ASH Wednesday

Ash Wednesday, February 18th, is the beginning of Lent when we ready ourselves for Easter. At 5:30 p.m., we will have our Pancake Supper in Fellowship Hall. The cost is $5 for children, $7 per adult, and $20 maximum per family. Reservations for dinner are requested so that the cooks know how much food to prepare. They may be made on Sunday mornings in the Courtyard, on the church website under Upcoming Events, or by calling the church office (276-6338).

Then join us at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary for our Ash Wednesday Worship Service. We will read scripture, raise our voices in song, and consider the gift of God’s grace.

You do not have to attend the dinner to attend the worship service and no reservations are required to worship.

Connecting with Our Children

by Grace Hood, Director of Children and Family Ministry

Have you heard? Every Sunday in the prayer at the end of the Time with the Children, we pray, “Thank you for loving me”. God’s love is so important to each of us. Would you like to share your love of God with the children of this church? There are many opportunities coming up in the next months to share God’s blessing with our children. Please consider sharing your time and talents. You may contact Grace Hood at gracehood@firstdelray.com. Specific opportunities will be posted each month.
“They are people who lack all sense of right and wrong.”

Ephesians 4:19 (Common English Bible)

Imagine that most unfortunate condition! To be incapable of discerning what is right from what is wrong. It is a moral condition; a result when the capital of noble awareness and aspirations begins to shrink and a person is brought into a state of spiritual bankruptcy. The ability to distinguish between right and wrong is less mental discernment than it is a moral sense. It is the spiritual palate which tests and discriminates the moral qualities of thoughts and actions. Indeed, Job, from the pages of the Old Testament, used this very figure of speech when he asked, “Can my mouth not recognize disaster?” (Job 6:30 CEB) Job knew wrong by its taste. He detected and found it distasteful, as the physical palate detects and rejects food that has spoiled.

A fine palate can lose its power of discernment. Particularly when the body is ill, the power of taste is often diminished or lost altogether. Certain medications used to treat physical symptoms can also result in the loss of taste. The person finds that all foods taste similar or there is no taste at all. Such people find they are incompetent to appreciate the delicate flavors once enjoyed of excellent cuisine. So let that same person neglect their spiritual condition and there is a similar result of the moral palate. Good and bad, right and wrong become mingled into a common insensitivity.

Attention to God is the oxygen of a vital, life-giving faith. Neglect the spiritual palate and the soul becomes drowsy. Then it becomes numb. After some time any feeling of God is suffocated. Unable to distinguish one value from another, such people are driven by impulse. The dangerous result is that people turn themselves over to doing whatever feels good and to practicing every sort of corruption along with greed. Sin does it. Prayerlessness does it. Neglecting to regularly read God’s Word and to meditate on it does it. God eventually seems absent.

The glory of our Savior is that he has defeated death – the physical kind. Placed in a tomb for three days, Jesus rose again and drew fresh breath into his lungs. Similarly, Jesus can fill our spiritual lungs with new breath and vitalize our spiritual nature. Jesus can restore a faith that has withered from neglect and restore sensitivity to our spiritual palate. A person who has lost all moral discernment can – by turning again to God – recover all sense of right and wrong and know the pulse, and taste, of life as God intends.

Reprinted from Dr. Hood’s January 16, 2015 blog posting. ✤
“The expression ‘spiritual exercises’ embraces every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activity that will be mentioned later. For just as strolling, walking and running are bodily exercises, so spiritual exercises are methods for preparing and disposing the soul to free itself of all inordinate attachments, and after accomplishing this, of seeking and discovering the divine will regarding the disposition of one’s life, thus insuring the salvation of one’s soul.”

(St. Ignatius Loyola)

A Basic Approach to Spiritual Growth

**Formative Practices**
- Worship Regularly
- Pray Daily
- Learn & Apply God’s Word
- Participate in a Ministry
- Give Financially

**Time in Solitude with God**
Identify a regular time each day to be alone with God for a minimum of twenty minutes reading the Bible and prayer. Also helpful is the use of a devotional guide such as Dr. Hood’s *Heart & Soul* available from the church.

**Time in Community with Others**
One hour each week, spend time with one or more people reading the Bible and discussing the application to life today. Also share how your faith is growing or faith challenges you are facing. This may be done with a spouse, children, or friends. Make it enjoyable with a beverage and snacks.

**Time Sharing Your Faith with Another**
Our faith expands richly by sharing with another person how we are personally experiencing God or what we are discovering by our personal reading of the Bible. Be intentional and do this once or twice each year with different people like colleagues at work or friends in social circles.

