



## January 2018 Newsletter First Presbyterian Church Port Charlotte

Last month I had the opportunity to go to New York City for the first time, a dream trip that had been planted in my brain since the first time I saw the Macy's parade on TV. Since then, I had always dreamed of going in December to see the Rockefeller Tree. I wondered what it would be like to see all the decorated department store windows. I couldn't begin to imagine what it would be like to be part of the whirlwind of activity in the city that never sleeps. But most of all, I wanted to experience Christmas in New York. And so a group of 9 women and I planned a trip to NYC; we went and had a great time. I saw a couple Broadway plays, was on *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*, saw the *Rockettes Spectacular Christmas Show* (which was absolutely spectacular), hailed my first taxi and Ubered for the first time. On a more somber note, I went to Ground Zero and toured the 9-11 Museum which was a bit overwhelming still all these years later. With the temperatures dipping down well below our mild Florida winter temps, I got to wear my winter coat and put on some mittens which was even kind of fun for a couple days. And to the embarrassment of my friends, I had my picture taken with a nice New York City policeman. There are a lot of memories that will last a long time, and maybe even a couple scars after literally sliding into the barricade around the Rockefeller Tree, tripping over the curb while looking up, enamored by the lights.

Perhaps the memory that still intrigues me is that of sitting in a little coffee shop one night whose window looked into Times Square. That morning a terrorist had tried to cause fear, death and destruction. Thankfully the full potential of his efforts were thwarted and the resiliency of New Yorkers rose once again palpably to the surface, and life that day kept its pace. Hours later that same night, while resting my newly broken in NYC walking feet, I sat in the window sipping hot chocolate. The lights and hustle and bustle of life filled the streets. I sat in the space where many a New Year's resolution had been made and sealed with a kiss under the neon lights and I couldn't help but reflect on the past year and what my hopes and dreams are for 2018. Sometimes it takes getting away, creating space in my mind and surroundings to have healthy reflection. I have never been one to make New Year's resolutions, probably because I never seem to follow through with those I have and the ones I have made have either felt too shallow or contrived, hence unmeaningful to be motivated to work toward. But here I sat, an introvert creating space in the middle of Times Square and an electronic devotion pops up on my iPhone. The scripture is from a book of the Bible I rarely turn to: Lamentations.

*Continued on page 3*

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS



Many people know Christy Smith as the “shoe lady” not only at FPCPC but in Charlotte County. Christy was named 2017 Charlotte County Volunteer of the Year for her leadership role with the Sunrise Kiwanis Shoes for Kids Project. Christy has been involved with the shoe project for 13 years. The program provides thousands of shoes for school children each year.

“Each Charlotte County school nominated a volunteer from their site. The nominees were then considered by a committee. I was fortunate to be recognized and humbled to have been selected,” Christy explained.

Christy has been a member of FPCPC for 17 years. The best part of belonging to FPCPC is all the “friendly faces” she sees at the church. Previously, Christy was a member of the Small World board and she and her mother had organized “Friday Night Live” which offered dinner and entertainment for the congregation several times a year.

A special Bible verse that has guided Christy is John 15:5. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me, you can do nothing.”

Originally, Christy was from Ohio but moved here from Zanesville in 1990. Growing up, she says her parents were the most influential people in her life. “My parents showed unconditional love and support from day one,” she said.

The personal motto that Christy embraces is, “Always be kind to everyone you meet, for you never know the burden they may be carrying.”

Christy received her education at several schools including University of Toledo (Toledo, OH) for her undergraduate degree in mathematics and computer science and Ohio State University for graduate mathematics courses.

She received her Master’s degree in Educational Leadership at the University of South Florida and an Educational Specialist degree in Mathematics Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Christy’s first job was teaching Junior High mathematics for grades 7 and 8 at Roosevelt Jr. High School in Zanesville, OH. She has continued to teach mathematics for the past 31 years. Currently, Christy is employed at Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) formerly known as Edison State College.

Christy is the wife of Ron Smith. They married nine years ago after they met in 2005 at FSW. She and Ron have two Himalayan kitties named Samson and Slate. In her free time Christy likes playing tennis, walking and shopping.

