



*Purpose:  
To build a warm and welcoming church family where the wounded, weary and wondering are becoming transformed followers of Jesus Christ.*

**RMCUMC**

*Today*



Ridge Manor Community United Methodist Church February/March 2009

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**COUPLES RETREAT**  
March 20, 21, 22  
Leesburg, Florida  
—Speakers—  
Pastor Debbie  
and  
Pastor David Stauffer



**Preparing to Be a Beacon to Our Community**

See Page 2, Pastor's Pen, 'Now That Church Is Smokin!'

**Vision-Driven Budgeting Exciting and Full of Promise for 2009**

*Where is God leading us* in ministry in 2009? What area of the church needs tending to or in which ministries is He moving mightily? How can we empower those ministries in this new year to fulfill God's will?

Those are the answers the Finance Team is seeking in our exciting budget-building sessions ongoing right now.

*Around a couple of tables Jan. 3*, our group began the first session discussing our vision for where God is leading us in 2009. We were in consensus that our job reaches far beyond "number crunching." It is really a process of sensing God's will for our church and allocating available resources to fund the ministries that will take us in

the direction we feel God is sending us.

*We've got to make sure the bills* get paid and all the usual functions are funded and cared for, but it's so much more than that. We see this year as another opportunity to make a difference in people's lives — in the lives of those in our church and in the lives of those who are lost, questioning, seeking, suffering. It's an opportunity to be purposeful and plan our course around our needs and vision rather than just doing what we did the year before and the year before that.

*Following our Jan. 20 session*, we will be presenting our budget in a new format — as a mission-oriented plan for

the year. Look for that exciting presentation in the coming weeks.

*Please be in prayer* for our process and for each of us as we seek God's will. "We" are Pastor Debbie, Louise Gerheuser, Bill Miller, Linda Sawyer, Richard Poe, Sue Hughlett, Marie Locke, Shannon Gaines, Joanne Ritz, George Nelson, Jan Poulton, Sam Blomberg and —*Lori Cunningham, team leader*

**New Publication Dates** RMCUMC

Starting this month, *Today*  
the newsletter will be published every other month (bi-monthly).

Pastor's Pen

# Now That Church is Smokin'!

In a previous edition of this fine publication, I admitted one of my secret loves to you — candles! Tea lights and votives and pillars, oh my! Every shape, size, scent — I sure do love a candle.

Perhaps that is why I love the front page picture of our church so much. Dad captured it for us on Christmas Eve.

All my twinkling, little buddies lined up like little soldiers all in a row, ushering people into our church this past "Holy Night." It's art, I say. (Nice work, Ron Ritz!)

Although I have seen this photo many times before, I look at it now with a fresh, new perspective. After preaching on the priesthood of all believers, this snapshot holds a sacred message that I missed before ... a sermon I failed to hear ... a revelation nearly overlooked.

Each candle has a role to play in leading those outside the church to the One within. Each light has its place in illuminating the path for those who need to find their way. The luminous walk is only complete with each candle burning bright in the places intended for them. How true as well for us as the Body of Christ!

***"Everybody has been given the manifestation ... the gifts, the gifting ... of the Holy Spirit for the common good,"*** according to Paul's urging — we all, each and every one of us — have a part to illumine for the Body and the world. YOU have a role to play in lighting the way to Jesus! The part you play, the gift you bring, the service you offer in the Body will help bring those who need a Savior into God's Kingdom, into a secured eternity. Talk about having worth and importance! You matter in the Body of Christ, and our illumined path is not complete without the light of Christ in YOU shining through your gift.

Gone are the days, hallelujah, of "watching the minister



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

do ministry." Bye, bye on-lookers! We are ***all ministers*** who are to take seriously ***the call*** of God upon our lives. Paul beckons us in Ephesians 4:1, ***"Therefore I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God ... He has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ."***

Not "some," neither "a few," nor just "the special ones," but ***each one, all — you and you and YOU*** — have been gifted by God. No matter whether you have discovered your

gift(s) or not, it is time to be open to the move of God, lay hold of your gifts and start lighting the way for those who are stumbling and falling in the darkness of their own lives — what an amazing privilege! What an incredible calling! And it began when you were but a "wee one" in your mother's womb. Paul stresses this truth, ***"For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."***

That "take charge" personality you were born with ... God knew He needed a *leader* in you. That *soft heart* and those *gentle words* for others ... God knew He needed a *merciful healer* in you. That ability to *make money* and see where it needs to be *secretly distributed* ... God knew He needed a *giver* in you. Each gift — a light lit to guide others on their way.

Funny, I still love candles, only now I can say that my life is dedicated to seeing as many of them lit as possible — people like you and me, shining brightly in the way God designed us. ***WE*** are the Body of Christ, a beacon on a hill, a city lit to give others hope, so I say, Arise! Take the place in ministry prepared just for you — I need you, He is calling you and they are looking for you in a dark, dark world. ***Shine! For your light has indeed come.***

Now where did I put that match?

—***Pastor Debbie***

## The Secret

One day, one friend asked another, "How is it that you are always so happy? You have so much energy, and you never seem to get down."

With her eyes smiling, she said, "I know the Secret!"

