



March Edition 2025

We will be entering the Christian liturgical season of Lent in just a week and a half. It is a time of deep prayer, confession, solitude and reflection. Psalm 51 is traditionally read at Ash Wednesday Services, and it doesn't take a PhD in Biblical Interpretation to understand as the Psalmist (tradition says King David) words have the power to both pierce as well as transform even stony hearts. I invite you to take time to hear and discern what the Spirit might be speaking to you through words such as: "have mercy," "wash/wipe/purify me", "you want truth in the most hidden places", "create a clean heart for me", "put a new faithful spirit deep inside me", "sinners will come back to you". This Psalm is full of nuggets of self-reflection as it calls us to take an honest look in the mirror of our soul and ask for the Great Physician to pour mercy, grace, and love over us and make us whole once again. Or, as one of my favorite line says "Return the joy of your salvation to me and sustain me with a willing spirit" (v.12). Psalm 51 calls us to quietly listen to hear the voice of Jesus, the Lover of our Soul and remember what we are and more importantly whose we are. Remembering we are ashes, yet God's children invites us to live each day as if it's the last.

Perhaps before hearing the soft, gentle voice of our Savior, we have to acknowledge that our aptitudes, values, and behaviors are influenced by the people we listen to. I want to challenge each of you to consider the voices that you are allowing to influence your life. This includes voices on the macro level - the entertainment you watch, the media you consume, and the social influencers or apps that you follow. Together, these macro voices can account for hours of influence every day! And then there are the personal relationships in our lives – the friends and family we have, the neighbors at the clubhouse or golf course that we allow to impact us.

All of these voices shape us, often in helpful and healthy ways. At the same time, lent is a challenging, yet beautiful season already built in the church calendar year, that is an opportune time to reevaluate who we listen to and wrestle with the life we are creating and want to leave behind. If we want to change something in our life, or begin moving in a new direction, very often we must shift the voices we listen to. This also means identifying unhelpful or unhealthy voices, and then turning them down or muting them all together.

In the Bible, God warns us about certain kinds of people, specifically the critic, the narcissist, and the fool. The critic is negative and can drag us into negativity, as well. In their place, we are called to find encouragers in our daily life. The fool is someone who doesn't know God or what God's vision for life is. As a result, they can lead us down paths that do not help us to become the people God calls us to be. In their place, we are called to find wise people walking a path that we want to walk. The narcissist is selfish, and the kind of person that will take everything they can from you, without giving much back. In their place, God calls us to find people who are humble and serve others as they look after themselves.

God speaks to us through other people – especially through people who love God and love us. But, part of seeking out new voices is also getting better at listening to the voice of God deep in our own lives. Doing so, I believe this begins by blocking out noise and hearing so that you can grow in your ability to hear our Savior. Giving God both our attention and intention can help us find a reliable voice to guide you through the chaotic and confusing times but also help us create a worthy legacy. During worship in Lent, we will be listening for God's voice and wisdom as we ask the significant question "What will you do if you had only one week left to live?" To help and guide us, we will walk through some key events of Jesus' last earthly week.

I hope you join us throughout our Lenten journey, and we will begin, once again on Ash Wednesday, March 5. This year we are slightly changing it up to allow more worshippers a chance to participate. Instead of an evening service, we will have a 1pm worship service. However, if you are unable to make this time due to work or another conflict, the sanctuary doors will also be open from 7-9am for an individually time of prayer and receiving of ashes. In the midst of all the unwanted noise of life pulling us in all kinds of directions, I encourage you to take a moment of solitude to place your attention on Jesus and the cross. By remembering our mortality, we can more fully live, and hear the One who offers true life.



Last Month's Prayer Request

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

Beaty Family, in the death of Mary Ann Beaty, Church Family
Colton Seitz, not broken but sprained foot playing baseball, Church Family
Linda Schneider, in a difficult month of loss, Church Family
Millie Dalrymple, broken hip at Gulf Coast Hospital, Church Family
Ottaviani Family, in the passing of John, Mary Burns (close friend's father)
Anne Chisholm, back out of the hospital, Church Family
Dave Seitz, rehab, Pastor Zach (father)
Kaiden and Family, praise for family circumstances are better, Shirley Runyon (grandson)



Save the Date

Sunday, March 30, join us in the fellowship hall as we honor both veterans and some spouses with a special ceremony.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

(Name Missing? Email the office.)

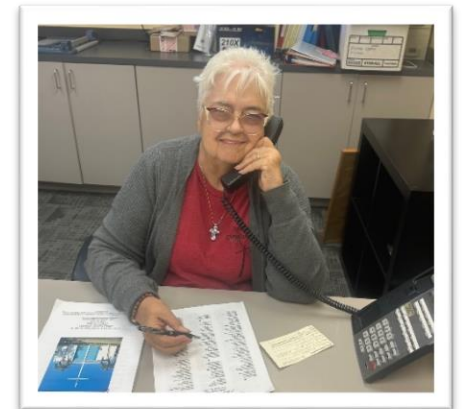
Dean Brown	5 th
Rev. Dr. Peter Morgan	16 th
Kathy Harris	21 st



Cub Scout Pack 217 joined us for our first Scout Sunday. Thank you to our very own Bill Garlow, a previous cub master, who shared about his own scouting experience during worship! We look forward to hosting the cubbies pine wood derby again this month.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Please plan to stay after worship on **Sunday, March 16**, as we officially vote for the 2025-26 budget, officers, and elders/deacons. Afterwards there will be a St. Patrick's theme potluck in the fellowship hall.



"Hi, this is the Linda Lee, the official and unofficial Fort Myers Christian Church secretary..." says Linda delightfully making phone calls in the church office. Subsequently, there is typically a brief pause and all of a sudden a bunch of laughter on both lines. On the serious note, I am grateful Linda has been donating her time at the church once or twice a week to assist with tasks. Specifically, Linda was extremely helpful with the online directory as she made calls to get members information. If you or anyone you know would like a hardcopy directory or assistance downloading the app on your smart device, contact me or the "official/unofficial secretary."

Outreach Corner

It has been an exciting couple of months and there have been a few ladies working on decorating jars for the Christmas Jars Program. Jars will be passed out on Sunday, March 2, when we watch the movie *Christmas Jars*. Be sure to view the brochure that has a list of the upcoming exciting ministry and events at the church. For instance, we have two game nights planned, Sundays, Mar.9 and 23rd from 6-8 in the fellowship hall. Also, Mary Burns will be giving a private tour of the Gladiolus Food Pantry at noon on Wednesday, March 12. Whether you have been to the pantry or not, this is a terrific opportunity to witness this in action as well as to see where your generous generosity goes towards.
-Linda Lee (outreach chair)