*By Kathy Bruyere*

Lamentations 3:22-24 says:

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."*

In those verses I am reminded of God's love and blessings that have seen me through the year. The gift of friends and family whose love has witnessed to the never ending love God has for me each and every day have been tangible expressions of God's compassion. I am reminded that even though there are uncertainties that lie ahead in 2018, that same compassion and love will guide my days ahead. And perhaps on an even deeper level, though I am still wrestling with words trying articulate what I believe to be true, I know that because God "is my portion," God's presence filling the core of my being, all else in life (my goals, my dreams, my hopes, and maybe even my resolutions), will flow from God's Spirit within as I open myself up to God's possibilities and therefore, no matter what lies ahead in 2018, all will be well. Because of God's steadfast love, I can trust my future to God's hands and I can trust in God's faithfulness that brings me to each new morning, empowering me to be about those things that share his love and peace. And in that, I find hope.

As we enter into the unknown of 2018 as a church, there is so much to embrace as good, faithful and beautiful. God's love abounds and has been steadfast and is here to remain at the center of our lives. We will have our challenges and will face them, trusting in our God who has been steadfast. We will have our times to rejoice, and will give thanks to our God who has brought us to this time and place. We will embrace each new day as an opportunity to witness to God's faithfulness and steadfast love, because we are people of hope.

May the year ahead be one of hope, peace, love and beauty as God's steadfast love guides us into the future that is here and now.



[tacklehunger.org](http://tacklehunger.org)

## SOUPER BOWL of CARING Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m. in Worship

A simple prayer: *"Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat"* is inspiring a youth-led movement to help hungry and hurting people around the world.

This prayer, delivered by Brad Smith, then a seminary intern serving at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC, gave birth to an idea. *Why not use Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football and fun, to also unify the nation for a higher good: collecting dollars and canned food for the needy?* Youth could collect donations at their schools and churches in soup pots, and then send every dollar DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice.

The senior high youth of Spring Valley Presbyterian liked the idea so much they decided to invite other area churches to join the team. Twenty-two Columbia churches participated that first year, reporting their results so a total could be determined, and then sending all \$5,700 they had raised to area non-profits.

That was 1990. Since then, ordinary young people have generated an extraordinary more than \$100 million for soup kitchens, food banks and other charities in communities across the country. In addition, hundreds of thousands of youth have experienced for themselves the joy and satisfaction of giving and serving, inspiring people of all ages to follow their generous example. *The Souper Bowl of Caring* empowers youth and unites communities around the time of the Big Game to help those in need.

The youth of First Presbyterian Church Port Charlotte will be participating in the *Souper Bowl of Caring* again this year and invite you to be part of this life-changing movement.

On **Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>** you are invited to wrap a dollar bill, a ten dollar bill, any denomination of a bill, or a check (earmarked "*Souper Bowl of Caring*") around a can of soup. Use a rubber band to hold the bill in place and bring it to church that morning. Our youth will be in the Narthex to help you place the can of soup on a cart who will then wheel the cart to the front of the sanctuary to be blessed along with the offering. Believing that we can make a significant impact in our community, **the youth have set a goal of raising \$530 and 530 cans of soup, all of which will stay at our church and will be used in and by our Food Pantry Ministry.** So pray about how you can make a difference tackling hunger here in our community, and support our youth as they raise money and cans of soup for our Food Pantry. Then bring your donations to worship on Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>.



# CHILDREN AND YOUTH JANUARY CALENDAR

**Tuesday Afternoons**  
**Youth Group**  
**4:45 p.m.**  
**New Life Center**

Join us Tuesday afternoons for snacks, fellowship, activities, and drumming.

**Tuesday, January 2nd**

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Sandy will lead us in Ice Breakers.

**Tuesday, January 9th**

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Kathy will lead us in drumming.

**Tuesday, January 16th**

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Lynn will lead us in a craft and service project.

**Tuesday, January 23rd**

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Kathy will lead us in drumming.

**Tuesday, January 30th**

4:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Darlene will lead us in making banana bread.

**Sunday Mornings**

**Sunday School**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Youth Room**

**Worship**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Sanctuary**

Join us every Sunday morning for Sunday School and Worship.

**Sunday, January 7th**

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

**Sunday, January 14th**

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

**Sunday, January 21st**

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

**Sunday, January 28th**

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

**SPECIAL YOUTH EVENT:**

**Sunday, January 7th**

11:15 a.m. Pizza & Games  
after church

## **FOOD PANTRY**

**1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.  
and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Anytime you want to work on your upper body strength, feel free to appear at the Food Pantry door about 9:30- 10:00 am on the first and third Thursday of each month. That's when the truck from the Harry Chapin Food Bank in Ft. Myers arrives in our driveway between the New Life Center and MacDonald Hall. We place an order twice a month. The food offered varies each time. Most USDA food we get for free; we pay a minimum amount for other food and a small delivery charge. Our clients really appreciate the meat and poultry; we could not afford to provide meat without getting it from Harry Chapin. We now have two new reliable freezers for our meat.

