



FEBRUARY 2024

ISSUE 24-2

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

AT A GLANCE

Pg. 2, Leadership

“Making the Invisible Visible”, Session Highlights, Church Committee Structure

Pg. 4, Discipleship

“New Year’s Resurrections (Not Resolutions)”, Rock on Wednesday, Christmas Parade Cookie Thank-you Note

Pg. 6, Music Ministry

“The Joys and Trials of Music Ministry in the Church: Thoughts from a Life of Serving the Church”

Pg. 7, Family Ministry

“Words from Walker”, Upcoming Events, Youth Pictures

Pg. 8, Church Family

Milestone Celebrations, Thank-you note from Ruth Gilman

Leadership

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

From Pastor Mackay

I've had several conversations lately where it has been observed that ever since the 2020 pandemic, many books have been published about the church. It would appear that the new patterns of life and the convenience of at-home video streaming have tested the American church's understanding of what it means to live out our faith in corporate worship with our brothers and sister. Perhaps a better way to say it is that this "new world" has shown how poorly Christians understand the importance of corporate worship.

In 2 Cor 5, Paul is speaking of the otherworldly hope that Christians hold. We know that we have a home with God in Heaven. While life in the body is not to be despised, it is lived with "groans" as we long for the full redemption that is yet to come.

In other words, we live ultimately based on what we do not see. What we see is our mortality and it's struggles. That can tempt us to build a life singularly devoted to opposing those struggles and maximizing all we can in this world. But, Paul says, we walk *not* by sight, but by faith. We live based on what we do not see.

And, that means we visibly do things because of what is invisible. Isn't it interesting that Paul uses a *visible* metaphor to describe our reaction to an *invisible* reality? It is our walk that is affected: our day to day life. Just like no one can see the wind, but we respond to the wind with the appropriate clothing, so no one can see the hope that we have in Jesus, but we respond to it in visible ways. We make the invisible visible.

I think that's a helpful way to think about living out our faith together in corporate worship. We are expressing an invisible reality by visible discipleship. Consider two big questions:

Who are we? That is, what is this group of people (this church) among whom we live? It is a group that has been forged together by God's amazing, sovereign grace. We who were not a people have been made a people (1 Pet. 2:10). We are God's workmanship (Eph 2:10). This is a

body, even the body of Jesus Christ, which is incomplete without all its parts (1 Cor. 12:12ff). God has given his Holy Spirit that binds us together in unity. (Eph. 4:3)

Notice carefully that this is not something that we ourselves have done! This is God's work. Just as none of us decided the family into which we have been physically born, so God has worked in our hearts to bring forth the new birth of salvation in Jesus Christ. God has knit us together. He has formed his team as he has joined us to him.

What does it mean, then, to make the invisible visible? If we walk by sight, we simply act as a group of people linked by common affinities. Walking by sight creates cliques and tension, as we see differences of opinion rear their heads. More seriously, walking by sight makes church attendance optional at best. Why? Because I see so many better opportunities elsewhere! Yet, the invisible reality is that we belong to one another (Eph. 4:25) by God's grace. Living life together is not creating a reality, it is reflecting the reality that God has created.

Where is God? Now, we know that metaphysically speaking, God is everywhere. Many Christians attempt to use this invisible reality to argue against church attendance. "If God is everywhere, why do I need to be in a building once a week?"

But consider how the Bible talks about God's location. God is "enthroned on the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22:3). His presence is to be understood where his people gather in praise to Him. In the Old Testament tabernacle, Israel was to maintain a constantly burning lamp, and a constantly fresh loaf of bread (Lev. 24:1-9). These were a sign to Israel that the God that filled Heaven and earth dwelt particularly with his people. So, now, God's presence dwells by the Spirit among his people, for the people of God are themselves the new temple (Eph 2:21-22). God is building us together as his dwelling place.

How do we make this invisible reality visible? We gather in worship to experience God's presence.

So, let us walk not by sight, but by faith. Let us make the invisible visible in the way that we order our lives and hearts this year and every year. ■

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on January 23, 2024.

