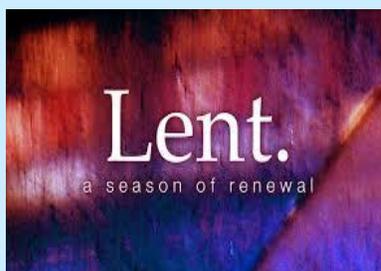




From the Pastor



The season of Lent began on February 26 with Ash Wednesday and continues for forty days and six Sundays that parallel the time of preparation Jesus spent in the wilderness. We have the gift of these forty days to reflect and focus on our spiritual journeys. Lent is a pilgrimage that offers us opportunities to refresh, re-create, and to remind ourselves of who we are as spirit beings.

Our Lenten worship practices reflect questions asked by seekers for many years, exploring the many ways in which the life journey is a spiritual quest. The spiritual journey may be a physical one, but it is most surely one made in the home of the heart and not dependent upon place. The theologian Brian McLaren's helpful book *We Make the Road by Walking* describes the spiritual journey as one that invites us again and again to engage in processes of Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation. He writes, "The quest for aliveness explains so much of what we do. Its why readers read and travelers travel. Its why lovers love, and thinkers think, why dancers dance and moviegoers watch. In the quest for aliveness, chefs cook, foodies eat, farmers till, drummers' riff, fly fishers cast, runners run, and photographers shoot. The quest for aliveness is the best thing about religion, I think. It's what we're hoping for when we pray. It's why we gather, celebrate, eat, abstain, attend, practice, sing, and contemplate. When people say, 'I am spiritual,' what they mean, I think, is simple: 'I'm seeking aliveness.' "

This Lent, may we find ourselves willing to find our way forward on the journey to full aliveness. May this Lenten journey help us to be formed, reoriented, and activated—renewed and reconnected to our inmost truths, in deep communion with Earth, with Spirit, and with one another.



Want to add a special spiritual practice to this Lent?



Pastor Shelly invites all who are interested, to join her in the practice of Contemplative Prayer. Contemplative Prayer is an opportunity for us to center ourselves with silence, readings, meditation, breathing, and prayer for and with, one another. We will gather each Thursday at 10 AM in the chapel. Come as you are and whenever you are available.

Spiritual educational opportunity for Lent- Sundays March 1st -29th & April 5th 4-5:30 pm



Film series and discussion on the topic of suffering:

“MARCHING FROM PAIN TO POSSIBILITY”

Pain proposes perplexing questions: What is the meaning of pain? How can I survive it? What do I do with it? However, Lent offers a way of grappling with the unintelligibility of pain; it invites us to look at our lives and our deepest longings for healing, restoration, and fulfillment.

These films are invitations to take a journey of making sense of our deepest desires that comes from pain and woundedness. The curriculum that follows each film offers ways to reflect and find that place of pain, and at the same time, that place of wholeness and healing. Practices will be suggested as invitations to examine both our wounds and the wounds of others and see how we might bring peace and healing. The desert is a place void of easy fixes, but it can also be where we find who we truly are.



Note from our Moderator



“I Come to the Garden Alone”

Do you know that hymn? I hope someday we'll visit, and I'll tell you the image that comes to my mind.

In the spirit of New Beginnings, I'm very pleased to be writing to you as the newly elected co-moderator at Church of the Isles. It seems this is a good time to introduce myself to the many of you who I maybe haven't met personally. I have been a member at COTI for one year, and I've been worshipping with you for three years. My husband Larry and I moved to Largo from St. Louis, Mo. in 2013, and like most of us who move from one city to another we visited several churches. You know how that turned out. Nowhere else did we feel the warmth, the commitment to social justice, and the deep commitment that we felt at Church of the Isles.

I have held other offices while on the board at Compton Heights Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, in St. Louis Missouri. We were active in that urban church for 20 years. I will confess the one area that I initially adopted on my own which grew to be a ministry of that church was to just spruce up the church garden. I believe now as I did then that the curb appeal of the church is as, or more important than, the curb appeal of the houses we go looking for when new to the area. The way the church appears on the outside says a great deal about the folks who are in worship on the inside. It isn't just putting lipstick on a pig. It is saying that these are sacred grounds. This is a place of reverent beauty that deserves our care, time, and often sweat, especially here in Florida I know there must be others of you in the neighborhood and at the church who feel as I do, so I hope that we meet soon and devise a creative New Beginning for the gardening and tending of the outdoor space.

As we move forward in this process, I'm sure there will be a blossoming of new spirit and excitement. Together I'm confident we will continue to flourish, and in the future, we will be known by our radical hospitality. I look forward to seeing you in worship. I look forward to seeing you in the garden.

May Christ's Peace Be with You, Jan Kreuger



Church and Community News

13th Annual IRB Greenfest- March 28th 10-5

13th ANNUAL
INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
GREENFEST
Saturday, March 28th, 2020 10am-5pm
24th Avenue & 1st Street

Eco-Friendly, Local Products, Services & Non-Profits

and wine offerings (sponsored by Crabby Bill's and 18 On The Rocks), and a silent auction with many items to bid on.

