

May Edition 2024

(*The complete article can be viewed on Facebook and email).

Over the weekend I listened to a podcast that featured J.S. Park, who is an experienced trauma one hospital chaplain. This particular episode was called “sitting with death.” Now I have officially confirmed each of your suspicion of my geekiness whenever I am not shouting at a little league Kansas City Royals (forgive me) baseball game or watching my favorite seven-year-old cheering “Let’s get fired up” on the football field! Anyhow, it was exceptionally informative to listen to a seasoned chaplain’s wise, yet humble perspective on such a heavy topic as nobody can escape loss. To be on the same page, by definition, grief can be defined as the way our body, heart, and soul deals with loss. Not only does loss and grief take form in all sizes and shapes, but also effects people and families differently. In short, we must recognize and then make space for others’ grief even when it might appear a bit peculiar for our own taste.

Whether you or a friend is going through a loss, it’s dangerously tempting to surpass, deny, or bypass grief. Even though we might have only thoughtful and pure intentions, quite often we faithful jump too quickly to some form of Christian/Hallmark card one-liners (Or, my nieces or your neighbors might bluntly say “cheesy phrases”) as an attempt to fix, to mask, or to offer some hope. In short, as a society we strive to put a curtain over loss and act as if everything is just “fine” or at least dress up our beautiful social media accounts. However, might we dare to set aside the illusion of our self-made, picture-perfect independent lives or what some theologians might call the false self. In lieu, might we have the wisdom and strength to look deep inside ourselves and be confronted with the harsh, yet liberating reality that we are just human and it’s okay. Furthermore, it’s natural for green pastures to sometimes fade into dark valleys as we find ourselves frightened, overwhelmed, and in unfamiliar, uncomfortable places surrounded by feelings of emptiness and wondering if anyone out there cares or understands.

You might be familiar with a parable or story about a handful of people who sat down at a table with their backpacks. Inside each of their backpacks was the suffering they were carrying. They eventually placed this on the table. Suddenly someone at the head of the table spoke up and said “If anyone wants to exchange backpacks you can do so now.” However, after looking at one another's suffering, each person would wisely pick up their own backpack and marched on. In this story, by simply noticing others and their suffering they had the wisdom to realize others were all carrying a heavy load as well. It was by being up close to one another, sitting with one another that they were truly able to *not just listen but really hear and embody compassion* to one another.

Join us this Tuesday, April 30, from 11am to 12:30pm, in the fellowship hall to connect with other believers who are also coping with grief. Please know this is by no means a professional group counseling session nor intended to replace one’s professional therapist. At Fort Myers Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) I want to simply offer a safe, inviting space for our worshipers as well as our neighbors in the community to share stories, to be a source of encouragement, and to be in prayer with one another. In preacher form, going back to the previous table/backpacking story, I believe as the Body of Christ we can help carry each other’s backpacks full of grief, sorrow, and hurt. We do not have to carry our grief and hurt alone. Depending on the participants and the overall group’s census, this will determine if this ministry will take place once a month or quarterly. Please be sure to sign up in the narthex, this Sunday, as a box lunch will be provided for the first meeting.



Picture taken on **April 26**.
The sanctuary will be finished painted by **May 3**.

Updated April Prayer Request

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

Kate Seitz and Family, in the death of her grandpa Roland, Church Family

Benik Minasyan, fell and cracked bone in his knee, Asya (father)

Harry Rubin, rehab after heart valve surgery, Church Family

Bill Garlow, Church Family

Gabi Rivera, numerous tests and scans, Ricardo Rivera (sister)

Ricardo and Family, in the death of his grandmother as well as grandpa who is transitioning into hospice, Church Family

The Weavers, in the death of Steve's brother David, Church Family

Family and friends of Glenna Lohnes, in Glenna's death, Linda L. and Shirley R. (close friend from former church)

Linda, fractured pelvic, Church Family

Linda, breast cancer, Linda Lee (friend)

Sharon Sutherland, in the death of her husband Ray, Dean Brown (friend and coworker)

Sue Fink, recovering well at home from hiatal hernia surgery, Church Family

Inge Stuart, waiting for a second opinion regarding scans, Church Family

Alaina Eunpu, serving with "Youth with a Mission" and the mission is in the Pacific area, Dean Brown (granddaughter)

Bill and Linda Garlow, in the death of their cousin, Church Family

Outreach Corner

Well, here we are 1/3 of the way through a new year. I don't know about you but it sure seems to fly by. We are in the beginning of the new fiscal church year and I am looking forward to exciting projects and events.

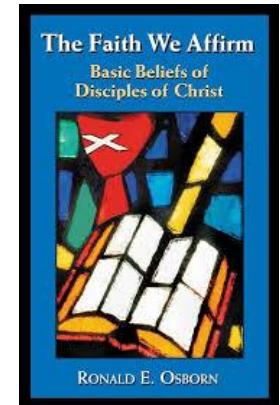
Couple of projects I am working on are the following: #One is getting supplies for the school teachers. As most of you know, teachers spend a lot of money from their own pockets for the school year. I will be putting together supplies with the hopes we can help them defray some of the cost.

#Two when hurricane Ian hit our area, Fort Myers Beach Elementary School was completely destroyed. They have rebuilt the school, but lost their library. In the upcoming months, let us begin collecting books appropriate for children grades one through five. In the near future, I am trying to get a list together of books that they would like to have.

I am looking for a couple of people who would like to help on the outreach committee with throwing ideas out or if you have any ideas please let me know so that I can try and stay on top of this project better.-Linda Lee

Upcoming Disciples 101 Class

Are you interested in reading, studying, and participating in a six-week class on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? Whether you are relatively new to the church or a lifelong member of our mainline protestant denomination, this is a terrific way to understand the fundamental beliefs and what makes Disciples the "best kept secret." The study is tentatively planned to begin in the middle of May, and will be Mondays from 10-11:30am. If you are unable to join us, you can still order a copy of the book from Amazon and have a personal devotion using the reflection and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.



May Birthdays & Anniversaries

(Name Missing? Email the office.)

- Charlie Fink 5th
- Hildur Skaggs 13th
- Martha Furrow 16th
- Dr. Asya Teruni 19th
- Rev. Zach and Kate Seitz 21st
- Rev. Ed and Diane Bodanske 28th

Cub Scout Pack 217 Pine Wood Derby

Upcoming and Exciting Dates

Tuesday, April 30, Circle of Friends (Grief Group) 11am-12:30pm, box lunched included.

Sunday, May 19, Outdoor Pentecost Worship Service

Saturday June 1, 4pm Ricardo Rivera fundraiser concert