirds.

To access the meeting, there are 3 ways:

1. You can click on the picture above.
2. **You may go to www.zoom.us. Then, click on “Join,”** which can be found on the right-hand corner of your computer screen. After that, type Meeting ID: 878 3208 0869. If asks you for a passcode, it is: 396015.
3. You can also access the meeting, by copying and pasting the link below on your web-browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87832080869?pwd=TUxCRThUcEdRbTNTWmJ6emZRamUyZz09>

Upcoming EVENTS

March/2024

Sunday, March 3

- Continental Breakfast - 7:45 to 8:45 AM.
- Adult Sunday School - 8 AM.
- Children's Sunday School - after Children's Blessing.
- Sunday Service with the **Celebration of the Lord's Supper** - 9 AM.

Monday, March 4

- Lectio-Divina - 8 AM (Online on Zoom).

Tuesday, March 5

- Food Pantry - 8 AM to 11 AM.
- Southport Square Assisted Living **Communion Service** - 2:30 PM.
- The Chosen, Season 2, Episode 2 - 6 PM.

Wednesday, March 6

- Bell Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Thursday, March 7

- Choir Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Saturday, March 9

- Set up Tables for Visioning - 9 AM.

Sunday, March 10



- **Daylight Savings time.**
- Continental Breakfast - 7:45 to 8:45 AM.
- Adult Sunday School - 8 AM.
- Children's Sunday School - after Children's Blessing.
- Sunday Service - 9 AM.
- **Visioning Workshop** - 10:15 AM. Lunch will be served after the workshop.

Monday, March 11

- Lectio-Divina - 8 AM (Online on Zoom).

Tuesday, March 12

- The Chosen, Season 2, Episode 3 - 6 PM.

Wednesday, March 13

- Food Pantry - 4 to 6:30 PM.
- Bell Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Thursday, March 14

- Choir Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Sunday, March 17



- St Patrick's Day
- Continental Breakfast - 7:45 to 8:45 AM.
- Adult Sunday School - 8 AM.
- Sunday Service - 9 AM.
- Children's Sunday School after Children's Blessing.

Monday, March 18

- Lectio-Divina - 8 AM (Online on Zoom).

Tuesday, March 19

- Food Pantry - 8 to 11 AM.
- Southport Square Assisted Living Service - 2:30 PM.
- The Chosen, Season 2, Episode 4 - 6 PM.

Wednesday, March 20

- Bell Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Thursday, March 21

- Choir Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Sunday, March 24



- Continental Breakfast from 7:45 to 8:45 AM.
- Adult Sunday School - 8 AM.
- Children's Sunday School after Children's Blessing.
- **Palm Sunday** Service 9 AM.

Monday, March 25

- Lectio-Divina at 8 AM (Online on Zoom).

Tuesday, March 26

- The Chosen - Season 2, Episode 5 - 6 PM.

Wednesday, March 27

- Bell Rehearsal - 6 PM.

Thursday, March 28



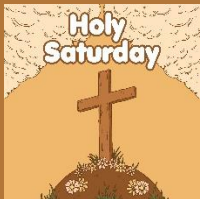
- **Maundy Thursday** Service - 6 PM.
- Choir Rehearsal - **5 PM**.

Friday, March 29



- **Good Friday** Service - 12 PM, held at **Wintergarden** Presbyterian Church.

Saturday, March 30

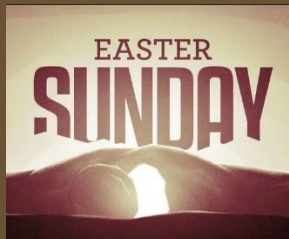


- **Holy Saturday**, in Silence and Contemplation we wait.



- **Easter Sunrise** Service will be held at **Wintergarden-PC** at 7 AM.

Sunday, March 31



- **Traditional Easter** Service will be held at **FPCPC** at 9 AM

MEMBERS ON FOCUS

Have you met?



Bernadine & Tom Allesee

Music and Education has always been part of this couple's life. Bernadine and Tom Allesee met during choir practice at Indiana State University, where Bernadine studied Music Education and Tom studied Social Studies with a minor in Business. After getting their Bachelor's, Tom went on and attended Valparaiso University to get his teaching license, and later, back at ISU, a Master's in education.

While at the University they got married and this coming September, they will be celebrating their 65th anniversary together. Isn't that just amazing? With their degrees in hand, Bernadine became a substitute teacher and a music teacher, while raising two children, and believe it or not, when the third one came along, she still managed to direct the choir at a United Methodist Church.

As for Tom, he taught math at a junior high school in Indiana, while at the same time, acquired a real estate license. When Tom received a call

to work in Ft. Myers, he moved to Port Charlotte to teach math and science in Lee County. After some time, he began teaching at DeSoto County High School in Arcadia, where he stayed until he retired around 2008.

Following her husband and after getting their affairs in order, Bernadine also moved down to Port Charlotte. Here, she began subbing as a music teacher. She eventually started working at Neil Armstrong Elementary School, which continued for over 20 years. She took an early retirement but after a short period, she decided to teach for a few years at Community Christian School because she missed being with the children. Bernadine was also a very successful Mary Kay consultant, becoming a director and even earning her first Mary Kay car.