- Shepherd lists were reviewed. Prayer given for the needs of our congregation and church ministries.
- Tony Woods (Elder) was elected as Assistant Clerk in 2024.
- The Property Insurance Ad Hoc committee continues their work to find appropriate coverage for the church facility. The Session plans to have quotes to consider mid-March or early April.
- Director of Music Ministry Search Committee has posted position information on the church website.
- A reorganized committee structure was approved for 2024. (See below)
- Stewardship & Finance reported on the year-end figures for 2023. Thanksgiving to God was given!

Budgeted Revenue	\$969,585	
Budgeted Revenue Rec'd		\$902,473
Estate Receipts		\$332,625
	Total: <u>\$1,235,098</u>	<u>\$1,235,098</u>
Overage (Shortfall)	\$265,513	
Less Actual Expenses	<u>\$1,082,577</u>	
Overage (Shortfall)	\$152,520	

- Annual reports for Florida Presbytery and General Synod were approved. ■

CHURCH COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Church committees help us team up to carry out the mission of our church. This year, our committee structured as been refined as follows:

*The mission of the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales, Florida, is to be a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true **worship**, personal **evangelism**, **discipleship** and **servanthood**.*

I. Session

A. Ministry Committees

- 1. Worship Committee**
- 2. Evangelism Committee**
- 3. Discipleship Committee**

B. Administrative Committees

1. Administration and Personnel Committee
2. Nominations Committee
3. *Stewardship and Finance Committee*

II. Diaconate (**Servanthood**)

A. Buildings and Grounds Committee

B. *Stewardship and Finance Committee*

III. Trustees

The *Worship Committee* will advise the session on our weekly worship services.

The *Evangelism Committee* will advise the session on our efforts in local and foreign missions.

The *Discipleship Committee* will advise the session on our efforts in Christian Education for all ages.

The *Buildings and Grounds Committee* will advise the session on the care of our facility.

The *Stewardship and Finance Committee* will report to both Session and Diaconate.

If you are interested in serving on a church committee, contact a pastor or elder!

Discipleship

NEW YEAR RESURRECTIONS (NOT RESOLUTIONS)

From Pastor Myers

If it hasn't happened already, it won't be long until you start to see chinks in the armour of your "new year's resolutions." If you were consistent in getting to the gym in January, chances are that you will not do as well in February. If you have resolved in your heart to keep your cool and not lose your temper, chances are that your patience has been severely tested already.

These and other examples point to one of the basic problems all of us face, and that's the problem of real, genuine, improvement. It is extremely difficult to improve. Our character flaws and vices are like David's enemies, those evil-doers who trample on us all day long and attack us proudly (Ps 56.1-2). As soon as we get out, it's as though they pull us back in.

But the world's way to cultivate improvement, the way of the "new year's resolution", is doomed to fail. Why? Because worldly improvement is always carried out by the wrong means and it is always carried out for the wrong purpose.

When we ask the world how we can enact real, genuine improvement in our lives, the answer ultimately centers on you. It is you who must "be the change you want to see in the world." It is you who must "Just do it." And are you strong enough to overcome you? A biblical, Augustinian heart would confess "no."

And why change? Why try to improve our lives? According to the world, we should improve so that we might have a cushier life, so that we might "move up" in the world, "move up" to a further tax bracket etc. In other words, according to the world, we should improve so that we can store treasure on earth and not in Heaven.

Very different, however, is the Bible's plan for effective, genuine, real improvement. According to the Bible, although we are certainly called to exert effort in our sanctification, the power for

such effort ultimately does not originate in us but in God himself. We are to "work harder than any" yes but we are also to recognize and rejoice in the fact that it is "not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Cor 15:9) that explains our growth. We are to work not by our own strength but "by the strength that God supplies." (1 Peter 4:11)

Why? To what end should we strive when we experience real, genuine improvement? Peter finishes his sentence, "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:11). In other words, biblical improvement is not about you but God. It's not about earthly treasure but about heavenly treasure.

When we focus more on Christ than on our sins, we will be far more successful in mortifying our sin. When we meditate more on Christ's holiness than on our own lack of holiness, we become more holy. We should consider our sin, yes, but not to the point of morbid introspection but so that we would be led to Christ-observation.

