

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DOC)

DECEMBER, 2022

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Seasons Greetings!

It is that time of year when we begin a new church year which starts with the First Sunday of Advent, November 27th this year. I always like to think of advent as a trip or an adventure. It brings to mind how we, as human beings, once again approach one of the most sacred days of the Christian year with fear and trembling as well as with gladness and celebration. We might not be able to help but to reflect upon years past when we shared this exciting times with our children and grandchildren and how the excitement filled Christmas morning as they opened up packages and played with toys.

Whatever our situation might be, I wish for you this Christmas Day the excitement and joy that you recall in your own eyes, that of your children, and that of your grandchildren or other family members. Nothing can replace the enthusiasm and hope that comes with the Christmas season. Nothing can substitute for the total optimism that the Christ child coming as a babe in the Manger can bring to the world. This is a year in which we need that focus and vision more than any other year.

We may view the past few years pessimistically. Most of us know somebody that has passed away with COVID. Many we see are still living with the after-effects Of COVID even in our own congregation. Florida has lost over 82,500 of our citizens during this time. Others that are no longer physically in our fellowship are dearly missed as well. Perhaps we silently mourn every Sunday as we pray for those that are struggling with health issues be they immediately around us or some distance from us. We now struggle with issues like inflation, immigration, war, political instability, climate change, and many natural disasters. We may think that our situation is desperate or even intolerable. We thought retirement was going to be better but perhaps we thought wrong.

Is it not ironic that in the middle of winter, in the middle of all that seems right, in the middle, when it seems like that which is evil will prevail, we have Christmas. We have Christmas and all of the hope that it brings. We have December and the adventure that we see of God coming down and touching us as his people, walking with us to that Manger in Bethlehem, perhaps symbolically, but perhaps so real that it seems inevitable that we are following that star.

We need a restart – a time when we can take all of what we learned in the past and apply it to the future.

The phrase "seasons greetings" seems so inadequate for a time that's filled with so many expectations that were fulfilled on that day that we celebrate, and celebrate continuously, when we sing those songs of hope and especially when, with our hearts we say:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep
God is not dead nor doth He sleep
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on Earth, good will to men

Pastor Alan

Pastor's December Office Days: 6, 10, 13, 14 20, 21, 27



BOOK CLUB

In December we will be reading “Decadent Deceit” by DeAnna Julie Dodson. This is the 2nd book in the “Annies Secrets of the Quilt” series. Again we have Sofia Parker who is trying to create props for her son's school play. But she ends up in a mystery when someone tries to sabotage the production and things get dangerous for the star of the show. The plays tyrannical director alienates everyone with her overbearing attitude fit for a queen. She seems to have it in for Sofia and her husband Jim. At the same time, Sofia is trying to research the 2nd square in her family's heirloom quilt. There's a diary that came with it, and it seems her ancestor Cerise Belanger served in the court of Marie Antoinette. The fabric swatch stitched in the quilt came from the royal court of France in 1789. Just like Sofia, Cerise finds herself in a mystery involving the tyrannical queen, some nobles who reside at the Palace of Versailles, and murder! Cerise must stay out of harm's way, stay in the queen's favor, and fulfill her dying father's wishes while being true to her own heart. Will Cerise's story inspire Sofia to have the courage she needs to deal with the tyranny in her own life?

We meet once a month, on the first Monday at 1:30 pm. Please read the entire book before you come and be prepared to ask questions for all of us to answer. We are all leading the book from now on, and all will participate as much as we can. Please order your book from Amazon, or wherever you buy your books.

Our next meeting is Monday, Dec. 5th at 1:30 pm in the church library. Stay tuned for the January selection. It hasn't been decided yet.

Submitted by Jaquae L. Sands, 382-3428



CHOIR NEWS (December 2022)

Music is a big part of the Christmas season. As always the choir is working hard to bring you a special anthem each Sunday. As the song says, “It's the most wonderful time of the year!”. So grab a friend and bring someone to church. Let's make this season special!! See you on Sunday!

Keep in Tune,
Jaquae

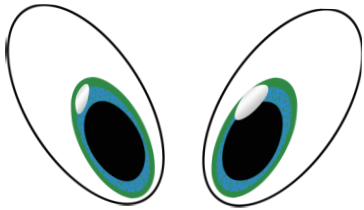


A JOYFUL NOISE



For now, the chimes are on hold. We need more people so if you're thinking about joining us, please give me a call. I'd love to hear from you! They say all good things are worth waiting for!

For Whom The Bell Tolls,
Jaquae



Are you keeping your eyes open for unsung heroes in our church?
Please submit someone's name that should be recognized for the
little things that are done for the church.



Thank you to all our prayer warriors who never fail or tire of praying for our church family and extended family. Since working in the church office here at FCC Sebring, I have sent out many prayer requests and receive so many replies and concerns. I cannot thank all of you enough for the many prayers to God for the requests sent out. The power of your prayers are constant evident in our lives.

Love to you all, *Pat*



Worship/Education/Fellowship Committee Report

What a wonderful Thanksgiving meal we had on the third Sunday of November!!! Although the turkey was delicious, the side dishes and desserts were even more impressive. Thank you, Rich, for the "Pastor Appreciation" sheet cake (hopefully, we will be having some leftovers for the lasagne dinner.)