As for religion, Bernadine and Tom grew up with different religious backgrounds. Bernadine grew up Methodist and Tom grew up Baptist. Tom was a Deacon at a Baptist church in Indiana and an Administrator Board Member-at-Large at PC United Methodist Church. Of course, because of their love for music, they were always choir members of all the churches they attended. At one point, Bernadine volunteered to teach musical instruments to children and for many years now, she still teaches Children's Sunday School.

Prior to find our church around 2001, they attended Port Charlotte Methodist. Being a Methodist and a Baptist before, they knew about Presbyterians because they had visited a Presbyterian Church in Detroit, which Tom's brother was part of it. They realized the Presbyterian church was a good fit for them and after some prayer and discernment, they became Presbyterians. Bernadine and Tom said they like the environment and atmosphere at First Pres but have seen big changes since Hurricane Charlie hit back in 2004. Tom expressed that he likes First Pres because the people are friendly and understanding, and Bernadine likes the Pastor and his messages. They both agree they enjoy being members here at First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte.

Their favorite vacation place is Menorca, an Island in the Mediterranean around 50 miles southeast of Spain. They both also loved their trip to Maui, where they spent their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Tom likes a variety of all food, he says, "That's the spice of life." Bernadine loves all kinds of meat, including prime rib steak, fried chicken, and fish.

Together, Tom and Bernadine have four children, Susan, Keith, Erik and Kevin, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. We love having Bernadine and Tom around. Pastor Syl said they are loving people and that they are both very knowledgeable about the Bible. Pastor Syl even mentioned Pr. Chuck saying Bernadine is a "natural evangelist".





Meet our March Pet of the Month!

His name is “Gomez.” Gomez is a Havanese dog breed, and according to his proud owner, Sue Brembs, he loves to be the center of attention and loves to smother her with kisses. Although being the cutest little dog, we heard from very reliable and non-disclosable sources, that Gomez has a bit of an attitude, and he also loves to boss Sue around. When inquired about that, Sue just smiled and said, “Well, I am afraid it is true”.

Send Pam a picture of your pet to pastorsecretary@fpcpc.com, and your little friend could be the next Pet of the Month.



Upcoming Birthdays

Claudette McLennon - March 20
Susan Littrell - March 29
Ambrose Woods - March 30

Do not see your name here, call the church office and let us know (941) 625-5045

CHURCH OFFICIALS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS



- **Board of Deacons** meets on the first Wednesday of the month, at 1:30 PM. Next meeting: **March 6, 2024.**

- **Worship Arts Committee** meets on the second Wednesday of the month, at 11 AM. Next meeting: **March 13, 2024**.
- **Finance Committee** meets the second Sunday of each month immediately after worship. Next meeting due to Visioning on the 2nd Sunday, will be changed to Wednesday, **March 6, 2024**, at 10 AM, for this month only.
- **Visioning workshop** scheduled for Sunday, **March 10, 2024**, at 10:15 AM.
- **Session** meets the third Sunday of each month, immediately following worship. Next regular meeting: Sunday, **March 17, 2024**.
- **Choir** meets every Thursday at 6 PM.
- **The Chosen Bible TV-Series**, every Tuesday at 6 PM. The Saturday viewings have been canceled.
- **Bell Rehearsals** meet every Wednesday, at 6 PM.
- **Building & Grounds Committee** meets on the last Wednesday of the month, at 10 AM. Next meeting: **March 27, 2024**.
- **Adult Sunday School** meets every Sunday, at 8 AM.
- **Children's Sunday School** meets every Sunday, after Children's Blessing.



I ♥ MY
CHURCH

**FEELING CALLED TO SERVE THIS CHURCH IN ANY
CAPACITY?**

We are in desperate need of people to help us draw our vision for the future of our church and our websites. No experience necessary. Click below to e-mail pastor Syl or just e-mail him at pastor@fpcpc.com.

[Yes, I am here Lord!](#)

TRANSPARENCY



January/24	February/24	March/24
Offerings	Offerings	Offerings
15,047		
Expenses	Expenses	Expenses
19,128		
Results	Results	Results
-4,081		

- The amounts are calculated by our treasurer Mr. Ambrose Woods, and it is based on the financial reports made by our financial secretary Mrs. Jeanne Fell.

PLEASE, FOLLOW US AND PASTOR SYL ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE.



CLICK THE ICONS BELOW:





Please pray for ...

Bernadine & Tom Allesee family – safety & health needs

Barbara Edwards – health needs

Jean Heim – health needs

Ruth Hester – health needs

Davi Levi – health needs

Sue Littrell – health needs

Donna & Loren Livengood – health needs

Margorie Lotz – health needs

Brad Messick – health needs

Mavis Powell – health needs

Ron Sharpe – health needs

Ryker Vanhese & Family – health needs

Donnie Webb – health needs

FPCPC FAMILY - If you know of any shut-ins or anyone else who may need our prayers, please call the church office at 941-625-5045. Names will be removed after 3 months. If you wish to keep them on the list, please call the church office.

The First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte is part of the Presbyterian Church USA, and the Peace River Presbytery in Florida.



First Presbyterian Church
of Port Charlotte

