

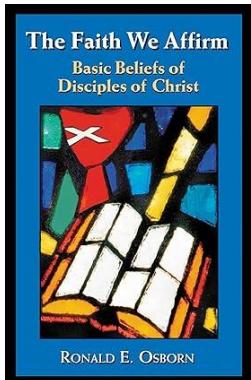


January Edition 2026

I am definitely aging when a close friend of mine, Matt, from seminary has a son who graduated from college two years ago. When we met, Caleb, Matt's son, was in elementary school but he always talked about leaving home. He didn't exactly know where, but Caleb wanted to go out of state and far away to college one day. For the most part this has played out. He went away to college, had a job overseas, spent a year in Europe, and now he lives in New York City as he has been in a handful of musicals. While Matt and his wife are happy for Caleb being independent and living out his dream, Matt did share with me over a Christmas conversation that it brought him some *parental satisfaction* to receive a phone call that basically went like the following: "Hey dad, I have something to ask you. Will you buy me a plane ticket to come back for two weeks at Christmas? I miss home." I can only imagine my friend just smiling...and answering YES!

Getting out and living life is great, but sometimes there is a power in coming home. I think we have all experienced this at some point. During the holidays you might remember sleeping on a sleeper sofa or basement mattress, and after sometime you want to get home. Or, even if you are at a beautiful hotel there is often a breaking point when you want to go home. Or, to tease my own parents, the story line in most Hallmark movies appears to have a sense of home, someone wants to come home, possibly doesn't choose it but they come home. Then, when at home they fall in love, they discover something new about themselves, heal a relationship, and the list continues. Once again, there is a power in coming home. I read a quote recently that said "Home is a place you grow up wanting to leave and grow old wanting to get back to." The Egyptian novelist, Naguib Mahfouz, said "Home is not where you are born; home is where all your attempts to escape cease." Maya Angelou put it this way "The ache for home lives in all of us..." The previous quotes speak volumes because they point to this idea that home is not literally a physical address, not really a hometown, but in the spiritual sense home is a place where you do not have to pretend. Home is where you know you can come and just be welcomed just as you are and you can find rest. It's a place to remember who you are and what is important to you. Spiritually speaking, life takes us all over the place throughout the year. However, sometimes it is important to touch base, come back, and return to our foundation.

I think there is a reason this time of the year that *home* has this sense of draw, because Christmas is the story about home. John, the fourth Gospel writer, shares his understanding of the Christmas story this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made His home among us." There is that word *home* again. I love this metaphor for Jesus being home. Just stop and read that again. Jesus is home but there is a wrinkle to it, right? Most of us think of home as somewhere we have to go, to travel to, but the story kind of flips it. John tells us that home is not so much a place but a person or perhaps even better said a loving relationship. And often we think of God far away and we have to search for God or pray a certain way to find God, but the story tells us that Jesus comes to us. Jesus comes right where you are. And Jesus invites us to come back.



Speaking of going back home, I'm excited about an upcoming Bible Study at our church on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I cannot tell you how many times people moved to SWFL to worship here and they say "It's good to be back home in a Disciples' church" or "Fort Myers Christian Church 'just feels like home.'" So let's go back home! If you are visiting the church, a relatively new member, or just want to know more about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) regarding beliefs and practice this class is particularly for you. We designed this class to meet on either Wednesday or Thursday evenings from 6-7:30pm with a light dinner. Please go ahead and purchase a book on Amazon. The class will begin on either Jan. 14th or 15th.

Recent Prayer Request

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

Family and friends of Sandy Shomper, in Sandy's unexpected death this weekend, Church Family

Joyce Turney, in the ICU at Health Park Hospital , Church Family

Baby Lilli, baby born very premature, Shirley Fizer (Friend's granddaughter)

Barbara Synder, Gulf Coast Hospital with a broken hip, Church Family

Dean Brown, praise for feeling better after severe case of the flu, Church Family

Phi Bodner, 43 years-old with a massive stroke, Michael and Pauline Levin (dear friend)

Dr. Asya Teruni, feeling much better, Church Family

Katie, Dean Brown (friend)

Vicki Iorio, COPD, Church Family

Pam Johnson, hip pain, Church Family

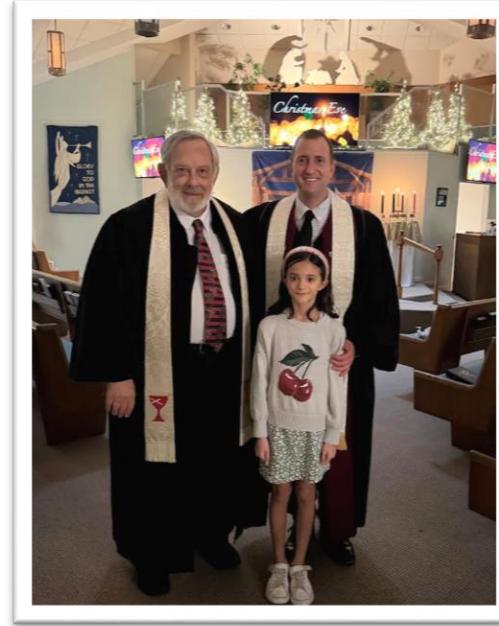
Linda Wideman, back home and doing better after surgery, Church Family

Mary Burns, praise she is recovering well after a knee replacement, Church Family

Les Rogers, began 3 month chemo for an aggressive cancer, Pam and Vicki (brother)



We Love our Veterans! On Sunday, Nov.9, we celebrated you and your families!



Rev. Ed Bodanske & Johnny Blasi

It has been great seeing Rev. Ed back actively serving. Ed helped lead the Christmas Eve Service and he will be in the pulpit on the first Sunday of the year, Jan.4. Also, special thanks to Johnny Blasi who has always made this year extra special.



4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Nativity

January

Birthdays/Anniversaries

(Name Missing? Email the office.)

Wally and Sherry Swartz 12th

Scott Hamm 17th

Steve Larson 20th

Charlie and Sue Fink 21st

Carol Vickers 27th

Save the Date!

January Board Meeting

Sunday, 18, 2026

Outreach Corner

We had a wonderful and eventful 2025. Ended the year with a fabulous play put on by the children and adults who helped. We also had a fabulous choir program. If you are not able to attend the service, I cannot stress enough to view worship via our website. I watched Christmas Eve and Sunday online in home sweet home Alabama. We are having a game night on Sunday the 4th. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!. –Linda Lee