A special thanks for all those contributing to make this a very special occasion. Teresa, Peggy, Sandi and Linda - and anyone else who helped - made a great kitchen angels team. If I missed naming you as an angel, please accept my apology; I wasn't in the kitchen. I'm a slow eater and I'm sticking with that explanation although it is not really a valid excuse.

Christmas Eve Service will be held at 3 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Pastor Alan will be conducting the service. Please invite your friends neighbors; we had over thirty attendees last year for the Christmas Eve service.

Traveling mercies to snowbirds. Many have already made it down to sunny Florida and we are anxiously awaiting more.

Blessings to all,
Ann

Christmas Bucket List

1. ^{Be}~~Buy~~ Presents

2. ~~Wrap Gifts~~ someone in a hug

3. ~~Send Gifts~~ Love

4. ^{Donate}~~Shop For~~ Food

5. ~~Make Cookies~~ Memories

6. ^{Be}~~See The~~ Lights



My Christmas Vow

Ethel Ballard Terry

I shall attend my tasks of love
This year—so that I shall have time
To walk beneath the altar-lit sky
And feel this magic hush sublime
That brings to earth the peace again
Which angels chanted clear that night
To shepherds watching flocks on hills
Of Galilee, beneath strange light.
And, if I'm quiet and listen long,
I too may hear the angels' song!

Once More

Margaret Rorke

Once more we hear the angels
And hurry from the hills.
Once more the star is shining,
And wisdom through us thrills.
Once more we've come to Christmas.
The spirit of it glows
And fills us each with gladness
No other season knows.

Once more we find the manger
And kneel within our souls
To ask the infant's blessing
Upon our earthly roles.
Once more our love we offer
To Him asleep on hay
And find as we are leaving,
We take more love away.



Rich's Corner

Our Saturday Men's breakfast will be December 10th at 9:00 a.m. Don't miss out on this wonderful time of fellowship and food!

Many thanks to all who supported the men's Lasagna dinner. All of the volunteers to help serve, prepare, cook, donation of desserts, our cashier are greatly appreciated, this could not happy without you. It was a great time of fellowship. An announcement of proceeds will be made on Sunday.

Blessings, Rich

BITS & PIECES

Somehow, not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.
—John Greenleaf Whittier

Welcome, Christmas! heel and toe,
Here we wait thee in a row. . . .
Fill us quickly ere you go,
Fill us till we overflow.

—Mary Mapes Dodge



Give unto all, lest he whom thou deny'st
May chance to be no other man but Christ.
—Robert Herrick



My good will is great,
though the gift is small.
—William Shakespeare

Not he who has much is rich,
but he who gives much.

—Erich Fromm



Devotions FROM THE Heart

Pamela Kennedy

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

THE GOD OF NEW THINGS

It isn't always easy to accept change. New friends and family members join our circle of relationships; things suddenly aren't the same, and we feel out of balance. We move to a different state or town and the stores and street signs are strange, and we feel uncomfortable. Our financial situation or health alters, and we're worried and concerned. We have to learn to do things differently, and we don't like it.

Holidays seem only to magnify these changes, and we often long for the old, familiar ways. I recall the first Christmas I spent in southern California as a young bride many years ago. I had never before spent a holiday season away from my home and family in the Pacific Northwest. Our tiny tree looked forlorn without the traditional ornaments I had lovingly hung every year. My fruitcake didn't taste quite like Mom's, the turkey wasn't as juicy as hers, and the gravy had unfamiliar lumps. But the worst was the eighty-degree weather and swaying palm trees on Christmas Day! Nothing looked or tasted or even smelled like the holidays. I remember calling home and tearfully complaining, "It isn't Christmas without all the traditions we always shared."

Wisely my mother listened and then gently reminded me, "Then it's time for you to make new traditions."

What great advice! Thirty years and twenty moves later, I've learned the value of embracing new traditions, of welcoming change as a friend instead of resisting it as an enemy. But this approach to life is

certainly not unique. In the Bible, God reveals to us that He is a God of new things, of change and movement. He longs to bring us into a new way of life—a new way of thinking about people and places, a new way of accepting the changes He sets before us.

When we refuse to accept change, we refuse to grow. We miss out on wonderful opportunities. We may even miss out on relationships that could bless us in ways we can't imagine. Even a change that brings

limitations can be a chance to be still, to listen to God, to allow others to bless us in new ways.

Is there someone new in your family circle this Christmas? Are you living in a new place either physically or emotionally? Are you feeling like the holiday season is just not as special

because things aren't the same? Perhaps God is calling you to let Him make all things new for you this year. The precious truth is that even though little in this life remains the same, the Lord emphatically reminds us in the Scriptures, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). We can embrace the new things that come our way in confidence that the God who allowed them will remain steadfast. It was His unchanging love that sent the Christ Child so we might experience a new kind of hope. It was His unending grace that provided a Saviour so we could enjoy a new kind of life. We serve a God of new things. This Christmas, rejoice in the newness He brings to you!

Dear Father, I know I often want things to remain the same, to resist change, to cling to the old ways because they are comfortable. Please help me face the new things You have brought into my life with joyous expectation, trusting in Your unchanging love.