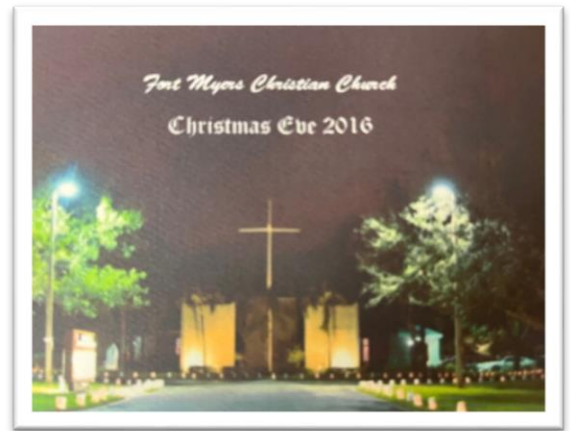


December Edition 2022

Traditions have the power to warm hearts as they can take us back to a beloved particular time and place, enrich the present moment, and allow us to pass on meaningful rituals to a new generation. There is no shortage of traditions or activities to kick off the holy, meaningful, and often magical season of Christmas. For instance, many of us decorate our homes, write a family letter to relatives, or find ourselves baking cookies. Well, at least eating them and might I add pumpkin pie. Maybe we pull down the shoebox from the shelf that contains grandmother's famous holiday recipe. Does anyone dust off old records? Or, should I had written plan to stream your favorite tunes to your smart devices so that you can listen to and spread the Christmas spirit everywhere.

Several months ago it was brought up to the church board to bring back the tradition of setting up luminaries around the church for Christmas Eve Service. If you have joined within the past two years, you will understand why members miss this rich tradition as candles around the church illuminate the message prior to one steps into the doors that "the light shines in darkness; and the darkness cannot overcome it" (John 1:5). Also, we cannot forget numerous worshipers' favorite aspect of the candlelight service. If you're wandering, it's not my children falling asleep during the sermon. It's when we dim the sanctuary lights, and from the flame of the Christ candle light one another's candle and collectively sing *Silent Night!*



While Sundays always roll around fast for clergy, this year it's even more unique with Christmas Eve on Saturday. Therefore, the Christmas Eve Service is intentionally going to be slightly different to encourage a greater attendance to both services. Yes, we will have luminaries and still sing *Silent Night*. However, the theme for Christmas Eve will be "Voices of Christmas." Not only will we walk through the story of Christmas, but also have prerecorded Christmas songs on the screen from a variety of our young and talented vocalists. While the holidays can certainly be a difficult time for many, I pray that you might hear the voice of the Christ Child during this sacred time we call Advent.

A Special Stewardship Note from Kathy Harris- 2022-23 Stewardship

Matthew 2:11 (CEB). They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We begin the month of December. We begin the holy season of Advent. It's all about Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. And the gifts. With the birth of Jesus, the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas was established. Now it's time for each of us to give careful consideration to selecting and giving those we love and care about a thoughtful and meaningful gift. Something useful and something to be remembered.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the greatest gift in the history of the world, what shall we give? Perhaps we will open our treasure chests and present gold to His church. Maybe we will share our frankincense, a symbol of holiness and righteousness, in our daily living. Or we could offer myrrh, and the healing, caring and compassion it provides.

The original gifts presented by the Magi were thought to provide for the family to leave the country, readily transportable, that would allow a refugee family to survive for an extended period. May God use **our** gifts of financial treasure, service to others, and personal worship and devotion, to make a difference in His world. Divine providence or simple kindness? It's a matter of faith. Have a blessed Advent and Christmas.

Prayers and Praise to God from the Past Month

Judee Buhlinger, is on hospice, Church Family

Peggy Teegarden, moving to an assisted living in Chicago near her family, Church Family

Naomi Kratzer, is temporarily at Brookdale Independent Living

Address is 12820 Waterford Circle Apt 345, Fort Myers, FL 33919

Lauryn Kay, moving back home to Charleston, SC, Church Family

Family of Evalyn Carlson, after the passing of Rev. Evalyn, Weavers/Larson (former pastor and friend)

Ron Brown, in the hospital with fluid on the lungs, Shirley Fizer (friend/resident of Hidden Harbour)

Turner Owen, back in hospital in need of a heart and kidney, Shirley Fizer (friend)

Don Norris, cancer patient and beginning hospice, Peggy Roley (Tyler's father)

Treasure Beldo, hysterectomy scheduled for November 21 regarding multiple masses, Church Family

Joyce Turney as well as Steve and Chana Weaver, had COVID, Church Family

Evlyn, praise she is back home after a successful lung surgery, Blasi Family (dear friend)

Lori Summers, in the death of her father, Church Family and Church Bookkeeper

Cards can be sent to the following:

8900 Crown Colony Blvd Fort Myers, FL 33908

Roman, major open heart surgery, Linda Lee (great grandson)

John Blasi Sr., back surgery is postpone again due to heart concerns, Church Family

Outreach Corner

Our friends at Gladiolus Food Pantry continue to need our help. Join us for Bags of Hope on **12/1 at 6:00 p.m.** to pack rice and beans. Also, we are collecting toiletry items until **Sunday, December 11** to assist folks as they try to get back on their feet. A tote is in the narthex for your donations of soap, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.

Please join us at the Walmart Neighborhood Market at 9131 College Parkway on **12/17 at 9:00 a.m.** We will once again be ringing the bell for Salvation Army. Our efforts help feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless and gifts for children at Christmas.



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

(Name Missing? Email the office.)

Bob and Kathy Coates	4th
Gerald (Jerry) Hessee	5th
Harry Rubin	10th
Shirley Runyon	11th
Butch and Carlene Griggs	13th
Mya Jane Seitz	24th
Zach Seitz	25th
Sharon Rimes	28th

Blessing of the Christsmas Jars!

On **Sunday, December 4**, we encourage you to bring your jar for a blessing during worship. Decorated jars are still available in the narthex for you to pick up and fill up. Remember to prayerfully consider who your recipient might be. Perhaps it's a neighbor, your hair dresser or barber, the person sitting next to you in church, or employee at your local grocery store. It's never too late to get in the season of giving as we truly are blessed to be a blessing!



Welcome back Grace Anderson! Grace will be in town for the holidays from her graduate studies at MIT, and she is happy to be our guest vocalist. In fact, Grace upon Grace it will be as she will sing both **Christmas Sunday and New Year's Day!**