Church of the Isles is once again inviting everyone to participate in our wonderful 13th Annual IRB Greenfest. We will have up to 65 eco-friendly and family-friendly vendors, wonderful food (i.e. Pajano's Pizza and lobster rolls fresh from Maine), the always entertaining Dead Frets band, beer

and wine offerings (sponsored by Crabby Bill's and 18 On The Rocks), and a silent auction with many items to bid on.

If you would like to be involved in preparing for this special event, please contact Marty Synnott (727-249-3011; martysynnott@yahoo.com). We have many volunteer opportunities.

- If you like to bake, we are looking for cookies and other baked items to tempt everyone in the family.
- If you have anything you would like to donate to the silent auction: a themed basket, gift certificates, new items that we can put into a basket, we will welcome your donation with open arms! If you don't have anything yourself but would be willing to solicit items or a service (i.e. lessons) from local establishments or individuals, we could use your help.
- We need help getting our posters hung up **everywhere**.
- We could always use extra hands with set-up (7:30am) and take-down (5:00pm).

Most important of all, mark your calendars for March 28th, and bring your family and friends to IRB Greenfest. Don't miss it, it only comes around once a year!!

Emergency Assistance Fund Special Offering- 1st Sunday of every month.

Each month when we have our communion service, we receive a special offering which helps to support members of our community and beyond, who need help throughout the year. Individuals and families who are experiencing times of crisis and transition are assisted by your help. Thanks for your generous gifts to this fund on March 1st and April 5th.





COTI Spring Cleaning- March 9th-14th



Its time again to clear the cobwebs of winter and refresh our beautiful church as we enter the season of Lent and prepare for Easter. We will have a dump trailer on the property during the week or March 9th through March 14th, and are seeking volunteers to help purge, dispose, and organize areas of the facility. There are many tasks available to suit any age and ability. All are welcome to join in the fun! Please contact

Jeanine Waller, (727) 595-1038 (church office) or (727) 593-1275 for hours of availability. There will also be the infamous “sign-up” sheet in Pilgrim Hall.

COTI Book Club- Sunday, March 15th @ 3 pm

We regularly meet at 4:00 p.m. in the Lounge on the third Sunday of each month. The group is full of interesting people reading (for the most part!) fascinating books which is a great mix for some lively discussions. We’re always on the hunt for books to add to our list. Join us and share some of your favorite books.



March 15 – *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman

“A smart, warm, and uplifting story of an out-of-the-ordinary heroine whose deadpan weirdness and unconscious wit makes for an irresistible journey as she realizes... The only way to survive is to open your heart”

Here’s what’s coming up: **April 19** - *The Other Einstein* by Marie Benedict

Miracles Outreach



Our Miracles Outreach girls had a great time making their vision boards. Thank you to all who donated magazines and a special thanks to Alicia Isaac for showing us what to do and providing most of the arts and crafts materials.



COTI Task Force against Human Trafficking



Did you know that Church of the Isles has a task force on human trafficking? We are hearing more and more about human trafficking in the news these days, which is both good and bad. It is good because it is shining a long-overdue light on the pervasive practice of sex and labor trafficking of (mostly) young girls and boys. It is bad because it is in our face that this is rampant in the Tampa Bay area.

In 2015 we started a Task Forces on human trafficking with these main objectives:

- ❖ Educate task force members, the congregation and the community about the scope of human trafficking in our area
- ❖ Identify critical issues and assess how our church can best impact change, and from that we...
 - ❖ Researched and identified a safe house that we could support
 - ❖ Held two community-wide workshops with panel members from various organizations working on different aspects of human trafficking.

This past Saturday, Nancy Ertz and I attended a workshop on human trafficking at Faith UCC in Dunedin, and it dawned on me that many of you may not know about the work COTI has done and is doing to play a small role in helping victims/survivors of this horrific crime.

After researching several safe house agencies in the area, we chose Miracles Outreach because of their commitment to unconditional love of each girl that comes to them, either from the state foster care program or through the human trafficking advocacy teams in local police/sheriff depts. Once a month anywhere from 6-14 girls between the ages of 11-18 come and spend a day with their “Grammas” at our church. A group of women from Anona Methodist Church help us with this program and we have varied activities for them each time they come. Some are from abusive homes and some from human trafficking – we don’t know which, but we love them all. They have all been through so much trauma in their young lives, it’s hard for us to imagine. Love and time are what they need and what we give to each!

DID YOU KNOW??

- ❖ Human trafficking is in our backyard. (Tampa Bay area is one of the worst in the State.)
- ❖ The average age of victims is 13-15 years old, and once they are under control of their trafficker, the average life span is 7 years.
- ❖ Human trafficking is quickly closing in on drug trafficking as the most lucrative crime in the world.
- ❖ The United States is the fastest growing “buyers” market in the world and Florida is one of the biggest markets. (In one recent 60-day period on social media in the Tampa Bay area, there were 32,730 ads for sexual encounters with children under 18.)



