

If you read the creation story, the very first chapter of Genesis, the Bible says God created light, dark, sun, moon, water, air, the creepy things, birds in the air, and finally at the end God created a human. Also, you cannot help but notice the refrain throughout the initial story: “God saw what God made and it was good.” It was good, indeed, it was good. Subsequently, for the first time, God notices something in creation and says “This is not good.” What is this thing that God called not good? Isolation! Isolation is the very first thing in history that God calls not good. Loneliness, in other words, was the first problem in creation.

In May of 2023, the US Surgeon in General released a report that received a lot of news. One of many articles was entitled “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation,” and it discovered that half of all adults in our country experienced loneliness. The loneliness people feel is linked to all kinds of risks in our lives from depression and dementia to heart disease and a shorter life-expectancy. In fact, Dr. Vivek Murthy famously likened what loneliness does to us by noting: “Loneliness is like smoking fifteen cigarettes a day.” Not only does loneliness negatively impact our mental, emotional, but also plays a role in our physical health. Dr. Murthy’s report is a sweeping scientific study of what loneliness and isolation does to us. And guess what? *It is not good.* However, in the letter that accompanies the report, Dr. Murthy points to the solution, and I want to share what he writes: “Each us can start now in our own lives by strengthening our connections and relationships. Our individual relationships are an untapped resource—a source of healing hiding in plain sight. They can help us live healthier, more productive, and more fulfilled lives. Answer that phone call from a friend, make time to share a meal, listen without the distraction of your phone. Perform an act of service.

Express yourself authentically. The keys to human connection are simple, but extraordinarily powerful.”



In other words, better and stronger relationships are the best tools we have to combat loneliness. I am happy God agrees! In fact, well before this study, right after observing isolation and declaring “This is not good,” let’s recall what God does. God creates another human. Not only does God create another human, but in doing so God creates the possibility of meaningful relationships. Although I probably do not have to convince you that relationships are important, I still don’t think we often pay attention to how dangerous

loneliness and isolation are for us and how easily it is to fall into that trap. Perhaps it’s that we don’t see this as the same threat to our well-being as we see other things such as a) smoking—so we avoid it, b) blood pressure—we monitor it, c) food intake—perhaps watch carbs or red meats. In short, many of us go to great lengths to stay healthy in the previous ways, but we almost talk about relationships like they are luxuries or bonus items we can do if we only have time. Yet, relationships combat the single greatest threat to our lives— isolation and loneliness as they bring us joy!

While large churches certainly have their advantages as they offer their members more options with programs and ministries, let us never underestimate the significance of Fort Myers Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) being a family-oriented church. I’ve heard countless stories of new members joining the church and instantly feeling the love of other worshippers as well as long-term members sharing how others at church have truly become family with blooming relationships. Within the next two weeks, we will have an official shepherding list. Each elder of the church will be assigned several families to stay in touch throughout the year. As the spiritual leaders of the church, elders will check on their members to express encouragement, support, and love. On a practical level, along with myself, elders can check on their flock when they have been sick or had surgery, have missed a few weeks of worship in a row, communicate about a change in worship/activity, and let’s not forget to simply say hi or plan for lunch together after church. Life is better together!

## Last Month and Beginning of May Prayer Request

*(The "FMCC Cross Connection" email contains the ongoing prayer list)*

Family and Friends of Anne Chisholm, in the death of Anne,  
Church Family

Judy Hesse and Family, in the death of her husband Jerry,  
Church Family

Sue Fink, endoscopy procedure last week, Church Family

Rev. Dr. Jim Carpenter, discharged and gaining strength after  
being in Gulf Coast Hospital, Church Family

Carol Vickers, broken rib after fall, Church Family

Amanda Greene, praise she has passed all her dental hygienist  
boards, Church Family (visitor)

Gloria, pancreatic cancer, Joyce Turney (chorus friend)

Charlie Fink, praise doing better after heart stent, Church Family

## **Connect with us outside of worship:**

Sunday, May 18

Celebrate Don's Ministry  
and potluck after worship

Game Night, from 6-8pm in  
the fellowship hall

Sunday, May 25

Memorial Day Weekend,  
Ice Cream Social after  
worship



**Upcoming Board Meeting,  
Tuesday, May 10, at 10am  
(Fellowship Hall)**

## **May Birthdays & Anniversaries**

*(Name Missing? Email the office.)*

Charlie Fink	5 <sup>th</sup>
Barbara Wodarczyk	5 <sup>th</sup>
Bruce and Debbie Morrison	10 <sup>th</sup>
Dr. Asya Teruni	19 <sup>th</sup>
Bill Garlow	28 <sup>th</sup>



This past month, Fort Myers Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) hosted Cub Scout Pack 217 annual pinewood derby for the second year in a row. It was awesome seeing so many children, and young families in our fellowship hall. Additionally, this month we hosted the Florida Repertory Theatre's Annual Volunteer Luncheon.

## **Outreach Corner**

As summer approaches we are taking time off from some activities and planning a few simple, but nice opportunities to connect. One new idea is to start up a book club. We would meet once a month to discuss the book we had read. If interested, please let me know or signup in the narthex. Another idea is to hold a coffee hour before church once a month. Please know we will be needing people who are willing to help with dinners and setting up and leaning up. If you are willing to help once in a while, please let me know.

-Linda Lee, Outreach Chair