"What secret is that?"

To which she replied, "I'll tell you all about it, but you have to promise to share the Secret with others.

"The Secret is this: I have learned there is little I can do in my life that will make me truly happy. I must depend on God to make me happy and to meet my needs. When a need arises in my life, I have to trust God to supply according to HIS riches. I have learned most of the time I don't need half of what I think I do. He has never let me down. Since I learned that 'Secret', I am happy."

The questioner's first thought was, "That's too simple!" But upon reflecting over her own life she recalled how she thought a bigger house would make her happy, but it didn't! She thought a better paying job would make her happy, but it hadn't. When did she realize her greatest happiness? Sitting on the floor with her grandchildren, playing games, eating pizza or reading a story, a simple gift from God. —Unknown

# United in Terror

**February 26, 1993.** I believe the time was 12:18 p.m.

My co-workers were lunching in the conference room, and I was at my desk in my little cubicle. The lights flickered and I heard a “boom.” Then the lights went out, computers shut down and the building shook. If you had ever been to the World Trade Center, you knew that the buildings swayed in extreme windy weather, preventing the buildings from breaking like a tree. The restrooms were in the middle of the building, and there you would actually be weaving back and forth. After the first year, you got used to it

This time, however, the building didn’t just sway. It shook. Complete silence. We knew we were in trouble.

I went to the conference room. We just looked at each other, and an unspoken fear caused a panic within — something I pray I never feel again. We didn’t run, we didn’t speak. Then someone came into the room and said, “Leave.”

**We felt this might be it.** But, again, there was no panic, no screaming, no words. We simply went to our cubicles, gathered our coats, purses and moved into the corridor. After experiencing fire drills many times over the years, we knew we had to take the stairs. So, we began our descent of 82 flights of stairs to where we hoped we would see daylight and our families again.

Just writing this, I am breaking out in a sweat and starting to shake. You can’t begin to know what it feels like to think you might be walking to your death. Your gut says get out quickly, and the adrenaline rushes through you. You know you have to go down. The first five flights or so go quickly. After that, bottlenecking slows us. The darkness is the worst thing. The fear of falling into the person in front of you and having people falling down the stairs is awful. We hang on to each other for support. I don’t even know who I was holding onto. It didn’t matter. I just wanted to reach the bottom floor and know I was safe.

After about 15 minutes, the smoke started billowing up the stairwell. People prayed quietly. It’s amazing the things you think of at a time like that. Little things, like when your children were born ... what your family was doing right then ... and wishing you could take back a million things you’d said in anger, and promising to be a better person if you got out alive. Pictures of my boys flashed through my head, and I vowed to make more time for my husband Barry.

**During the two and a half hour** descent, so many thoughts flooded my mind. I had just obtained my bachelor’s degree in 1990 and had a job I liked and, more importantly, finally felt part of a group I respected and that made me feel good about myself.

The smoke got worse and my mink coat, which I once perceived as a costly expression of who I was, started getting on my nerves. It was heavy and cumbersome. A number of flights down, I said I was going to throw it into a hallway. My friends, Jane and Kathy, said absolutely not, we will help you carry it. My asthma was getting the best of me, my legs felt like jello, and my ankles were shaking. After an hour or more, we starting singing songs like “America the Beautiful,” and “Amazing Grace.”

**Other people starting praying** out loud. Several times, we came to a standstill. Instead of freaking out, we started praying and joking. At no time was there panic or pushing/shoving. We held hands, we hugged, and it didn’t matter what color we were, our ethnic background, or the fact that most of us didn’t even know each other. Some were slower than others and got separated while merging with other floors. But no one was going to be left behind. We still held on to each other as if we were best friends.

After awhile, I didn’t feel my legs anymore. The pace quickened the further down we went. Visibility and efforts to breathe, without inhaling too

much smoke, got worse. Somewhere around the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, we heard loud voices.

They were telling us to “move it,” and then at last flashlights were shining up at us. Those wonderful fire fighters and police officers were heading up. Our spirits lifted, and we knew we could make it. A new strength came over me.

**Only seven people perished** that day. We all had become brothers and sisters and took care of each other. It was beautiful. I wish people would care about one another like this every single day. The world would be such a wonderful place. Be thankful for everything you have. Never take family for granted. Tell them how much you love them and show it with hugs and support.

**I decided to move away** from New Jersey/New York in 1995. I had dreamed my mom, who died in 1991, was sitting in my childhood living room, shrouded in a dark veil. She said, “Get out while you can.”

If you believe in things like this, you can understand how powerful that message was to me. Who knows where I might have been on 9/11/01 otherwise? Everything is in God’s plan and all I know is that I’m trying my hardest to be thankful every day for everything I have — because in a moment, it could be gone.

**Oh, the mink coat.** I never put it on again. I sold it the following winter.

—**Karen Crown, member/volunteer**  
*Note: Karen has been diagnosed with a torn quad tendon suffered in a fall and is facing surgery.*



**KATHY, KAREN, JANE**  
 Together they got out and also saved what had been Karen’s prized possession.  
 (See Page 8)

## UMW Gives/Receives Honors, Awards

The January meeting of the United Methodist Women was a memorable one. Officers for 2009 were installed and special awards presented.