In the spirit of the joyous Christmas season, the food pantry was able to spread joy to our clients. Thanks to Harry Chapin and our generous congregation, we were able to distribute a \$10 Publix card to every household that visited the pantry in December. Several clients broke out in tears when they were given the card. One client commented that she could now purchase a ham for Christmas dinner. All of our clients were grateful for that little extra help to make the Christmas dinner special.

In November, the Food Pantry served 98 households for a total of 274 unduplicated people. Keep in mind that a lot of the families came on both Tuesdays so we actually served 396 people. To be fair, we give people who can come only on Wednesday night double the amount of food on the card. It is as if they came to the pantry on both Tuesdays.

Thank you for your generosity with both food and monetary donations.

*Nancy Sharpless*



## FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

The choir took off one week from singing and is ready to begin the new year with some of your favorite anthems, some “zippy” music (as one congregant calls it), some new music and all the appropriate music relating to Lent and Easter. We would really like to include bell ringers. One person has volunteered (besides our Pastor) and we would like to re-establish a bell choir. Classes and instructions will be held before the bells participate. We are looking for a bell ringing instructor/Director. We are slowly building voices in the choir, but we still need more singers. If you are interested, please call 941-625-4945 for further information. We are looking forward to an exciting new year!

*Peace, Joan Byron*



## THANK YOU FROM THE YOUTH GROUP

The children and youth would like to extend a big thank you to our church family for helping with our cookies. Thanks to your baking skills, we received **1,284 cookies!!** Our teams brought bags of cookies and Christmas Eve invitations to our neighbors and enjoyed meeting some really amazing people along the way. We appreciate those of you who prayed for us too.



**ADULT BIBLE STUDY**  
**5-Week Series on *The Book of Psalms***  
**Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**Beginning January 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Conference Room**

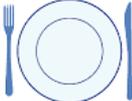
The book of Psalms powerfully resonates with the whole spectrum of human emotions and experiences, resounding with heartfelt praise, humble confession, and honest lament. Led by Rev. Terri Jo Crego, we will study and learn (or relearn) how to pray with the psalmist. The first Wednesday will be an introduction and overview. Then using Walter Brueggeman's three categories, we will study the Psalms of:

- Psalms of Orientation
- Psalms of Disorientation
- Psalms of New Orientation

Finally, we will end our series with an opportunity to enter into the Psalms prayerfully and discover ways that we might use them in our daily lives giving voice to our experiences.

*(Walter Brueggeman is the Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Seminary and the world's leading interpreter of the Old Testament)*

**ALL CHURCH**

**Fell**  **wship**

**BREAKFAST**

**BREAKFAST BUNCH**  
**Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**MacDonald Hall**

Join us on Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. in Mac Hall for fellowship and a delicious breakfast prepared by Bob the Barber. Bring \$2 to help cover costs and sign up in the New Life Center or Narthex to make a reservation so we know how much food to prepare.



**Thursday, January 4th**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Parlor**

Home Alone Group just completed its first year, a year packed with activities. Founded for folks in the church who live alone, the group has expanded to include folks and couples both in and out of First Presbyterian Church. So, watch for the Home Alone Group to be known by a new name in 2018.

To that end, all who are interested in contributing ideas for activities, offering a new name for the group, or just seeing what the group is about, please attend a planning meeting as follows:

- **First Presbyterian Church Parlor at 10:00 a.m. on January 4, 2018 (the first Thursday of the month).**
- **Please bring your calendar for planning purposes.**
- After the meeting, those who wish can go out to lunch.
- Questions or concerns? Call Jan Baker at 386-972-3915.

## **WELCOME NEW OFFICERS**

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, we ordained and installed our new officers. We are grateful for their many gifts, their vision and their faithfulness. Sandy Asaro and Becky Baird will rotate back onto session for another term providing continuity along with their wisdom and gifts. Lynn Webster and Elaine Woods will serve as Elders for the first time and were ordained last month adding energy and new sets of eyes. Norma Campbell will be serving as a Deacon who has incredible gifts for nurturing. And Bob Hull will continue serving as a Trustee, always providing a careful eye on our assets and always there to support us. Every member serves in so many ways, demonstrating their faith and love for Christ for which we are deeply grateful. As we begin a new year, we ask your support of these leaders, including your prayers as we seek to serve faithfully as a church with God's help.

