



“Everything Blue”

Per Capita

*(about that blue envelope in your box
of weekly offering envelopes)*

In case you are wondering what the blue envelope near the beginning of your 2015 offering envelope box is for, you are not the only one. “Per Capita” is the assessment each congregation pays for each church member recorded on their membership rolls. It is assessed by our denomination (Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) to cover the required administrative expenses to operate the Presbytery, Synod and General

Assembly offices of each judicatory. These expenses are rounded out to \$35 per member for 2015.



Since the Per Capita is included in calculating our operating budget, not everyone contributes extra to this source. Others prefer to do so in order to help ease a little of the financial burden that this places upon the church budget. A little extra giving does make a difference when our congregation’s total Per Capita assessment is \$22,875. Thank you to those who choose to help. ❖

Parking Sticker

(about the blue church parking sticker)

Members of First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach are entitled to display a blue church parking sticker. This is mounted on the inside of the front or back window of the car, wherever it is easiest to reach.

Everyone attending worship is allowed to park in the church parking lots on Sunday mornings. A parking sticker is not required for Sunday morning worship attendance.

However, if you attend an event, program, rehearsal, or meeting at the church at any other time during the week, this sticker is a signal that your car belongs on the church lot. Our east parking lot located to the east of Fellowship Hall and the Christian Education Building is leased to a valet company. This blue sticker is a visual clue to them that you are a member of the church and entitled to park in the lot.

Other than on Sunday mornings and special events, the parking lot on the west side of Gleason Street, directly across from the front of the Sanctuary, is leased to the City of Delray Beach. The blue parking sticker is not a substitute for paying for metered parking and you will receive a ticket from the city. The visual reminder that this parking lot is allocated for church activities is the large Church Parking Sign and the covered parking meters.

If you are a member of the church and are in need of a new parking sticker, see Nancy Fine on a Sunday morning or stop by the church office during the week. ❖

INSIDE . . .

Annual
Meeting Page 9

Annual Congregational
Dinner Page 7



From My Heart to Yours

by **Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.**
Senior Pastor



On the Road

“Commit your way to the Lord!”

Psalm 37:5 (Common English Bible)

Perhaps there is no more familiar image in the Bible than the image of the road. We encounter it everywhere. From end to end in the Bible our life is compared to a journey – a journey that is rarely direct or easy. Along any journey circumstances change often requiring a change in how we move toward our destination.

The people of Israel leave their captivity in Egypt and travel toward their own land. But God is concerned that difficulties along the journey will result in the people becoming fearful and turning back, so God leads the people not by the shorter route but in a roundabout way of the Reed Sea desert (Exodus 13:17, 18).

After the magi have honored the new born baby, Jesus, they return to their own country “by another route” having been warned in a dream (Matthew 2:12).

Saul, on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians who are living there, encounters Christ and not only experiences a conversion to the Christian faith but his name is changed to Paul (Acts 9).

Means of travel along the road is different today than in biblical days but what remains the same is the unexpected. Illnesses, loss of a spouse or close friend, career change or any number of unplanned circumstances position themselves along the journey, each demanding a change of course. Life is filled with complexity and progress becomes slow. We are not surprised that Israel might have become discouraged on the road to God’s Promised Land. Obstacles along the way can do that.

But pay attention to the “road stories” in the Bible. They are instructive as we begin a new year. Though the pace and direction of these biblical journeys often had to be adjusted according to each unique circumstance, God always remained on the road with God’s people. Those who trust in the Lord never travel alone. The ability to adjust to changing circumstances and obstacles is vital to moving forward successfully. But it is committing our way to the Lord and trusting in God that holds us steady until we have arrived at our destination.