The unit was honored to receive the outstanding Five Star Award from the district for completing the five areas of giving to missions.

Ruth Fitzwater received the 2008 Mission Recognition Award for her many years of dedication and service to the United Methodist Unit. Ruth has been a member since moving to Ridge Manor in 1983 and has been active serving as treasurer, reading program chairperson, and membership secretary. We have been blessed to have Ruth in our unit, and we appreciate her.

Certificate of Recognition was presented to Pam Blomberg, Halla Scott, Ruth Fitzwater, Louise Gerheuser, and Pauline Miller, for completing Plan I of the Reading Program for 2007.

Pauline Miller, will serve a second year as president, with Jan Poulton as vice president. Joann Schellhase is the new treasurer, and Halla Scott, secretary.

Thanks was given to Louise Gerheuser and all who helped at the Christmas Open House at the parsonage. Thank-you notes were read from all eight charities that received \$150 from our unit this past December. Jan Poulton presented a Pledge Service for the New Year 2009.

Next meeting is Wednesday, Feb. 4, at 12:30 p.m. Pauline Miller is hostess. We invite all women in the church to join the fellowship, and bring a friend!

—Pauline Miller, UMW president

## What's Ahead for Children

March 29 is Children's Sunday.

This is a time when the children get to fill the positions of Big Church. They love serving the grown ups by being ushers and greeters, and by reading the Bible verses and leading the singing.

It's a wonderful way to show them how the adults serve the Lord.

April 11 is our Annual Easter Egg Hunt. No explanation needed on this one.

April 19 will be the next Children's Play. *"Breaking News! First the tomb is empty, now Jesus sightings."* —Diane Beuthe, children's ministry director

Meditate.

Live purely. Be quiet.

Do your work with mastery.

Like the moon, come out from behind the clouds!

Shine

—Buddha

(See Page 2, Pastor: **Shine! For your light has indeed come.**)

## Seth Returns Home Filled With Enthusiasm for Discipleship

Not many months ago, Seth McCarty's family, including church family, and friends, thought that he was a troubled youth who had stumbled and lost his way.

He had made new "friends" and become involved in a life totally different from what he was used to, and one no one knew of or expected.

However, just when a feeling of desperation had set in, a miracle took place. Seth, who had been a runaway, returned home a second time and went back to work. It was an uneasy time.

In the daily routine, without any expectation of great things happening, he ran onto an opportunity of a lifetime — to join a missionary youth group. It offered travel to places he had never been and where, with the other young people, he would be ministering to youths in need of spiritual guidance.

An unimaginable gift for Seth. He

shared the results Dec. 28. With an easy stage presence, Seth gave his testimony, which included songs, and prayer, as he joyfully expressed his commitment to serving God.

After the worship service, the family reflected their feelings as they happily posed for a photo together.

Truly, a moment to remember.



Seth and Pastor Debbie offer prayers.



Seth, at ease with life



ENJOYING A FAMILY PHOTO — Back, Drew, Seth, Paul; front, Noah, Tye, Clay, Heather, and Victoria.

# Second Service Developing as God's Directions Emerge

Our new worship team met for prayer, discernment and planning on Saturday, Jan. 19. Our journey these past few months has been one characterized by a deep sense of believing. Believing God for wisdom. Believing God for direction. Believing God for resources. He has proven faithful, of course, and we are trusting Him with each new hurdle.

**What God has shown us in His wisdom and direction:**

**1. Start strong and in My perfect time** ... If it were up to us, we would have started long ago, throwing haste to the wind, but we knew that was "our will" and not His, as we are waiting for what we need to start strong.

**2. This is to be a healing service** ... for those who are wounded, weary or wondering (sound familiar? If not, see our mission statement). Each service will conclude with Holy Communion and a time of healing prayer for those who need to remain and receive healing.

**3. "No perfect people allowed."** A catchy motto for those who may otherwise avoid a Sunday morning service because they do not look or feel worthy. As Matt said, "This service will be the place where it is okay not to be okay." It will herald a "come just as you are" message.

**4. Be truly ready for the response will be great** ... The Lord has impressed upon our heart that if we will allow Him to lead and own this service, the response is going to be tremendous and far-reaching. The Body of Christ here at our church needs to ready herself. We believe a time of unified

**SATURDAY NIGHT PRAYER**

The new worship team meets in the sanctuary on Saturday nights to pray and discuss God's direction



for the up-coming service. The team consists of (l-r) Pastor Debbie, Matt Nix, Judi Greaves, guest Hazel Wells, Barb and Jim Green, and (not present) Shannon Gaines, and Judi Moran.

prayer and fasting is coming for us to be ready.

**What God has done in terms of our resources:**

**1. Provided our new projection system**

... which will enable us to worship using praise and worship, words projected and hands free. It will also allow us to use various types of media to reach an unchurched and yet very visual generation.

**2. Provided people within our church to serve** ... People have caught the vision and are stepping forward to both serve and attend the service. Ushers, greeters, prayer warriors, musicians are now coming forward to serve in this new worship experience.