With all these considerations in mind, maybe we should think twice before making "new year's resolutions." Of course it is good and right to set goals for ourselves in becoming more like Christ. The act of making a resolution is fine in theory. Jonathan Edwards famously wrote for himself 70 life goals or "resolutions" to follow as well.

But given how often we fail in our resolutions, maybe we should approach our resolutions from a new angle and adopt a new term. I suggest that we opt for a term like "new year's resurrections."

Why? Because fundamentally, if you are a Christian, you are united to Christ in his death and resurrection. All of your sins, all of your flaws, all of your failures have already been set aside in the glorious cancel culture of the Gospel. You are already without blemish in Christ. You are already pure in Christ. You are already holy in Christ. Those are the facts.

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Therefore, in light who you already are, dead with Christ and risen with Christ (Rom 6:4-5), therefore go and live out your identity. In light of Christ's past first fruits resurrection, live into the hope of the future harvest resurrection.

Make your resolutions, sure. Set the imperatives of God's law before you with

utmost seriousness. But do it in light of the great indicatives of the Gospel. Do it in light of your union with the risen and glorified Christ. Let us therefore make our new years' resurrections and walk together by faith in the risen Sun of righteousness this year, trusting that he will bring healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2). ■

ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

FIRST WEDNESDAYS - Potluck and Fellowship

SECOND WEDNESDAYS - Breakout Night

- "Unbreakably His: Part A" Led by Pastor Myers
Pastor Myers will teach on bible narratives that illustrate tenants of Reformed Theology
- Women's Study led by Rachel Smith
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

THIRD WEDNESDAYS - Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing

FOURTH WEDNESDAYS - Lesson Series

- "Unbreakably His: Part B" by Pastor Mackay
Pastor Mackay will teach on the confessional/theological perspective of Reformed Theology
- Children's program, "The Biggest Story"
- Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"

FIFTH WEDNESDAYS - Break

Want to help?

Contact Pastor Myers

(Discipleship Committee chair)

if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs



Dear Presbyterian Church,
I would like to express my gratitude for the delicious cookies you served at the Christmas parade. They were a real treat and I appreciate the thoughtfulness that went into providing them. Your kindness and generosity have not gone unnoticed, and I feel blessed to be part of this wonderful community. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness. I am a Methodist attending First Baptist with my daughter and son-in-law, Paul and Sara Webb.

Love to all,
Lettie Mae Lee

THE JOYS AND TRIALS OF MUSIC MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH THOUGHTS FROM A LIFE OF SERVING THE CHURCH

From Vince Treadway

I began piano lessons when I was 4 years old with the proverbial “little old lady” who was kind and gentle and nurtured my desire to learn to play the piano. I knew even earlier than 4 that I wanted to learn to play the piano, but my parents were told “wait until he’s in first grade” and “he’s too young to understand.” However, my mother persevered and found a teacher for me who got me started on what was to be a lifetime of music and service to the church. When people would ask me as a child, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I would say, “A church musician!” and they would usually respond with a mild smile and something like, “well that’s nice, but I mean what would you really like to do for a living?” I would respond with, “I want to be a church musician!” and they would either smile or just shake their head. As it turned out, my childhood ambition became a reality! When I retire, I will have served the Lord 60 years in the church! I began my “career” when I was 8 years old, because I was hired as the church pianist/organist at \$5.00 per service (a lot of money for an 8 year old in 1964!) and even as a child faced many of the challenges that I would face later when my service to the church became my full-time career. I praise the Lord who has enabled me to serve Him my entire career in His church! Without God strengthening me, I never would have made it. There were many times that physically or emotionally I did not think I could do it; sometimes I was sick, sometimes I was exhausted, sometimes I was hurt by what people said and did. But the Lord gave me the strength and tenacity to carry on through the good times and the challenging times.