© W. Douglas Hood, Jr.
Deacons’ Corner
by Mary Martinéz

The Deacons Want Your “Talent” ... But That’s Not All!

“A great evening of fellowship for a great cause, the youth of our church and the Deacons’ Scholarship Fund”

The Deacons are gearing up for their upcoming Scholarship fundraiser and YOU are key to its success. There is a role for everyone in the congregation to play in making the “No Talent/Talent Show and Dinner” – along with its Silent Auction, a success. Here’s how!

First, we hope you have already marked your calendars for March 6, 2015. The event will begin with appetizers and a chance to view and bid on the silent auction items at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. and the talent show kicking off at 7:30 p.m. The Deacons will be serving rotisserie chicken, roasted potatoes, green salad, a vegetable, cranberry sauce, and dessert. The price of the dinner is $12 per person or $25 for a family of three or more.

Second, the talent show is looking for performers. Remember, you don’t have to be a “Superstar” to take the stage -- although rumor has it that we can expect appearances by Johnny and June Cash, The Supremes, The Jersey Boys, and several pianists of note. Contact Kate Pemberton 276-7862 or delraynative@yahoo.com or Cindy Pemberton 374-8707 or TP2486@aol.com if you would like to be added to the list of performers.

Third, we need your donations for the Silent Auction. Auction items can include anything you are willing to donate that you acquire from a vendor as a donation, paid for yourself and are willing to give away, or items you have made. This could include tickets to concerts or other events, restaurant gift certificates, paintings, woodturning items, gift baskets, etc. If you want to approach a vendor for a donated item, a letter certifying the fund-raising is available from Paula Hare, 276-6338, ext. 23. Contact Bill Fisher 901-8194 or bill@unitedsocceracademy.org or Ellen Tuggle 588-8982 or eit33462@lycos.com for more information about donations. All items are due in the church Office by Tuesday, February 17th.

We hope everyone will join us for this wonderful evening: The dinner will be great, there will certainly be something in the Silent Auction offerings that will grab your interest and be worth a bid, and then, there’s the entertainment!

Don’t miss the chance to make your contribution, whatever it may be, to this terrific First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach event and assist the Deacons in their mission of caring for our church community.

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GOT TALENT

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The Spirit of Christmas Rolls On

by Jeanne Heavilin, Co-Chair, Mission Outreach Committee

By the time you read this, Mrs. H will be driving her son, who has hydrocephalus among other health issues, to his doctors’ appointments and can continue to seek employment. Shira will no longer spend four hours a day on a bus travelling to her job and back home. The Gumbs will find it easier to get back on their feet after a fire destroyed their home and the mother who, with her young son, has been housed at Casa Vegso Transitional Housing will have a better chance of finding a job and a permanent home.

Because you gave so generously to our Christmas Eve Offering, Wheels from the Heart has been able to provide reliable cars to these four families, identified by local community agencies that we assist, as well as to other families who desperately need transportation to go to work, take their children to day care or school, go grocery shopping and make it to medical appointments.

In the next few months, we will let you know what a reliable car means to each of these families and what has changed in their lives as a result of having reliable transportation.

Thank you so much for your generous support of Wheels from the Heart and the families it serves.

Blood Drive

by Jim Good

You have a great opportunity to support your local community and save a life. We are having a blood drive on Sunday February 22nd from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Why be a blood donor? Every 2 seconds someone receives a blood donation. 60% of Americans are eligible to donate yet only 5% do.

What do you receive? You will receive a mini physical that includes a blood pressure check and blood analysis based on twelve tests including hepatitis B and C, iron level and cholesterol. But best of all, you will know you have saved a life. To get started, call Jim Good at 733-4256 or email him at jim.good111@gmail.com to set up an appointment time.

Share your power and start saving lives today!
Since its release in 1939, Victor Fleming’s The Wizard of Oz has established itself as one of the most important fantasy films in history. Its songs have become popular standards, its characters are beloved by generations of parents and children, and its imagery has led to countless parodies and imitations. Frequently it seems that the actual story, based on L. Frank Baum’s 1900 novel The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), gets lost in a sea of pop culture paraphernalia. It was heralded as being one of the first identifiably American fairy tales, not just because of its American setting, but also because of its inclusion of farming and industrialization motifs. Indeed, two of young Dorothy’s companions on her quest to the Emerald City represent these themes, being, respectively, a Scarecrow and a Tin Man. The story itself seems to take bits and pieces from other narrative tropes common to fantasy stories and fairy tales: Dorothy is a stranger in a strange land who must find her way Home (Hansel and Gretel); she encounters a series of bizarre challenges and characters (The Odyssey); and she is alternatively helped and harmed by witches (Rapunzel). If taken one step further, Dorothy’s journey to the Emerald City in order to receive a boon from some mystical force can be interpreted as a modern parallel to the Arthurian legends concerning the search for the Holy Grail.