**4. Provided His sovereign spread of the word about the service** ... Each day we hear of more and more people who plan to attend or at least "check out" the new Saturday evening service, and we have not done any "official" advertising. The Lord is granting us favor

If you are interested in the new service, we are looking for at least 50 people to make a three-month commitment to attend. Studies show that services with attendances under 50 usually do not survive their first year. Help us rise above that statistic.

You may continue to attend Sunday morning if you wish, but we need to secure the 50 attendees as we prepare to start. See Pastor Deb if you can be one of the 50.

and spreading the word — praise Him!

**What we believe God has met but we have yet to receive:**

**1. Our Worship Leader** ... who will lead the worship (singing and worship flow). We know this person is out there, but the Lord has not released him or her yet. We need YOU to assist us in seeking the Lord to reveal this individual. We believe we will be ready to begin once he/she is found.

So please join our efforts to seek the Lord for His will, His resources and His timing, and continue to spread the word with friends, neighbors and the people in our area. God is faithful and always on time, so please believe with us for His will with this new service. With thanks and faith. —*Pastor Deb and your New Worship Team*



**LITTLE ONES MEET**  
Two little girls, Camille Decker and Madison Gaines, find themselves face-to-face and enthralled. Children's Church brings all sizes and ages together every Sunday morning where they meet before Sunday school.



**DAKOTA EARNS PRAISE**  
Playing an ox can be difficult, especially when you have lines to say. But Dakota Jernigan accepted the challenge and practiced and practiced. He proved to be a great performer in the Children's Christmas Program. Unfortunately, he was misidentified. Apologies to Dakota. And to Meghan Miller, who wasn't an ox but she was a trouper, playing two parts.

# 'Blessings of Friendships' at Church Changes Life Entirely

## My testimony —

*There have been a lot of blessings in my life associated with re-dedicating my life to Christ. I feel led to share this part of my story.*

### The blessings of FRIENDSHIP

I always had lots of friends growing up and in each setting as I progressed. I attended high school in a suburb of Chicago and went to college in central Illinois. In both situations, I had separate groups of friends who were my age, going through the same experiences.

As I headed off to graduate school, again, there was a built-in support system and another set of young adults also pursuing higher education with whom I forged friendships. Even in my first job as a reporter on a newspaper in Greenville, S.C., the staff was all young, all college-educated and we all socialized, and even lived close to each other or roomed with each other.

**When I came to Florida**, as a Tampa Tribune reporter in Dade City, I worked with others in my similar age group and again, friendships were formed. But far fewer than in my earlier experiences. You see, I was raised by parents who left home for careers and while we always visited family on both coasts, we never lived close to family — my parents never had the experience of living in the same town or close to the same town where they were raised.

I had repeated this experience by setting off on my own for career reasons. Even though the man I was to marry, Grady, had been in Dade City since he was six years old and knew absolutely everyone, I still felt like a bit of an outsider even 15 years after moving here.

My 30s were touched by a bit of loneliness, as I pursued a new career in building up and running retail stores while enduring 10 years of infertility. Those years were marked by several losses and constant disappointment.

I was a Christian but I wasn't in a regular relationship with Christ and I had few true friends to turn to when the trials came. (Thankfully, Grady and I were there for each other and I have a loving family who also stood by us.)

**During that time, I prayed** — actually pleaded with God for the family I so longed for, but I didn't have the family of God to lift me up and carry me through, to assure me He would never forsake me. I was busy and I knew lots of people but I didn't feel really connected to anyone except Grady and my family. (My parents retired to Florida and later my sister and her kids and an aunt and uncle also relocated here.)

**I started to add** to my regular prayer for fertility, a request that God help me to find the type of supportive, fun, lively and very deep-felt friendships I'd always had in my earlier years.

Well, one day sometime during my first years of motherhood, it struck me that God had answered my prayers. Not only was I the blessed mother of 6-year-old twins, but I counted among my friends each and every member of Ridge Manor Community United Methodist Church. (We found RMCUMC when I was some five months pregnant and became members just after the twins were born.)

**I thought for a time**, God would send me that same type of same-age, same-situation friends I'd had growing up and in schooling and first-job years.

That didn't happen.

Instead, I was surrounded by ladies of all ages and backgrounds and stages. Now, I am blessed to feel close to quite a few of them in a way I don't remember from my earlier friendships.

There's a comfort-level, a lack of fear of rejection that is so refreshing and God-sent.

You see, when I was in my 30s, there were lots of people I could have reached out to but none felt all that safe. Would they be pleasant and polite but not really want to add another deep friendship to their already full plates? After all, I hadn't grown up with them and here I was trying to insert myself into their lives. Living in a small town where everyone went to school together can be lonely indeed.

**But being part of a church family** changed all that. Suddenly, there were lots of folks whose hearts were open and whose kindness was genuine. I felt cherished, not just by my husband and family, but by a circle of friends with whom I could joke or in whom I could confide or for whom I could pray.