I continued piano lessons with several different teachers from age 4 and through my undergraduate and graduate studies at Indiana University South Bend, then Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond as well as privately with the chair of piano at Temple University. I also studied organ privately as a

young adult, and then formally at Westminster Choir College in Princeton New Jersey during my years there while I worked on my Masters Degrees. While I was going to college I also served in

several churches as Music Director and those jobs included playing the piano and organ and directing choirs and instrumental ensembles. As I served various churches I noticed that children were often completely overlooked in musical training, and only received instruction either privately or at their public or private schools. I had a great burden that children should be trained from an early age to understand, use, and develop their musical gifts to glorify God! So I included the study of teaching children in both my college studies and in my private studies. I attended many choir rehearsals and lectures and seminars on how to lead children, and took careful notes on what was working and what was not working. I developed a great passion and love for teaching children, and it remains one of the parts of my job that I love!

The joys of serving God in music in the church included leading the congregation in rousing praise in song, training and directing children and adults in choirs, helping musicians to develop their skills to use in worship, developing worship plans that helped worshippers to understand and participate in what was happening in worship, and planning and executing special musical programs and concerts. One of my greatest joys was in Philadelphia one year when we were performing Handel’s Messiah with full orchestra. Most of the orchestra musicians were from the Philadelphia Orchestra—one of the finest orchestras in the world—and so were very accustomed to playing the Messiah. However, when we got to the chorus “Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain” the Holy Spirit filled the room and the singers and the musicians with such power that we could all hardly sing and play through the tears of joy! After the concert was over several of the orchestra members came up to me and said, “What was that that happened in Worthy is the Lamb?! I’ve never felt anything like that before!”

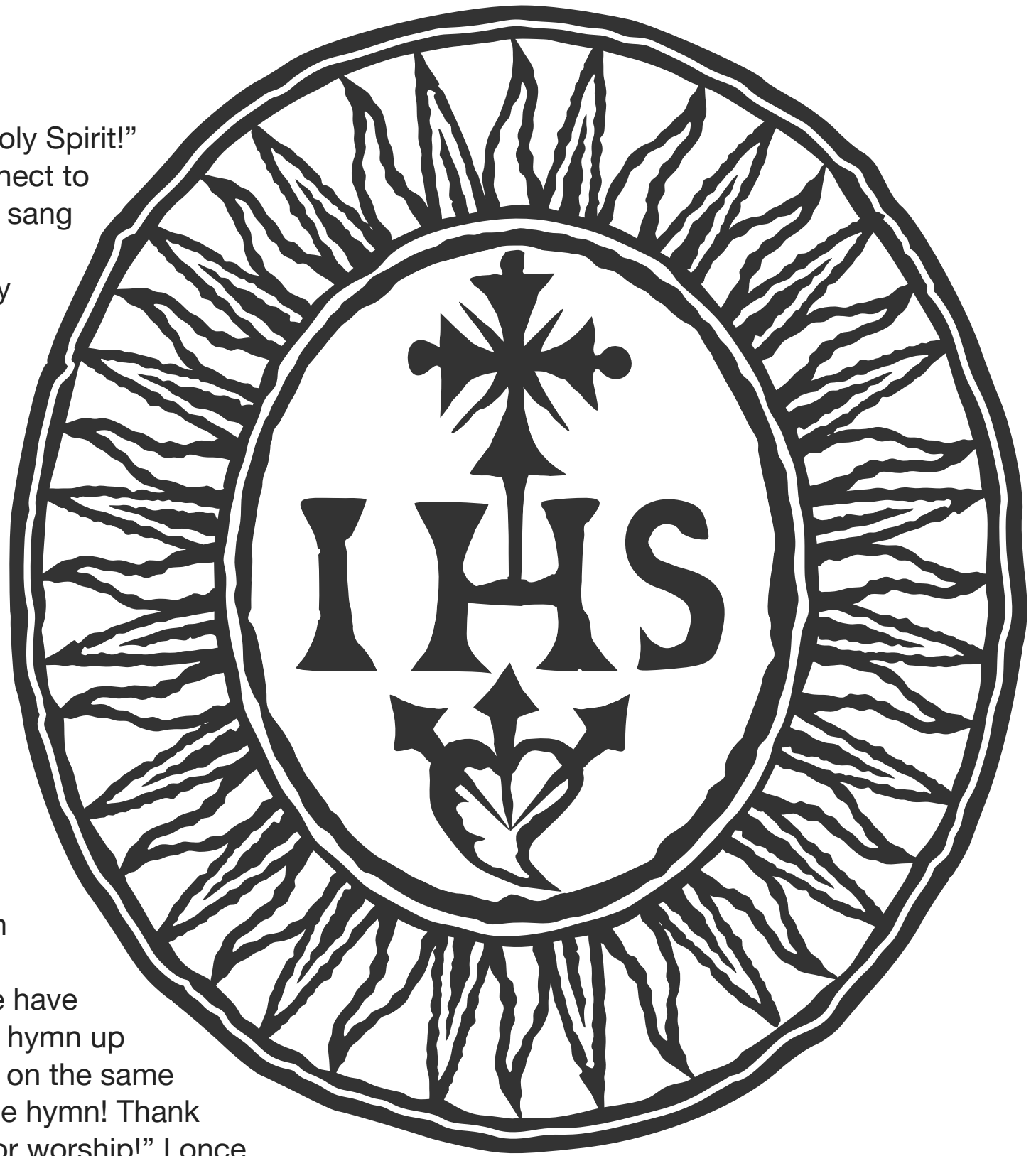
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I told them, “THAT was the Holy Spirit!” Seeing choirs of all ages connect to the music and texts that they sang has been a wonderful joy as well, especially when the Holy Spirit pulled everything together in a service through the words of Scripture, creeds, prayers, and sermons.