## **VETERANS MEETING** **Thursday 10:00 a.m.** **New Life Center**

The Veterans Group will have their January meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The meeting will start at 10:00 a.m. in the New Life Center. The widows of Vets are invited too.

# Stewardship is...



...EVERYTHING we think, say, and do after we say "I believe"

The mission of our church is "To be a beacon in the community by leading all people into a life changing, every growing relationship with Jesus Christ".

We are a missional church with a solid and strong congregation with members who pray, reach out, visit, comfort, console, and share the good news of Christ. We feed the hungry, give hope, and help bring peace to the troubled.

Along with doing God's work, we have operational costs including building maintenance, repairs, utility bills, property taxes, insurance, staff salaries, grounds maintenance, computers, communications, media, printing, supplies, Presbytery expenses, and numerous other expenses.

God has blessed each of us with time, talents, and treasures which are needed to support our church while doing His work. God values the heart that overflows with gratitude and thanksgiving; the same God who saved us and gives us all things. A grateful heart gives generously, willingly, and cheerfully in response to the love and grace that abounds in Christ.

We are asking that you prayerfully discern how you may increase your giving in 2018. Everyone's weekly and monthly support of our missions and operating expenses is important to us. Your continued contributions and offerings are appreciated and we are truly grateful as we thrive and grow as a congregation while doing God's work in our church, our community, and the world.

*Ambrose E. Woods, Chair Finance Committee*

## SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS DECEMBER 2017

- At the Called Congregational Meeting (12/3), the congregation unanimously approved the Nominating Committee's 2018 Slate of Officers:
  - Elders:
    - Becky Baird (Class of 2019)
    - Sandy Asaro, Lynn Webster, Elaine Woods (Class of 2020)
  - Deacon: Norma Campbell (Class of 2020)
  - Trustee: Bob Hull (Class of 2019)
- Sue Littrell was enthusiastically received into membership at our Session Meeting.
- Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on Sunday, February 25 following the Worship Service.
- The baptism of Donald Whitmarsh's granddaughter, Linden Sue Bjornson, took place in a special worship service on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Conversations have begun taking place about church safety and security.
- Our sound system and lift have been repaired.
- The Adult Bible Study resumes in January 2018.
- We are excited about the growth in our children and youth programs.
- Youth Confirmation Class will take place during April and May 2018.
- Clients in our food pantry will be receiving \$10 Publix gift cards.
- We now have 2 new freezers for our food pantry needs.
- Sandy Asaro will be attending the APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) conference in Louisville, KY in Feb. 2018 and received a student grant from Union Presbyterian Seminary to offset attendance costs.

FPCPC

2230 Harriet St

Port Charlotte, FL 33952

**The Mission of First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte is:  
To be a beacon in the community by leading all people into a life changing,  
ever growing relationship with Jesus Christ.**

### **Ministry Staff**

Rev. Terri Jo Crego, Pastor	<a href="mailto:pastor@fpcpc.com">pastor@fpcpc.com</a>
Betty Smith, Financial Secretary	<a href="mailto:bsmith@fpcpc.com">bsmith@fpcpc.com</a>
Tanga Killian, Church Secretary	<a href="mailto:tanga@fpcpc.com">tanga@fpcpc.com</a>
Scott Austin, Media/Grounds	<a href="mailto:scottaustin0557@gmail.com">scottaustin0557@gmail.com</a>
Lamont "Butch" Rotert, Custodian	<a href="mailto:butchnjoyce@yahoo.com">butchnjoyce@yahoo.com</a>
Judy Prier, Organist	<a href="mailto:judyprier@comcast.net">judyprier@comcast.net</a>
Joan Byron, Music Director	<a href="mailto:Jfbyron@comcast.net">Jfbyron@comcast.net</a>

### **Session**

Class of 2017: Sandy Asaro, Rebekah Baird , Ambrose Woods  
Class of 2018: Barbara Danylak, Nancy Sharpless, Ron Smith  
Class of 2019: Joan Barry, Gail Gamble, Richard Lund

### **Deacons**

Class of 2017: Doris Coddington, Dottie Messick, Don Phillips, Elaine Woods  
Class of 2018: Dottie Gamble, Pauline Paquin, Laverne Sinkia, Donald Whitmarsh  
Class of 2019: Andy Buell, Clarence Diersing, Addie Schaad, Diane Schmidt

### **Trustees**

Richard Lund (President), Ambrose Woods (Treasurer)  
Sandy Asaro (Secretary), Ron Smith (Finance Committee Elder)  
Class of 2017: Bob Hull (Member at Large)  
Class of 2018: Clarence Diersing (Member at Large)