Adapted from Dr. Hood’s December 5, 2014 blog posting. ❖

Church Staff

W. Douglas Hood, Jr., D.Min.
Senior Pastor
Vice-Moderator – Presbytery of Tropical Florida

Jessi Higginbotham, M.Div.
Associate Pastor

Jo Garnett, M.C.E.
Associate for Pastoral Care
Minister to Children and Families

Donald J. Cannarozzi, M.M., J.D.
Organist / Director of Music

James K. Poch, S.M.M.
Associate Director of Music

Nancy Fine, CA
Office Manager

Christine Davis
Accountant

Paula Hare
Secretary

Aaron Strippel
Head Custodian

Rita Avery
Custodian

First Presbyterian Church
33 Gleason Street
Delray Beach, FL 33483
phone: 561-276-6338
fax: 561-272-8505
e-mail:
administrator@firstdelray.com
web page: www.firstdelray.com

The Spire

EDITOR:
Tim Knapp

LAYOUT:
Char Conklin

PROOFREADER:
Barbara Vanderkay

SPECIAL THANKS:
Printers Choice

If you or a family member are hospitalized, please notify the church office. Even if you give the name of the church upon admission, the hospital will NOT notify us.

DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

by Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.
Senior Pastor

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is one of the most spectacular artistic masterpieces in human history. Painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512, the ceiling depicts scenes from the book of Genesis, including the Creation of Adam, the most well-known. This scene portrays the God of creation and giver of life reaching out to touch the finger of Adam. Considered by many to be one of the world's greatest artistic treasures, this great work has experienced inevitable deterioration over time.

Several restoration efforts have dotted the centuries since Michelangelo completed these nine ceiling frescoes. The most recent restoration took place between 1980 and 1994. Ceiling cracks, structural and water damage, the buildup of smoke and waxy residue from burning candles, automotive exhaust from once-opened windows at the top of the structure, and the effects from

thousands of annual visitors increasingly compromised the frescoes' unsustainable beauty.

Scripture teaches that each one of us was created in the image of God. We are God's masterpieces! After creating the heavens and the earth and everything on the earth, God preserved God's greatest work for last – God created man and woman. Yet, as the centuries have resulted in the deterioration of Michelangelo's great work, sin has resulted in our own disfigurement. Christ's call, in His day and today, is to participate in God's great work of restoration for each of us. It is a shared effort – what we do and what God does in the work of the Holy Spirit. Printed below is a pathway for our own participation in God's great work of restoration of God's masterpiece – each one of us.



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

Report on December's Deacons' Christmas Tree Project

First, the Deacons would like to thank all who contributed to our Christmas Tree project in December. According to Jen Buce, Linda Whitaker and the church staff who know the history of this event, 2014's participation of the tags was the best ever! In past years, there have been a considerable number of gift requests that were not picked up by congregants. This meant that the Deacons had to do the shopping, sometimes taking funds from their other resources to cover these so as not to leave children at the agencies without gifts. But 2014 was a wonderful outpouring of Christian giving. We are grateful to be able to make a difference in the lives of so many children.

Importantly, all of your donations that come in related to the Christmas Tree project are spent on helping those in our community, including those in our congregation, to have a happier, more comfortable holiday. In the past, when there have been funds left over after all gift requests are met, the Deacons have assisted with other special needs at the agencies or provided relief for one or more families in our congregation who were experiencing financial difficulties

In the Spirit of Giving . . .

at that time of year. The additional monies from 2014 have been divided equally among the recipient agencies.

Where do the Deacons get their budget to carry out our mission of caring for those in our congregation and beyond?

While we are on the subject of donations and funding, I thought it might be a good time to share some information about how the Deacons finance their work. The Deacons' efforts are not funded through the church's operating budget. Rather, we are solely dependent on what is received in the Deacons' Fund envelopes. (Yes, these four special envelopes do have a purpose, if you have been skipping over them in your envelope box!) We also are dependent on the donations we collect for our special projects, such as the Deacons' Christmas Tree and the Deacons' Scholarship Fund. We also appreciate donations to the Deacons' Fund in memory of or in honor of loved ones.

As we approached the end of 2014, it was noted that the expected contributions via the envelopes were considerably short of the anticipated budget amount. So it seemed like a good time to remind our congregation that we need your support to continue carrying out our mission.