For you see it was now a two-way street. Living was expanded. Being a part of the body of Christ was joyful, it was fulfilling and soon it was so overwhelming that I had to start learning how to share it with others. I'm working on that right now. Trying to practice that open, welcoming spirit of friendship I found here — that sharing of Christ's love that breaks down barriers, lifts up our lives — and definitely cures loneliness. —**Lori B. Cunningham, lay leader**

## Share Your Inspirational, Life-Changing Stories and Testimonials

How have you or someone you know been blessed by being a part of Ridge Manor Community United Methodist Church?

Please write up your story — anything from a small blessing to a monumental transformation — in the form of a brief testimony. If you don't like to commit words to paper, please see

me and we'll arrange to share in another forum.

If you have been touched, please share. It is such an inspiration — and so important — to share what God is doing in your lives.

In Christ's love, —**Lori Cunningham, lay leader**

# CALENDAR February/March/April 2009

## Sundays, Feb/Mar/April

Koinonia Cafe, 8:30 a.m.  
Bible Study, 9 a.m.  
Worship, 10:15 a.m.

## Sunday, Feb. 1, Mar. 1, Apr. 5

Communion  
Food Collection

## Sunday, Feb. 8

Youth French Breakfast  
7:30 - 9:30 a.m.  
Brief Council Meeting  
After Worship Service

## Sunday, March 29

Children's Sunday  
Children's Home Offering

## Sunday, April 12

**Easter Services**

## Sunday, April 19

Children's Easter Play

## Sunday, Feb. 22

Loving Hands Ministries  
Worship/Potluck

## Mondays, Feb. 2, 16; /Mar 2, 16, 30 /April 13, 27

Small Group, 6 p.m., Lori/Grady's  
every other Monday

## Mondays, Feb/Mar/April

Small Group, 7 p.m., Martha's  
Boy and Cub Scouts, 7 p.m.

## Monday, Feb. 16, Mar. 16, Apr. 20

Food Pantry, 4:30-6:30 p.m.  
(Behind church)

## Tuesday, Feb. 3

SPRC meeting, 7:30 p.m.

## Tuesday, Feb. 17, Mar. 17, Apr. 21

Ladies Lunch, noon, Denny's

## Tuesdays, Feb/Mar/April

Small Group, 3 p.m., Marie's

## Wednesdays, Feb/Mar/April

Small Group, 1 p.m., Halla's  
FBI, 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
No FBI April 8

## Wednesday, Feb. 4, Mar. 4, Apr. 1

UMW, 12:30 p.m.

## Wednesday, Feb. 25

Ash Wednesday Service, 7 p.m.

## Thursdays, Feb/Mar/April

Youth Ministry, 6-8 p.m.  
No Youth Ministry April 9

## Friday, April 10

Good Friday Service, 7 p.m.

## Friday, April 24-25

Youth 'Acquire the Fire'  
Sundome, Tampa

## Friday-Sunday, Feb. 20, 21, 22

Couples Weekend Retreat  
Leesburg

## Saturday, Feb. 21, Mar. 14, April 4

\*KAIROS, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

## Saturday, March 7

Habitat for Humanity Auction  
Hernando County Fairgrounds

## Saturday, March 14

Tribal Council Meeting,  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

## Saturday, Mar. 28

Cub Scout Career Fair, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

## Saturday, Feb. 28

Organ Recital, 3 p.m.  
Margaret Davis  
Light Refreshments

## Saturday, April 11

Easter Egg Hunt  
9 a.m. - noon

## Saturday, Apr. 23-26

\*KAIROS 'Weekend'

### **For Small Group information call:**

Church office, 352-583-3770  
Lori, 352-567-0150  
Martha, 352-583-2985  
Marie, 352-796-7925  
Halla, 352-467-0233

\*Prison Ministry  
(RMCUMC supports KAIROS  
by providing meeting space.)

FBI Ends, May 13; Restarts in Fall  
VBS - July 13 - 17

## HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

### Thursday, Feb. 12

Lincoln's Birthday

### Saturday, Feb. 14

Valentine's Day

### Monday, Feb. 16

Presidents' Day

### Sunday, Feb. 22

Washington's Birthday

### Wednesday, Feb. 25

Ash Wednesday

### Tuesday, March 17

St. Patrick's Day

### Sunday, April 12

**EASTER**

### *February Birthdays*

- 1- Grady Cunningham
- 2- Judi Moran
- 11- Lynda Ehrman
- 19- Carl Smith
- 20- Jeanne Marcelle
- 24 - Martha Endress
- 24- James Green
- 26- Matthew Nix
- 26- Victoria Brand
- 28- Suzi Morgan

### *February Anniversaries*

- 17- James & Barbara Green

### *March Birthdays*

- 8- Joanne Niemeyer
- 11- Valeria Dragonswan
- 16- Keith Marcelle
- 17- Marie Locke
- 23- Leona Smith

### *No Anniversaries*

### *April Birthdays*

- 14- Janette Leach
- 24- Nancy Ginder

### *April Anniversaries*

- 2- Jackie & Don Rupert
- 2- Lisa & Jonathan Studer
- 11- Sam & Pam Blomberg

# YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULES CONCERTS, FUNDRAISERS

The youth, so full of energy and enthusiasm, need to know the “good news” of the gospel and the Christian principles, so they can be a positive influence in our church, our community, and our world.