Some of the challenges of music ministry have come from my own lack of experience or planning, and it has simply taken time to develop strategies to plan better to avoid issues. Some of the challenges came from comments from singers, musicians, congregants, and church staff. There have been many Sundays when after the service people have said, “Where did you dig that hymn up from? That was terrible!” and on the same Sunday, “That was my favorite hymn! Thank you for selecting that hymn for worship!” I once had a pastor say to me, “You just stick to the music and leave everything else to me. If I want your opinion I’ll ask for it!” (That did not happen here!) I also remember one Christmas Eve service when I had a fever of 101 and felt absolutely terrible, but I had to carry on because there was no one else to do it! Like most people, I also had to deal with hurt feelings, misunderstandings, wrongful accusations, and staff issues throughout my career.

I have witnessed the Lord’s great blessings on the church as well as the difficult times. But I have never seen the Lord abandon His church when they truly sought after Him! I have seen the Lord provide miraculously many times—when the way seemed absolutely impossible! I have had several people ask me, “Wouldn’t you rather do something else for a living? You know you could make a lot more money in the private sector!” My answer has always been the same, “I couldn’t do anything else because this is what the Lord has called me to do.” There was a time when I thought I would explore the concert world



and even began working toward concertizing. But I quickly realized that that world held no appeal to me, and while it seemed glamorous, it also required a kind of steely tenacity to deal with the pressures of competition and public opinion that I did not want to deal with. I felt at ease and energized by working in the church, and the Lord has blessed me so greatly.

As I look back over my career in church music I can truly say “the Lord has been so good!” The Lord has led me, blessed me, carried me, forgiven me, and sustained me through His great power, love, and mercy. I would be remiss if I did not also say that the Lord blessed me with a wonderful wife, Faith, who has supported me, urged me, challenged me, and walked through all of the experiences together with me through thick and thin! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord for all His good gifts, and for the joy of serving Him through a lifetime of music!

Praise the Lord!■

Family Ministry

WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi Everyone!

A lot has happened with the Student Ministry since the last issue of the Diligent. We have had Christmas parties, game nights, New Years Eve parties, spontaneous hangouts, youth group, Bible studies, Sunday school, and more! Check out the pictures to see some of the fun!

As many of you know, in late January, Tori and I also had the privilege of attending a Youth Leader Training Conference in Nashville TN, put on by RYM (Reformed Youth Ministries)! While we were there, we learned so many different factors that tie into building an effective Youth Ministry. We learned about discipleship, mentorship, connecting with students, engaging families, forming a Gospel-centered ministry, biblical perspective on marriage in ministry, avoiding burnout, dealing with anxieties, and much more.