In addition to the provision of college scholarships to deserving youth from our congregation, which is held in a separate fund, monies that are collected via the Deacons' Fund envelopes go to support the:

- **Transient Fund, which is used for assisting non-members who present themselves with immediate needs for sustenance, housing, etc.**
- **Christmas and Easter Cards sent to our "flocks" that remind them we are here to provide help through prayer or service, and that we share with them in the celebration of these special times in our lives as Christians**
- **Deacons' Christmas Tree gift requests that are not covered by your donations**
- **Shut-in Gifts**
- **"Special Distributions", which are short-term/one-time instances of financial assistance to congregational members in difficulty**
- **CPR training to enable Deacons to respond to an emergency**
- **Any supplies we need to carry out our work**
- **Youth Mission Trip**

You'll see a "save the date" note about our next big fund-raising endeavor for the Deacons' Scholarship Fund in this issue of *The Spire*. We know you will respond and help us continue supporting our youth entering college. However, also remember that we need your regular donations to the Deacons' Fund. So please don't overlook those brown and gold envelopes.



TnT (Twenties 'n Thirties)

by Rev. Jessi Higginbotham

Happy New Year! It is with great enthusiasm that I bring in this new year by telling you all about our Twenties and Thirties Group here at First Presbyterian Church. TnT (Twenties 'n Thirties) was started almost four years ago as a parish group for young adults in this congregation. Its purpose is simple: provide a time and space for young adults to gather together, study God's Word and participate in the life of our congregation. This group has members from all walks of life – those who grew up in the church and those who are new to church life.

Professionals, moms, dads, students, and long-time friends all gather twice a month for a book study and dinner together. We travel together, we pray together, we eat and laugh together. The strength of this group lies in our commitment to each other and to Christ's Church.

There is one other important thing about this group you should know; we are friends. We spend holidays and weekends together. We watch football games together. We sit with each other in times of need, pain and hurt. We reach out to each other, we check in on each other, we meet up with a member who is struggling late at night for support and guidance. We listen to each other and, most importantly, we pray for each other.

Young adults are some of the busiest members of our congregation. They are juggling work, family, student loans, a new marriage AND church life. Finding time to commit to a church group is hard for young adults. If you know someone who is in their twenties, thirties, or forties, (we don't ask for a birth certificate!) who could benefit from this kind of group, please let me know and I would be happy to reach out to them. There are also flyers in the Narthex containing information about our group. As we go into this new year, please include our Twenties and Thirties group in your prayers. ❖

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!*





WORTH WATCHING

“EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS”

DIRECTED BY RIDLEY SCOTT

A Movie Review by Nathanael Hood, MA, New York University

To make a great film about faith or the faith stories of any religion, the filmmakers have to approach the material with some form of conviction. It doesn't have to be a religious conviction, per say; but it must be some kind of conviction nevertheless. One of the greatest religious films ever made, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), was directed by an Atheist, Pier Paolo Pasolini. But he was inspired to make the film after reading the Gospels during a trip to Assisi to participate in a dialogue with Catholics at the invitation of Pope John XXIII. Perhaps what drew Pasolini to the story of Jesus was that he saw in His teachings the same radical call for egalitarianism that was so personally dear to him as a Marxist. But regardless of his motivations, his film is as flawless a depiction of a biblical story as exists on celluloid.

Fast-forward to 50 years later and we have another film based on a story from the Bible being made by a director who also identifies as an Atheist. Ridley Scott's *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) tells the story of Moses and the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. This is familiar ground for Hollywood storytellers. Two adaptations entitled *The Ten Commandments* were done by Cecil B. DeMille alone, a man who lacked for anything BUT conviction. And while his films featured triumphant, ground-breaking production values, they both

were left wanting in the storytelling department with the 1923 silent version awkwardly transitioning from biblical epic to modern day melodrama and the much-loved 1956 color version feeling more like a strained string of static *tableaux vivants* than an actual film.