It is this very ease of interpreting the film that has in great part made it such an enduring touchstone of the American cultural identity. Over the decades many theories have been promulgated as to what the film truly means: it is a Populist political parable; it is a feminist allegory; it is an examination of Jungian psychoanalytic theories. The list goes on and on. But some of the most compelling interpretations are religious ones. I have read studies and sermons inspired by The Wizard of Oz and very few seem to agree on just what represents what in Baum’s beloved stories. Maybe the Yellow Brick Road is the path to enlightenment and the Emerald City heaven? But, by extension, that would indicate that God is the Wizard; a cowardly con-artist who savagely manipulates people to hide his lack of power. Maybe the Wicked Witch of the West is Satan; a malevolent force dedicated to corrupting and destroying God’s children (read: Dorothy)? But again the metaphor breaks apart because it suggests that mankind can defeat Satan on their own, much like Dorothy drenching the Witch in water, without the aid of God or an external spiritual authority. If Dorothy’s trip to the Emerald City is indeed representative of life itself, then that suggests that the purpose of life is meaningless since the inhabitants of the Emerald City are incapable of helping Dorothy get home.

Investigating the personal beliefs of Baum serves only to further complicate any possible religious interpretations of his work. Though he was affiliated throughout his life with various Christian churches and denominations, the vast majority of his literary output (including his books based in Oz) were written after he and his wife joined the Theosophical Society in 1892, an organization devoted to esoteric investigations into the nature of the universe and the study of comparative world religions and philosophies. The Theosophists believed that there was some truth in all world religions and that it was up to mankind to investigate and discover what was and what was not ultimately true. Furthermore, looking for explicitly religious symbolism in the Oz books is a largely fruitless task. Churches are mentioned only once in his Oz books: when the Cowardly Lion accidentally breaks one made of porcelain with his tail while traveling contiued on page 9
Welcome to Our Membership . . .

Henry and Christina Berry
Dale Bruhn
Neil and Megan Buck
Lori Chaffin
Paul and Fatima Charlton
Melvin Croucher and Cheri Davis
Nancy Fine

Caitlin Hodge
Edward Lewis
Barbara Milazzo
Jasmine Otero
Paul and Janice Rennie
Carline Stewart
Carol Swift

Celebration of Eternal Life . . .
Our Deepest Sympathies as a congregation is extended to the families of the following members upon the death of their loved ones:

Jim Griffis
December 7, 2014
Heather Berry
December 17, 2014
Gene Gorman
January 2, 2015
Natalie Latimer
January 13, 2015
Bill Beveridge
January 16, 2015

Wonderful Wednesday
by Kathy Smith

Join us each week for Wonderful Wednesday. At 5:30 p.m., there is a time to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Dinner is served from 5:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. There is a time of music and prayer. The program runs from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. with different speakers and topics each week.

The cost for dinner is $7 for adults, $5 for children, and $20 maximum per family. Reservations are requested for the dinner each week so that the cooks know how much food to prepare. You may make your reservations on our website www.firstdelray.com under Upcoming Events, call the church office (276-6338), or sign up in the Courtyard following the worship services on Sunday mornings. You will need to make your reservation each week.

Come join us during February for delicious dinners, delightful conversation, and dynamic programs. Menus, locations, and program details can be found in the weekly bulletin or on the church website.

February 4th - Meet in the lobby of the Crest Theatre at the Delray Center for the Arts (Atlantic and Swinton) at 4:30 p.m. Following the tour of the campus, we will meet back at the church for dinner at 5:30 p.m.
February 11th – “Evolutionary biology” – Mr. Johnathan Waage
February 18th – Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper and Worship Service
February 25th – Delray Beach Police Chief – Mr. Jeffery Goldman
My name is Grace Cameron Hood. The Session has hired me to be the Director of Children and Family Ministries on a part-time basis. Let me introduce myself to you. After receiving a BA in Christian Education from Belhaven College in Jackson, MS, I have worked in the Presbyterian Church in Christian Education and Children Ministries in South Charleston, WV; Irving, Texas; and also in Doylestown, PA. I studied at Columbia Theological Seminary working on a Master’s of Theological Studies. I met Doug in Hebrew class!