The youth have helped in the past in the Pumpkin Patch and were the mainstay in the Thanksgiving turkey/food giveaway. We believe this was successful as many of the people who came and attended the service were blessed not only by the food, but many comments about the service.

We invite all the youth in our church to come to our meetings and for us to reach out to the community to bring others. There are some now attending who worship at other churches. It’s great to have them here. Let’s pass the good news to all.

We could use some volunteers to help in many different ways. Help in food for the “hungry howies” that come in on Thursday night is much appreciated.

Our meetings offer a safe place where they can go for help, prayer and

good entertainment. Teaching the youth the word of God and how to apply it to their lives. We use the PowerPoint projector, that was just purchased, for video lessons and music.

The plans are to take the youth group to the “Acquire The Fire” convention. This is a very powerful message to the youth, a group that ministers all over the country. I have seen the results of this in another church.

We will need your financial support for this project. This event is April 24-25 in the Tampa area. Fundraisers, sponsored by the youth, will be coming up soon. Please help.

A schedule has been set up and more activities are to be added.

2/8/09 Sunday, a.m. Breakfast will be served for donations to support the coming event. Menu: French toast and strawberries.

2/28/09 Taking the youth to a St. Leo College basketball game.

In March there will be a bake sale and another event which does not have a definite schedule.

4/10/09 Good Friday, 7 p.m. The service will be conducted by the youth group.

4/24-25/09 “Acquire the Fire” concert at the Sundome in Tampa.

Matt Nix serves as youth minister.  
—**Jim Green, volunteer assistant**

## United in Terror

—Continued from Page 3

For Karen, the luxurious mink coat lost its once highly regarded status and significant monetary value, after her life-threatening escape from the World Trade Center after the terrorist attack in 1993.



## Mouse Tales



### 'Nosey' Tidbits From the Squealer

**Just found out** that one of my "sort" expressed an interest in writing some comments for my column. Well, I can tell you right now, I thought that was a wonderful idea! Why didn't I think of that? After all, I can't be everywhere, all the time now can I? So-o if you wanna add a juicy tidbit, or even not a too juicy one, write it up, label it Mouse Tales and leave it in the newsletter mail slot in the office. And from me you will get a crumb or two! Thankya, thankya, thankya!

**Whatcha think** of the every other month publication idea? I'm all for that one, too. I like it when thinking heads get together — it usually means coffee and cake, or cookies! You Methodists really love to eat, don't you? The Blombergs recently returned from a cruise, and they said the food was better here at potlucks than many dishes on ship! 'Magine that!

**Heard one sweet** lady of the church say she was approaching 60. Her husband grinned and asked, “Are you approaching it from 50 or 70?” Ouch!

**Surely is nice** to welcome all the snowbirds back. Ralph Miller does a super job leading the singing, doesn't he? Wonder how many folks took up his joking invitation for everyone to eat at the Ruperts with the *Forgiven* trio... someone told me Jackie's daughter, Renee, is a gourmet dessert maker. Think I should find my way over to

Whispering Oaks to check it out!

**Bill Miller and Curt Kellog** recently had stress tests. They both agree the greatest stress was the bill!

**Aren't the children** growing up fast? And we are getting such a large group of them! One of them told Miss Judy that his cat drank from the toilet.

"Do you know why he likes that water? It's cooler than in his dish," she said. How do you know, Miss Judy?

**I just found out** I can carry 20 times my body weight, so if you ever need help carrying a potato chip across the Fellowship Hall, I'll do it for you!

**I can't help noticing** the lovebirds these days. Like Donna and Joe Noack holding hands. Then I heard someone commenting on how protective Richard Poe seems to be as he keeps his arm around wife Nancy, whose contented smile says a lot. I hear they're newlyweds — only been married four years. All nice people. (Maybe they'll drop a crumb my way.)

**Another thing** that did my heart good was seeing an elderly white-haired lady singing along with *Forgiven*. I heard Alice Dow say look she's moving her lips to all the songs. I was wishing I could nuzzle up to her. No, not Alice. Anyone connected to a gun shop ain't anyone a nervous mouse would give a squeak to.

**Anonymouse**

## Take the Lenten Challenge!

Wednesday, Feb. 25, is Ash Wednesday, which marks the 40-day season leading up to Easter — the season of Lent.

Lent has traditionally been a season of sacrifice and self-reflection ... a time to think about our Lord, His sacrifice and prepare for resurrection day on Easter. If you were raised in a family that observed Lent, you most likely were encouraged to give up something, and usually this involved some kind of food. Meat, sweets or a favorite “vice” were traditionally abstained from until Easter (then watch out!).

This year, we would like to encourage you to make a bit more meaningful sacrifice — one that could truly be life transforming for you.

We are extending a Lenten Challenge to you. During the season of Lent, we would like you to sacrifice some time. We are asking each member to find a small group and also read the book, ‘One Month to Live: 30 Days to a No-Regret Life’ by Kerry and Chris Shook. In essence, we are asking you to take a 30-day challenge to learn what it means to make the most of your time on earth and live life with no regrets. Even our Sunday sermons during Lent will

coincide with your readings and small group lessons.

Currently, we have four small groups: every Monday night at 7 p.m., one that meets every other Monday night at 6 p.m., one on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. and one on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. In order for, hopefully, all of our members to attend a small group, we will need a few more hosts and a few more leaders.

If you would like to host a group in your home or would like to learn how to lead a group, please see Pastor Deb. But in the meanwhile, take the next month to pray and make the commitment in your heart to enlist in our Lenten Challenge. God has something special for you as you sacrifice the time and effort to seek hard after the life He died for you to have.

**Take the plunge — accept a REAL challenge this season of Lent! —Expectantly yours ... Pastor Deb**

*A special table will be set up in the foyer from Sunday, Feb. 8 through Feb. 22, so you may look at more information about the challenge, and officially sign up and order your book.*

## An Invitation: Step up and Serve with Hernando Habitat

Habitat for Humanity of Hernando County was the subject of a Council meeting held Sunday Jan. 4., after worship service.



Ron Ritz was introduced and explained to the 35 in attendance that the church has an exciting opportunity to become one of five Methodist churches in Hernando County to partner with Habitat for Humanity.

Many questions and concerns were raised, but after much deliberation, the group voted unanimously to support the project and participation is well underway.

The first joint fundraiser will be an auction at the Hernando County Fairgrounds on Saturday, March 7.

Volunteers from the five Methodist churches are canvassing county businesses for donations such as gift certificates or tangible contributions.

You and your friends can be a big part of this too, by donating items for the auction. We're looking for antiques and collectibles: a painting, a vase, furniture or something of value.

Joanne and Ron want to thank those who have already stepped up to help with the collection of donations.

Habitat has applicants anxiously waiting to hear if they have been selected for the home our church will help build.

No time limit has been set, and Ron said it could take a year just for funding before moving on to the construction phase. Contributions could be, for example, a septic tank company

donating a septic tank.

A sign-up sheet is in the foyer for others who would like to get involved.

For questions or pick-up, please contact: Richard or Nancy Poe, 608-4022; Joe Noack, 583-6196; or Ron Ritz, 583-4387.

How exciting to partner with our area Methodist churches and reach out to the community!

**—Ron Ritz and Joe Noack, leaders for Habitat, and Shannon Gaines, Council chairperson**

### BACK IN TIME

Who am I?  
See Page 10

Who is pictured in 1945? She had just received her engagement ring. Their romance led to a marriage that lasted 61 years, and produced three children, and eight grandchildren. After New York, Georgia, Texas, and Japan, they settled in Florida (40 years), and she taught school in Dade City for 30 years. Her teaching experience has proved to be an asset to the church.





'GREAT WITH CHILDREN' — That's Virginia Arnold, according to Sue Korando, who took the photos at FBI. Virginia is helping Ellie Chase.



Skyler Melvin



Kylee Young



Lane Bradshaw

### EVERYONE HAS FUN AT FBI



'NOTHING LIKE A GOOD BOOK' Bob Beard seems fascinated with the lesson in one of the FBI children's books. Bob is one of the dedicated Wednesday night volunteers, and he reads to the children every week. (He also likes dinner with the kids, cause he knows the meal will be good.)

### Remember Hedda?

When Hedda Hopper was mentioned in relation to Anonymouse recently, a promise was made that the first person who came up with the identification would be given "memory honors."

Donna Martucci, pastor's assistant, responded first with, "Hedda Hopper was a newspaper columnist who told all the dirt on the stars, I think ... back in the '50s? I saw her on an 'I Love Lucy' rerun once."

However, a true winner would be a senior who brought forth the answer through recall of the time.

Sorry, Donna, truly, age before beauty (oops, not that seniors aren't beautiful).

## Gospel Singers Know 'Real' Life

Forgiven" singers Debbie and Cloid Baker, who were here for a concert a couple Sundays ago, are very dedicated to serving the Lord through music. Their main goal is to reach others for Christ.

Some folks think gospel singers have an easy life not to have a regular job! That's true but they still have problems as we all do. One recent jolt came about six months ago when their second grandkid was born. Their son Chad called them (they were en route to yet another concert) very upset.

"Dad," he cried, "Carson was born just a few minutes ago but he was born with a seriously bad cleft palate!"

Cloid, with his constant faith in God, said, "Well, son, that's not so bad. It can be fixed. What if he had been born with a hole in his heart or with serious brain damage or with no arms. Thank the Lord that's all it is!"

Carson has already had two ops and his appearance is much better. He has at least two more to go but Chad's



FORGIVEN IN CONCERT — AN EASY LIFE? Cloid and Debbie Baker and, newcomer, Chris Little

employer (Greater Vision — a great male trio) and the couple's church, have helped the couple with money, moral support and encouragement. They have gotten such comfort from their church (I know you would've done the same!) and grown spiritually because of the strength which came from God. Isn't God good? —*Jackie Rupert, pianist*

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The lovely young girl is none other than the lovely Martha Endress, who enjoys preparing meals for the youngsters. She loves the children and they love her. Martha has always served in many other ways.



### Back in Time?

## TALK ABOUT MYSTERIES!

This picture was dropped off at the office with a "Guess Who?" attached. Are they twins? Photo quality indicates *way*" Back in Time." Unfortunately, we haven't a clue. Please fess up or you may be the basis for the next mystery dinner.

# Priests ... and ... Gifts ... and ... Tribes, Oh MY!!!

One can only imagine how excited the Church was when the Holy Spirit was given to them at Pentecost (see Acts 2).

They grew at monumental speed and kept adding to their number daily those who were being saved. Any pastor in such a situation would say two things: **“Praise the Lord!”** and **“Oh, my Lord!”** The first is a declaration of praise and the second, a desperate cry for help.

Beloved, as your pastor, I can honestly say ... we are there. On one hand, we have wonderful growth and amazing testimonies and sheer joy at what the Lord has chosen to do (and is about to do) through us. On the other hand, we need His Spirit to order us for more, mighty ministry.

With trepidation and excitement, our leadership seeks your cooperation as we endeavor to work with God’s Spirit to give order to our Body of believers. As you recall, the Holy Spirit helped the New Testament Church to settle into this new priesthood (where every member is a minister or priest), and if he could do it then, we know he can do it now with us!

*How we currently are being led by the Spirit ...* We believe God led us to His will for structuring our church for

ministry. Using 12 “Tribes” or teams of ministers (yes, that would include YOU), we hope to assist you in doing a few things:

1. **Find your spiritual gift/gifts.**
2. **Find a tribe (or ministry team) that will allow you to develop and use your gift(s), and**
3. **Find the joy that comes from giving back to God from the very thing He created you to do in His kingdom.**

*Gift ... Tribe ... Joy* — sounds super, right?! Well, even if it sounds foreign to you or a bit scary, trust us ... it is so fulfilling to settle into service for Jesus in the niche God created just for you. If nothing else, it is worth exploring since God’s Word beckons us to live such a life. So what is your part?

1. **Say, “yes” to God’s call to explore your call to ministry and discover your gift/gifts.**
2. **Take the Spiritual Gifts Inventory that will be given out Sunday, Feb. 8.**
3. **Attend the first Tribal Council on Saturday, Feb. 14, here at our church and check out a few tribes where you might be able to put that gift of yours to work**

It seems appropriate that our first meeting to explore our heart for ministry lands on Valentine’s Day! At that Tribal Council, we will begin with a few moments of worship, have an opening address, move into our tribe sessions, enjoy a luncheon together and conclude with the Council meeting and communion.

**It is going to be a fantastic day! So mark Saturday, Feb.14, and reserve it on your calendar.** It will be the first of four Saturdays we are asking you to give to the Lord and His call on your life.

Once a quarter we will have the meeting of the Tribes for *inspiration, collaboration* and *mobilization* into our ministries as priests and priestesses of the Lord. Come join us, and get on board with the miracles God hopes to work through YOU! — With praise and trembling ...

—*Pastor Debbie*

*(The Tribal Council Celebration on Saturday, Feb. 4, will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with childcare provided. Call the office to register your children.)*

Life is mostly froth and bubble;  
Two things stand like stone,  
Kindness in another's trouble,  
Courage in your own.

## Mystery Dinner Helps Feed Children

**Thanks to all** who helped make this years Murder Mystery Dinner a success. This is our biggest fundraiser for the children’s program and we couldn’t do it without everyone’s help.

**There is no small part** in a production of this sort. From the actors, the servers, the set up, clean up, decorators, artists, salesman, the cooks, the bakers and the candlestick makers, not to mention the people who bought tickets, you are all an important part of the whole picture.

**We have 37 children** and a dozen adults to feed on Wednesday evening and everyone knows how food prices have gone up.

**When a child gets so excited, because we’re going to have instant mashed potatoes, you know this is the best meal that some of them get in a week.** This money also goes toward the curriculum and craft supplies we use. Thank you all for supporting Jesus’ lambs. —*Love, Diane, children’s ministry director*



**CHEF AND HIS CHICKEN CREATE INTEREST**  
Who could resist this demonstration by Grady Cunningham, who had fun pushing the idea that the food would be as good as the Murder Mystery held Saturday.

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**JOYOUS CHRISTMAS EVE**

Philip and Rachel Moeller take part in the Lighting of the Christ Candle, and Philip reads the Christmas story. Rachel's big smile was brought on by the appearance of the donkey, Hollyi (in right photo), part of the enactment.



**AN ANGEL AND STUBBORN ... DONKEY**

It's one thing to get a donkey into the sanctuary, another to get him out. But this little critter, that was so calm during the children's Christmas program,



gives Angel Merrill Firmani a hard time. She won, just as she did in getting her into the back seat of her family's car to sit with her and her mother, Cynthia, for the trip from home and back. And why not? Merrill added, "She's just a baby."



**CHURCH FAMILY GATHERS FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER**

Many people from the church have family who are not in the area or they just want to spend the holiday with their church family. It's an idea started by Diane Beuthe and Marie Locke, who really enjoy preparing and hosting the event, which has grown each year. It gives meaning to the day as the blessing and thanks are given for the food and fellowship.

Not to end, but to begin



*"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

—2 Corinthians 13:14