Scott's film demonstrates neither deficiency of DeMille's, being both unified in its narrative and properly cinematic given the source material. And to Scott's credit, he manages to capture the width and breadth of the story without making the film's two-and-a-half-hour runtime seem monotonous or unbearable. The performances (by the shockingly and suspiciously Caucasian actors and actresses) are serviceable, although Joel Edgerton's turn as Ramesses II veers a little too close to unintentional parody, particularly during one early scene where Moses (Christian Bale) walks in on him caressing a giant cobra while longingly staring into the distance like he was Robert Downey, Jr. in *Satan's Alley*. The overabundant use of CGI (computer-generated imagery) is occasionally distracting. Scott and his cinematographer, John Toll, seemed to try and mask the sub-par CGI backgrounds by frequently utilizing shallow depths-of-field, thereby largely blurring them out. But instead of making them seem more realistic, the end result is that the effects look bad and blurred.

But now we get to the main thrust of this review: the need for conviction. And for all of its strengths and flaws, *Exodus: Gods and Kings* is a film with none. As a historical epic/blockbuster,

it is entirely serviceable. But as an adaptation of one of the most important stories from the Bible, it is lacking. One of the most curious aspects of the film is Scott's insistence on providing explanations for God's miracles that, if they are not explicitly scientifically possible, they are at the very least scientifically *plausible*. Moses first encounters the Burning Bush after being severely injured by a rockslide. His encounter with God? A fever dream. His subsequent visions? Schizophrenia. The parting of the Red Sea? A tsunami caused by a meteoric impact.

But my favorite is his handling of the Ten Plagues. Apparently, the Nile is turned to "blood" by the hyperactivity of the native crocodiles disturbing the river's layers of sediment. The tainted water forces the Nile's frogs to flee *en masse*. When the frogs die, the mountains of amphibian corpses lead to an explosion in the maggot, fly, and mosquito population. Which leads to pestilence, which leads to diseased livestock, and so on and so forth. Darren Aronofsky explored scientific explanations for biblical events to a lesser extent in his tragically underrated *Noah* (2014), particularly in one breath-taking sequence where the Seven Days of Creation are depicted as a montage of extreme time-lapses. But whereas Aronofsky's film seemed to be interested in a reconciliation between science and religion, Scott's film seems to be interested in removing the "religious" element completely. So we have a film where Moses isn't a

continued on page 9

Annual Congregational Dinner

by Nancy Fine, Office Manager

Mark your calendars and make your reservations for the second Annual Congregational Dinner on **Sunday, January 11, 2015** at Benvenuto Restaurant in Boynton Beach. Our featured speaker this year will be Dr. Thomas Long, who will be preaching in church that morning as part of our Distinguished Preacher Series.

Last year, the cost of the dinner was underwritten by a generous donation from Benvenuto Restaurant as well as the church. This year, we are raising the price to \$30 per person, and both the Church and Benvenuto are again underwriting a portion of the event. If you would like to contribute additional funds to help offset the costs, we would gladly accept additional donations.

You may make your reservation in the Courtyard following the Sunday morning worship services, on the church website under Upcoming Events, or call the church office. All monies are due to the church office on or before the night of the event. ❖



Social Hour

5:30 p.m.

Sit Down Dinner

6:30 p.m.

Wonderful Wednesday Returns

by Kathy Smith

Join us each week for Wonderful Wednesday, which resumes on January 14th. 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 January 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.

- January 14th** – Dr. Doug Hood, our Senior Pastor
- January 21st** – “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Being a Presbyterian and Were Afraid to Ask”, Dr. Jim Fisher
- January 28th** – Mr. Sandy Simon, author and local historian
- February 4th** – Mr. Joe Gillie, tour of the Delray Arts Center ❖

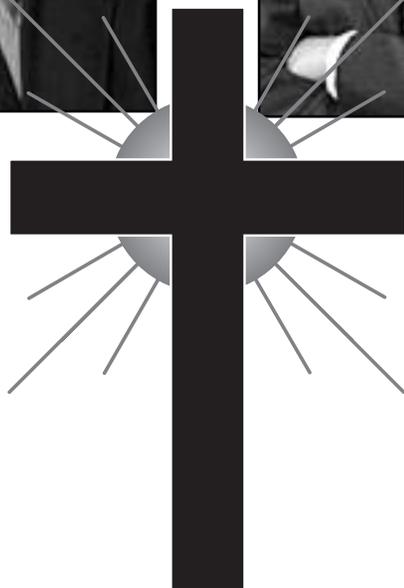
DISTINGUISHED PREACHER SERIES

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Thomas Long and Dr. William Carl, III, have accepted our invitation to preach as part of our Distinguished Preacher Series in January 2015

Dr. Thomas Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching: Coordinator of the Initiative in Religious Practices and Practical Theology at Candler School of Theology will preach on Sunday, January 11, 2015. A distinguished author and preacher, he is a frequent contributor to *The*

Christian Century and the *Journal for Preachers*, and a popular presenter at preaching conferences worldwide.