The week was both spiritually and mentally refreshing. The conference connected us with over 200 people in Youth Ministry from different reformed churches across the country. We even reconnected with a college friend also serving in Youth Ministry. Most importantly, it doused us in God's Word. We were preached over every day and attended upwards of 6-8 hours of lectures a day. We are truly thankful for this opportunity and are excited to begin putting to practice much of what we learned.

Lastly, I want to invite each and every one of you to participate in helping with the Youth Ministry. We just recently went around to many of the Adult Small Groups asking for support by providing breakfast for our Sunday School Class each week, but there are other ways you can help too! If you are interested in getting involved with Student Ministry here at First Pres, please reach out to me at walker@fpclw.org!

Thanks so much and God Bless!

Walker K. ■

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS

FEBRUARY 3rd

Youth Bonfire and Chili

FEBRUARY 4th

Youth Group

FEBRUARY 9th – 11th

High School Winter Retreat

FEBRUARY 11th

No Youth Group

FEBRUARY 14th

Youth Bible Study

FEBRUARY 18th

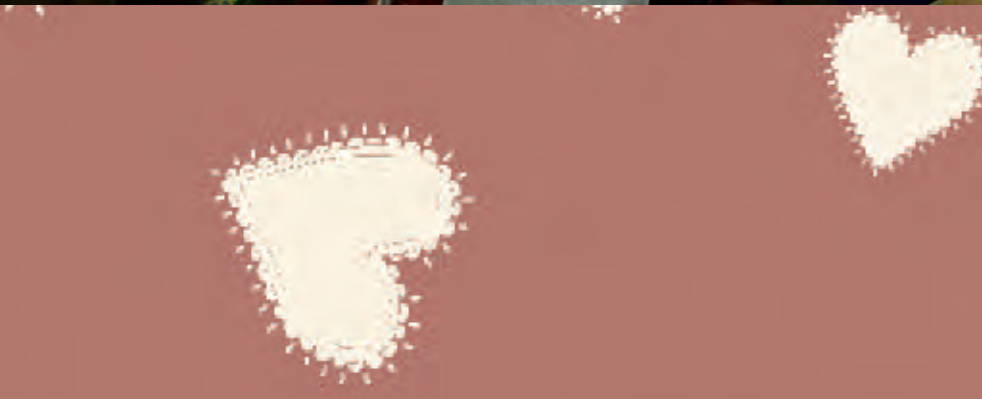
Youth Group

FEBRUARY 25th

Youth Group

FEBRUARY 28th

Youth Bible Study



MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

Church Family

BIRTHDAYS

February 2, Lee Turnquist
February 4, Laureen Beck
February 4, Katy-Grace Hixenbaugh
February 5, Laura Pace
February 6, Norma Schaffer
February 9, Ann Cone
February 10, Carl McCollum
February 10, Randy Portwood
February 11, Albert Balance
February 11, Lori Loveless
February 12, Adele Black
February 12, Janet Thullbery
February 15, Maddie Lippert
February 17, Ansel Buhrman
February 18, Betty Baust
February 20, Angie Bachman
February 20, Sophia Lewis
February 20, Jim Smith
February 21, Susan Alexander
February 24, Sharon Bevis
February 27, Brenda Wise
February 28, Abigail Wunker

ANNIVERSARIES

Joe & Caroline Swanson, February 15
Larry & Pearl Oliszewski, February 20
Bryah & Joel Knepper, February 29



A big thank you to all of you for your kindness and faithfulness that I received in making my move to the Club of Lake Wales. I surely miss all of you!!!! As we all know; Nothing is impossible with God. I believe strongly in those five words cause the Holy Spirit keeps me blessed with His wisdom and strength every day.

I love you all.

To God be the Glory!

Ruth Gilman



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 fpclw.org

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2024	2026
Daniel Hunt	Stewart Hurst
David Nelson	Ed Lamb
Andy Hunt	Jimmy Seay
2025	2027
Tony Woods	Chuck Loveless
Jim Underwood	Willard Pearce
	Fox Rawlings

DEACONS

2024	2026
Leah Gibson	Aaron Nelson
Dan Miller	
2025	
June Ullman	
Cindy Turner	

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: David Nelson
Chairman of Deacons: Dan Miller
Deacon Secretary:
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt