

Faithful Follower

FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OPEN & AFFIRMING



Faith United Church of Christ 4850 SR 64 E, Bradenton, FL 34208

| 941-746-8890

| faithchurchucc.com

FEBRUARY 2023

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Getting a Charge Out of Church

At a Catholic church in Milan, Italy, a young man, and woman from South America sit in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary. They come back day after day and sit for an hour or so and leave. This goes on for a month. The priests assume they are just like any other devoted Catholics, coming for prayer. One day the janitor notices an unusual electrical cord leading from the plug used to provide electricity to light up the statue. Upon further examination, it turns out the young couple is coming to church to charge up their cell phone battery.

The parish priest, Don Antonio Colombo, told *Corriere della Sera* newspaper, "They come here because they don't have a house. The church is their house and letting them charge their mobile phone is a bit like giving them a glass of water." ("Couple Hooked on Madonna," Reuters, Yahoo News, 7-15-02)

That's one reason to come to church! But sadly, there are millions of people not coming to church for any

reason. The Christian faith in America has been on the decline for decades. This is not surprising given that fewer Americans today than five years ago believe in God. The Gallup Organization has documented steeper drops in church attendance, church membership, and confidence in organized religion. This suggests that the practice of religious faith may be changing more than basic faith in God. (Jeffrey Jones, "Belief in God in U.S. Dips to 81%, a New Low," Gallup.com, 6-17-22)

We as a local church have felt and seen the decline firsthand. So much so that we, as a church, are forced to make some critical decisions about the future of Faith UCC. We held our Annual Meeting on January 29 during which we presented the options. We will be having a follow-up meeting to finalize our decision on a day and time to be announced later. I hope that you will be in prayer for our church as we face the challenges of being a local church in 2023.

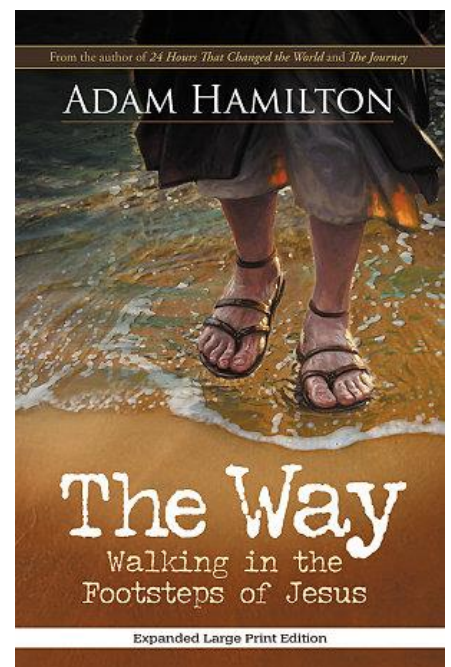
Todd

UP-COMING LENTEN STUDY- THIS MARCH

We will have 2 small groups for the Lenten Study this year. The groups will meet on Wednesday's from March 1 through March 29. Our first group will meet in the afternoon at the church at 1:00 pm. Then we will also have an evening group that meets at the church at 7:00 pm on the same dates.

We will be using "The Way" by Adam Hamilton.

Please sign-up so we can get an idea of how many will be attending. Books are available online for purchase.



CHURCH HAPPENINGS

Spirits and Spirituality - will meet at 6:00pm, on Wednesday, February 8. It will be a potluck meal and discussion at the home of Pete and Janis Groth: 711 Planter's Manor Way in Bradenton, not far from Beef O'Brady's. All are welcome. Please bring a dish to share. We plan to continue sharing our spirits and spirituality. The March meeting will be held at Beef O'Brady's.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Our book discussion group will meet again on February 28 to discuss the novel *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger. This novel is set in the summer of 1961 in a small Minnesota town where death (in various forms) is seen through the eyes of a thirteen-year-old boy. Nostalgia, tragedy, and suspense dominate the story and will give us many issues to discuss. It's a book club favorite. The book is available in libraries in our area and through Amazon, new and used. There is a sign up for this group at church in the Narthex.

Lenten Season Preview:

Feb 21	Shrove Tues
Feb 22	Ash Wed
April 6-	Maundy Thursday (service)
April 2-	Palm Sunday
April 7-	Good Friday
April 9-	Easter Sunday



FAITH PRESCHOOL

Wendi Steinbach-McKeithen, Director

A note from Faith Preschool...

On Thursday, February 9th from 8:45 – 9:15 AM we will have our "Donuts with Dad" event. The children are looking forward to having their dad's and/or grandpa's join them on the playground to have donuts, orange juice and/or coffee together.

We have started registration for the 2023-2024 preschool year. If you know of anyone looking for a quality, part time program for their 3 – 5 year old, please have them call me at (941)746-7895 or email me at faithpreschool1@verizon.net for more information.

Have a Happy Valentine's Day!

Wendi McKeithen
Faith Preschool Director



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS for FEBRUARY

FEB 5, 2023

Scripture: Janis Groth

FEB 12, 2023

Scripture: ?

FEB 19, 2023

Scripture: ?

FEB 26, 2023

Scripture: Joan Sheehan

If you would like to read scripture, please let us know! You can sign up by emailing: faithchurchucc@verizon.net

Financial Snapshot

2023-PER CAPITA

Per Capita is \$15 per person donation for members which is sent to support the National and State Conference. It is a new year and we are committed to 100% paid membership. Thank you for your prompt attention to this conference responsibility.

**FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 16, 2023**

Present:

Donna Blakey, Barbara Brownell, Sharon Cohoon, Dorothy Gallo, Janis Groth, Sylvia Hull, Matt Lepinski, Todd Weber, PJ Widerman

Absent:

Sheryl Overheidt-Smith, Faith Quici

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:25 PM

Opening Prayer:

Todd Weber gave the opening prayer.

PJ Widerman opened the meeting explaining that a TV production company had been filming a documentary on a local young man whose life was changed by an accident. He was able to turn his life around by coming back to religion. She informed the council that the production company paid an amount of \$1,500 for use of the sanctuary.

REVIEW OF CALENDARS:

Janis Groth stated that the Book Study is on Tuesday, January 24, the only date for January. In February Donna Blakey stated that the Faith Care/Prayer meeting will be on Monday February 13th. Janis Groth reported that the February book study will be Tuesday, February 14th. It will possibly be held during the day. Barbara Brownell reported that in March the mission, "One Great Hour of Sharing" will be discussed on Sunday March 12th, with collection on both March 19th and 26th. Todd Weber discussed possibly having a Lent Study on "The Way" by Adam Hamilton every Wednesday during March. It will be either during the day or at 6:30 pm.

Approval of December minutes: A motion was made by Dorothy Gallo and seconded by Sharon Cohoon to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

Approval of financial report: A discussion was held and Dorothy Gallo reported that through December the church was in red by \$43,000. A motion to approve the report was made by Donna Blakey and seconded by Matt Lepinski.

Priority Business: Todd Weber gave a presentation on the life cycle of the church. Attendance was up through 2019 and then took a major downturn during Covid. A discussion was held on why people are leaving. Even though income may have risen, expenses were skyrocketing.

It was stated that 25 % of UCC congregations are either merging or closing. There is also a shortage of available pastors for UCC churches nationwide.

What are the options for the next step for Faith UCC. If willing to hire a full-time pastor, the church usually pays the moving expense of approximately \$10K. The average length of time from posting for a new pastor to when a pastor is hired is 8 months.

Another option is to either go with a part time pastor, merge with another church or close.

Property:

Fire / Sprinkler inspection. Various issues were found during an inspection and need to be corrected in order for the preschool to continue operating. The cost is \$3,500 and needs to be paid. Due to financial issues, maintenance of the property has been deferred.

Presentation for January 29th Annual Meeting PJ Widerman asked if we want to continue the same way. Dorothy Gallo prepared a proposed budget with a full-time pastor and a secretary for 20 hours a week. If the church went in this direction, then the budget would be in the hole for \$46 K. In addition, there is no one willing to step up to hold the following positions: Moderator, Deputy Moderator and event/fellowship coordinator. More people need to step up into leadership roles. The congregation needs to be aware of how drained the leadership is. Barbara Brownell suggested that the council give the congregation all of the facts and what the council recommends the church do going forward. Several options are have either a full time or part time pastor, merge with another church or close the church.

On January 29th during the meeting Todd should open with a prayer, have a 15-minute service, the start the congregational meeting then explain that 2022 was been a difficult financial year. Dorothy Gallo should then present two different budgets, one for a full-time pastor and a secretary for 20 hours or a part time pastor with the secretary for 20 hours. The slate of officers will then be presented. Give the congregation perhaps 3 weeks to think about the facts and then have another congregational meeting. Ask the congregation what they recommend. The next congregational meeting will be on February 19th.

Old Business

Barbara Brownell made a motion to move \$190 from the sabbatical fund to the staff Christmas gratuity 2022 fund. It was seconded by Janis Groth. Motion carried.

Continued from page 3...

Barbara Brownell made a motion under Missions that CD fund #331 in the amount of \$5,231.59 be allowed to mature . Sylvia Hull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PJ Widerman made a motion that the amount of \$1,500, received for the documentary filmed in the church, to be used for the property and bringing the fire system into compliance. Sharon Cohoon seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PJ reported that Wednesday, January 18th is Todd Weber's birthday. She presented him with a cookie.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm

Closing prayer was given by Sylvia Hull.

Submitted by Sharon Cohoon,
Council Secretary

KIWANIS FOOD PACKING EVENT

Bradenton Kiwanis' next packaging event is being held on **Saturday, February 18, 2023** at Kendrick Auditorium, 1303 17th St W., Palmetto at **8:00 a.m.** The plan is to package 50,000 meals!!

All the food packed stays in Manatee County and is dispersed by organizations such as Our Daily Bread, Feeding Empty Little Tummies and local church food pantries.

If you have never attended a Kids Against Hunger event you will be amazed at how much fun it is as well as a rewarding way to help those in need in our community. You are encouraged to bring a friend or family member! This Kiwanis is one of our Mission Grant recipient organizations.

Please feel free to contact Babs Brownell or Bruce Covey if you think you might want to attend and help them pack these meals!
(They play good music and we sing while we work!)

SAM (Social Action and Missions):

February is: Peanut Butter

Our local food pantries are critically low on food, and we still want to be a help in any way.



PICK UP

1. We will be happy to come to your home and pick up your items! (call Babs at 747-9643).

DROP OFF

2. You can deliver to church during office hours. (Call Faith for info on those hours (941-746-8890)

SHIPPED

3. You can purchase groceries online and have them delivered right to the food bank address. Call Meals on Wheels for more info at: 941-747-4655

MONETARY DONATIONS

4. You can send contributions directly to Meals On Wheels at 811 23rd Avenue East, Bradenton 34208. And through this link:

Meals on Wheels PLUS OF MANATEE **THE FOOD BANK OF MANATEE**

CRITICALLY NEEDED ITEMS

<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED VEGETABLES	<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED MEAT
<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED FRUITS	<input type="checkbox"/> 100% FRUIT JUICES
<input type="checkbox"/> MAC 'N' CHEESE	<input type="checkbox"/> BREAKFAST BARS
<input type="checkbox"/> PEANUT BUTTER	<input type="checkbox"/> OATMEAL
<input type="checkbox"/> JELLY	<input type="checkbox"/> POWDERED MILK
<input type="checkbox"/> BOXED RICE	<input type="checkbox"/> APPLESAUCE
<input type="checkbox"/> BOXED PASTA	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIED BEANS
<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED SOUPS	<input type="checkbox"/> TRAIL MIX

Donations can be dropped off or shipped directly to:
Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee
811 23rd Avenue East, Bradenton, FL 34208

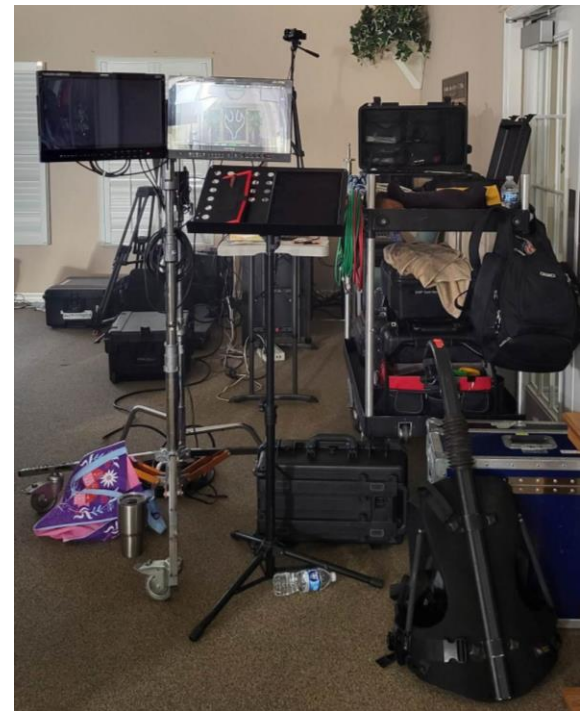
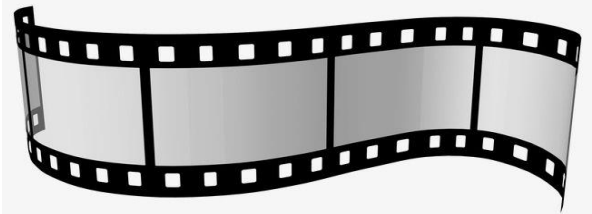
<https://securepayment.link/mealsonwheels-plus/one-time-donation/>



Lights, Camera, Action!

The week after Christmas, I came to the office on an off day to catch up at Faith Church. As soon as I sat down in my office, the phone rang. I answered the call. That simple act led to an amazing experience. It was a film production crew from California on the other side of the line who saw a picture of our church online and thought it would work perfect for an inspirational movie they were filming in Florida.

On Monday, January 16, the film crew came to Faith Church and recorded a few scenes in the Sanctuary for their movie. One day we shall watch this movie and see our church being memorialized on the silver screen. God had all this perfectly timed out and we just walked out the steps. Nothing is a coincidence when it comes to God.
~ Faith



FEBRUARY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
BAC= Bradenton Apostolic Church			1 7pm BAC service	2 "Donuts with Dad" Preschool AM 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	3 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	4 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
5 10:30am Service Communion 2:30pm BAC	6	7	8 Spirits and Spirituality 6pm –Potluck at Groth's 7pm BAC service	9 HOA Inlets 6pm-9pm 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	10 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	11 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room BAC- deep cleaning
12 10:30am Service 2:30pm BAC	13 Faith Care/Prayer team meeting	14 HOA San Casciano 7pm Valentine's Day	15 7pm BAC service	16 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	17 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	18 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
19 10:30am Service 2:30pm BAC	20 No School – President's Day 6:30pm Council Meeting	21 Shrove Tues	22 Ash Wed 7pm BAC service	23 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	24 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC Follower Articles Due!	25 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
26 10:30am Service 2:30pm BAC	27	28 7pm New Book Study Discussion Group HOA San Lorezno 6pm	HAPPY BIRTHDAY			

February is:

[click here](#)

To be taken to the "Stories Page" of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in DC