Dr. William Carl, III, is the President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as well as a professor of homiletics. Prior to coming to the seminary, he served as pastor of the 1,700-member First Presbyterian Church in Dallas. He is the author of eight books and multiple scholarly articles and reviews. Dr. Carl will preach on Sunday, January 25, 2015. ❖



SAVE THE DATE!

Save the date for the First Annual “No Talent/Talent Show and Dinner” including a Silent Auction!

March 6th at 6 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Proceeds will benefit the Deacons’ Scholarship Fund.

Members of the congregation are invited to participate by showing off their talents in this evening of fun, laughter and fellowship!

After the team has some meetings, we will have more information for the February and March issues of the Spire. For more information, contact Ed Jessell at 737-2456 or 317-1318.



NO TALENT/ TALENT SHOW!

Church Improvement

by Barbara Vanderkay

The long awaited Step-Above-Rummage Sale will soon be here, the second full weekend in February. The members' presale day will lead off from 1 p.m. to 3 pm. on Wednesday, the 11th. This is followed by three days for the public from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday the 12th, Friday the 13th and Saturday the 14th.

We request that you bring your donations to Fellowship Hall from 9 a.m. to noon beginning on Tuesday, January 20th and continuing on weekdays and Saturdays through

Monday, February 9th. We are always pleased with the great variety of items brought in. You are all so good about remembering what to bring: good CLEAN clothes and linens, housewares, toys, small appliances, furniture that will fit in your car and costume jewelry (which we will accept ahead of time so we can get it repaired if necessary, organized and priced).

Many people will be needed before, during and after the sale. Please volunteer using the sign-up

sheets that will be available in the weekly bulletins. Please fill one out, remembering to note WHERE you would like to work as well as WHEN. Drop it in the collection plate, leave it in the office or give it to a board member. Donna King will be glad to talk to you about it at 523-6061.

Please give serious thought to working with us. Our church is full of "friends you haven't met yet".



continued from page 6

WORTH WATCHING (continued)

prophet, but a possibly disturbed action-adventure hero. The story of the Hebrew's Exodus isn't one of religious significance, but merely the backdrop for big set-pieces and battle scenes. It's the Bible without the Bible; faith as a symptom, not as an inspiration.

Side note: if you *are* interested in seeing a film based on the story of Moses, check out DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt* (1998). It's a stunningly animated film that manages to perfectly capture the scale, gravitas, and drama of its biblical source material while remaining an all-ages affair fit for family viewing.



Annual Meeting

The Annual
Congregational Meeting
will be held in the Sanctuary
on Sunday, January 25th
immediately following the
11 a.m. worship service.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

For 2015, Communion will be celebrated on the first Sunday of every month. January 4th, February 1st (Deacon Envelope Sunday), March 1st, April 2nd (Maundy Thursday), April 5th, May 3rd, June 7th (Deacon Envelope), July 5th, August 2nd (Deacon Envelope Sunday), September 6th, October 4th (World Communion, Deacon Envelope Sunday), November 1st, and December 6th.



The Community Church by the Sea
33 Gleason Street, Delray Beach, Florida 33483

This newsletter is available online at www.firstdelray.com. If you are interested in receiving an electronic copy of this newsletter, please email Nancy Fine at nancyfine@firstdelray.com

Sunday Morning Worship Service

9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

Please join us on Sunday mornings as we worship the Living God together.

Church School

Adult Sunday Forum 10 a.m.

Sunday School for Children 11 a.m.

Youth Fellowship

Middle School

5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Senior High

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

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.