Over the years I have done a variety of jobs such as the Director of a Preschool, a Mission Educator at the Beth-El Ministries in Wimauma, FL and I worked in the public school system in Plumstead, PA. My background includes time spent as a missionary in Congo and Brazil with the Presbyterian Church. This has led to me to have a different view on the world. We live in a small community that reaches all around the world. Everywhere I have lived I have seen how important the children of our faith family are.

I want to spend time with you as parents to discover what First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach can do to strengthen your family in Christ and to bring all of our children to a greater understanding of a loving God. I hope that we can work together to build on what God is doing here by making this a wonderful place for families and children.

I look forward to seeing you on Sundays and invite your children to come to Sunday School after the Time with the Children during the services. Bible Bunch Sunday School for children (3 years - Grade 1) meets during both services. Bible Explorer Sunday School for children in (Grade 2 – Grade 5) meets during the 11 a.m. service. Please feel free to contact me at gracehood@firstdelray.com. I will be in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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**Meet Our New Director of Children and Family Ministries**

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**FILL A BAG, FEED A FAMILY**

February is one of two months a year that our church family collects food for those in our community who don’t have enough to eat. We are asking once again for your help in meeting the very real, very basic needs of those who are the hungriest in our larger community. You can do this by picking up a simple brown bag with a “shopping list” stapled to it in the Courtyard following the Sunday worship service. You may choose to “shop for” the listed items, however any canned products or boxes of non-perishable, unopened provides you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

Food may be left in the Narthex during the week or on Sunday mornings throughout the month of February. Not a shopper? Donations are also appreciated, with your check made payable to “CROS Ministries” and placed in the collection plate on Sunday mornings throughout the month.

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**50+ Wedding Celebration** – A half century of marriage or more deserves a celebration. Relationships that have stood the test of time are a major acclamation.

Sunday, March 8th, immediately following the 11 a.m. worship service, we are hosting a 50+ Wedding Anniversary Luncheon Celebration for those couples in our church family who have been married for over half a century. Sorry, only the young-at-heart brides and grooms are invited to this celebration.

The problem is that we aren’t sure who you are. Will you help us by contacting the church office (276-6338) and making your reservations for this luncheon in your honor? And, most importantly, we want to know how many years you have been married.
Church Improvement

by Charlotte Himmel

It seems as though we just ended the Holly Days Bazaar and we are already in full swing for our Step-Above-Rummage Sale. The ladies have been very busy sorting, cleaning, and pricing the items so graciously donated by our church members. Donations started arriving on January 20th and we are excited to see what comes in each day. Remember that you can drop off your good, clean clothes, in all sizes, linens, shoes, bedding, drapes, and small working appliances and electronics Mondays through Saturdays through February 7th from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

We appreciate the help of Aaron Strippel, Miles Knapp, and all the other men of the church who are invaluable with our set-up and take-down each year.

The sale will be open to the public on Thursday, February 12th, Friday, February 13th, and Saturday, February 14th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The presale for staff, church members and regular worship attendees will be on Wednesday, February 11th from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

We look forward to seeing everyone busily picking up bargains and hoping for a successful event benefiting First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach’s Church Improvement Fund.

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WORTH WATCHING (continued)

through Dainty China Country in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900).

But there is one element of the story of The Wizard of Oz that I personally feel escapes many religious commentators. At the end, after the Wizard’s attempt to send her back to Kansas has failed, Glenda the Good Witch appears and tells a grief-stricken Dorothy that she has had the power to return home by herself the whole time. The Scarecrow, not unreasonably, demands to know why she didn’t tell Dorothy that when she first arrived in Oz. Glenda responds, “Because she wouldn’t have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.” Too often, as Christians, we forget that faith in Christ is a journey, not a destination. And as we continue down that road, we discover that we are reaching our true potential as children of God. It is only after we have been perfected in Christ - a perfection that is completed by God’s power, not our own - that we can look within ourselves and realize who we are and what we are capable of. It is only then that we can truly go Home again.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL DINNER

Friday
January 15, 2016
Feature Speaker
Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor

More Details to Follow
Our Pathway of Ministry & Mission

This is our ministry of connecting people with Jesus Christ and the church. Jesus’ priority for the church is to share the Christian faith in such a way that people place their trust in Jesus and participate with Jesus in His ongoing work through the local church.

We were never intended to remain the same. Through this ministry, we engage people in intentional processes for growing in the character of Jesus.

Implanted deep within the nature of men and women is the hunger to serve others. Through this ministry, we engage people in a process that helps them discover, develop and deploy their God given gifts for service to Jesus in the local church and community.

One of the distinctive teachings of the Christian faith is that we are called to live in community. In community, we support, encourage, hold accountable and care for one another so that no one has to make the journey of life alone.