- ❖ 25% of (mainly men) active buyers account for 75% of market transactions.
- ❖ Education of adults and youth is critical; schools, religious organizations, youth groups, sports leagues, legislators, etc.
- ❖ How can you help?
- ❖ It is essential to report any suspicious activity.
- ❖ National Hot Line: 1-888-373-7888 OR Florida Hot Line: 1-800-962-2873
- ❖ Community involvement and coordination with Law Enforcement is essential; Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and the Clearwater and Largo Police Departments. Each department has a Victim Advocacy Unit.
- ❖ There is no typical Human Trafficker; it could be Anyone: Male, Female, old or young! No one stereotype exists!
- ❖ Victims cross all socio-economic lines; it's not just runaways and children from troubled homes. They include boys as well as girls, and LGBT youth are particularly susceptible. Some of the victims are as young as four.
 - ❖ Parents, grandparents, and any adult must be vigilant when accompanying children; especially in shopping centers, playgrounds and parks. Now traffickers are using kids under their control to lure innocent children. Must alert children to beware of unknown children and adults.
 - ❖ Buyers of the services must face severe consequences: no buyers, no trafficking.
 - ❖ There is a gap in government services for children over 18. Mental health and addiction issues are rampant, and many victims become homeless.
 - ❖ The internet has made human trafficking more accessible and facilitates the trafficker finding and recruiting vulnerable youth.
 - ❖ Trafficker may lure victims by mind control, drugs, promises of love and shelter, threats of harm, or force against them or others they care about.
 - ❖ Safehouses that provide shelter, services, protection, etc. need our support. Mental Health Services are critical. Victims suffer from PTSD.
 - ❖ An informative documentary is "Too Close to Home: Human Trafficking in the Tampa Bay Area", www.pbs.org. Also, "Hidden America", abcnews.com
 - ❖ An educational/insightful book is the "Walking Prey" by Holly Austin Smith, which is in our church library
 - ❖ The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act (TVPA) is the cornerstone of Federal human trafficking legislation and renders human trafficking (sex trade, slavery and involuntary servitude) as a federal crime.



If you are interested in hearing more about what we are doing or would like to support this mission with time and/or treasure, please let me know. We are very proud of what our congregation is doing, and we are told over and over by the staff at Miracles Outreach that the girls *really* look forward to their visits with us. We are making a difference, and that's what matters. We are blessed, Marty Synnott (martysynnott@yahoo.com; 727-249-3011) Other members who help with Miracles are Nancy Ertz, Valerie Courtney, Jan Kreuger and Alicia Isaac.



Holy Week worship opportunities

- ❖ April 5 @ 9 AM Palm Sunday
- ❖ April 9 @ 7 PM Maundy Thursday
- ❖ April 12 @ 7 AM Sunrise Service Easter Day on the Beach
 - 8:00 AM Breakfast at COTI
 - 9:00 AM Easter Day Worship



Beach Community Food Pantry @ Calvary Episcopal Church IRB needs the following **items for their food pantry:**
 Canned fruit and veggies, mac & cheese, pasta of any kind, pasta sauce of any kind, dog treats/food.



Deadline for submissions for the April Newsletter is NO LATER than Friday, March 20, 2020. If items are not received by the 20th of the month they may not be included in the newsletter. Thank you for your timeliness.



2020 March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9 am Worship 4-5:30pm- Lent Spiritual Op	2 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	3 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	4 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	5 9 am-2 p COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 10a- Contemplative Prayer	6 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	7 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
8 9 am Worship 4-5:30pm- Lent Spiritual Op	9 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	10 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 11a-2p- Pinellas hope	11 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 5:30pm Deacons Mtg	12 9 am-2 p COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 10a- Cmtpr. Prayer	13 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	14 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
15 9 am Worship 3:00 pm COTI Book Club 4-5:30pm- Lent Spiritual Op	16 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	17 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	18 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 10am- Church Council	19 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 10a- Cmtpr Prayer	20 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	21 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
22 9 am Worship 4-5:30pm- Lent Spiritual Op	23 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	24 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	25 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	26 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 10a-Cmtpr. Prayer	27 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10-4pm Greenfest set up	28 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop 10-5pm- GREENFEST
29 9 am Worship 4-5:30pm- Lent Spiritual Op	30 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	31 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop				

Church of the Isles United Church of Christ

200 24th Ave., Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

727-595-1038 www.churchoftheisles.org

Rev. Dr. Shelly Wilson, Pastor (352) 359-1869

Rev. Bill Main, Associate for Visitation (727) 291-3663

Jan Kreuger, Co-Moderator (314) 562-4585

Marty Synnott, Co-Moderator (727) 249-3011

Beach Community Thrift Store (727) 444-0339

13th Annual
Indian Rocks Beach

GREENFEST



Saturday, March 28th, 2020

10:00 am - 5:00 pm

24th Avenue & 1st Street

www.irbgreenfest.com

Local Eco Friendly Products, Services
& Non-Profit Organizations

Local Food, Beer & Wine, Baked Goods,
Children's Area, Arts & Crafts,
Silent Auction, Live Music, Unique Items and More!



Follow us on Facebook & Instagram! @irbgreenfest

Sponsored by:



Contact us: IRBGreenfest@gmail.com - (727) 595-1038 (Church Office)