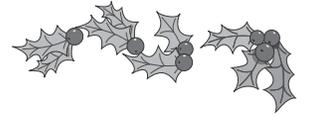




Christmas Eve Offering



by Kari Shipley

This Christmas, the Mission Outreach Committee would like to help a member of our church, Connor Logan. After graduating from St. Andrews High School in May, Connor was in a tragic accident and now suffers from a traumatic brain injury. Upon coming out of a coma, he was transferred to Atlanta's Shepherd Center which specializes in brain injury rehabilitation. After four months there, Connor recently came home and is now being taken care of by his family. Connor will

require extensive rehabilitation for the foreseeable future which is the key to his recovery. The family has run out of insurance to cover occupational and physical therapy this year. Home health care is extremely expensive, so Kevin Logan, his father, has left his job as Athletic Director at Atlantic High School to stay home, feed, bathe, change and work with Connor. Connor requires constant care. To help out, Connor's brother, Ryan, is returning in January from FSU to help. Gina, his mother, is still working as a teacher and is the sole provider to the family now.

We hope you will consider helping this family in need for Christmas through the Christmas Eve Offering. Their only prayer is for their son's recovery. ❖



"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light." (John 1:5 CEB)

COME, CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

Christmas Eve • Monday, December 24th
7 and 9:30 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight Services with Familiar Scripture Readings and favorite Christmas Carols

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From My Heart to Yours

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

Senior Pastor



“So the question might be... with whom are we spending most of our time? If it is among church people, then our vision is focused on them. If it is among the unwashed, non-Christian, pagan gentiles, it is most likely for them.”

Earl Creps from his book,
“Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders”

Earl Creps makes an interesting observation: Many in the church have an “affection” for the idea of mission - for reaching people for Jesus - without ever becoming intentional in cultivating a relationship with persons who don’t know Jesus. Personal vision is often revealed by whom you spend most of your time with.

Some may argue that their service to the church such as participating on a committee or teaching Sunday School discharges their obligation to spend time with people who don’t know Jesus. It doesn’t. Everyone who follows Jesus, including pastors, are to spend time with unchurched people, cultivating a relationship with them for the purposes of permitting them to see Jesus in you.

Perhaps one reason many “look for a way out” of any responsibility to spend time with unchurched people is a misunderstanding of that last sentence. I did not say that you have to preach to them, give them Christian literature or ask for a faith commitment. We don’t have to deliver the whole load. Remember, the Holy Spirit has accepted to do some of the work. All that is asked is that you spend time with them, develop a friendship with them and practice hospitality.

Hospitality – that isn’t so hard, is it? A warm handshake, a welcoming greeting and showing genuine interest in that person become powerful entry points for the Holy Spirit to do its work. There is more, of course. Making mental notes of their interests, birthdays and other important details about their life and responding appropriately. What I am talking about here is developing and maintaining a relationship. And, of course, pray privately for them. Ask God that they will come to know Jesus. (Note that I said pray “for” them privately, not “with” them. We are talking about hospitality here, not scare tactics.)

Something may happen if you do this. That person may ask you about Jesus. Could this be your second reason for not wanting to spend time with non-Christians? Simply tell them about your relationship with Jesus. A large knowledge of the Bible is not required. Articulate pronouncements about the faith not needed. Only a genuine, “I love Jesus and I try to order my life around His teachings.” “This is how my life is different because I follow Jesus.” Now if that last one is difficult for you to respond to then there is a more pressing question, “Are you really a follower of Jesus or simply a member of a church? ❖

Church Staff

W. Douglas Hood, Jr., D.Min.
Senior Pastor

Theodore A. Bush, Ph.D.
Pastor Emeritus

Jo Garnett, M.C.E.
Associate for Senior Ministries

Karlton Brown
Seminary Minister in Residence

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

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

Nancy Fine
Office Manager

Christine Davis Paula Hare
Accountant *Secretary*

Aaron Strippel Rita Avery
Head Custodian *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

Five Minutes for Spiritual Formation

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

Spiritual formation is an ongoing process. It is not a program or course that is completed in a few weeks. Properly understood, spiritual formation is a lifelong journey of transformation into the character of Christ. Additionally, such transformation is for the sake of others, not merely a self-improvement endeavor. As followers of Jesus, we participate intentionally in spiritual formation so that we may be more useful to God for God's ongoing work in the world – what is commonly called *Missio Dei*, the mission of God.

Solitude is the furnace of transformation, that place where our self-deceptions are burned away and we present our true self before God. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. brilliantly refers to this dynamic as “the silence of release” where we face up to our deep inner dynamics that sometimes result in grasping, controlling and manipulation of others. Solitude is more than simply drawing away from others and being alone with God. It is that, of course. More, it is acknowledging

who we are, all pretenses removed, to ourselves and to God. Genuine change always begins with an honest assessment of who we are and how far from Christ's image we have wandered.

Solitude also provides the opportunity to pay close attention to God, where God is at work in our lives and how God seeks to direct our formation in Christ. Properly exercised, solitude is not passive “quiet time.” Solitude requires skill and intentionality. The best resource I know for understanding the place of solitude in spiritual formation, acquiring the skills for meaningful practice and experiencing a richer process for transformation is, “Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence” by Ruth Haley Barton. Without a meaningful understanding and practice of solitude, efforts toward spiritual formation deteriorates into a lifeless script of human activity devoid of God's power.



A Basic Approach to Spiritual Formation & Discipleship



Formative Practices

Formative practices, intentional disciplines or habits, are how we make our home in Christ rather than in the world. They are lifestyle routines that help us keep on track in living into the life and character of Jesus. Five formative practices that are generally considered fundamental are, worship regularly, pray daily, learn and apply God's Word, participate in a ministry and give financially to the work of the church.



Time in Solitude with God

Spiritual formation and growth require a growing attentiveness to God, to where God is active in our lives, and to where we are being led. This attentiveness requires that we regularly make a place in our lives to sense God's presence and to hear God speak. This is a time for reading the Bible, prayer and sitting before God in silence.



Time in Community of a Small Group

The Kingdom of God is relational. A decision to follow Jesus and grow in His likeness cannot be accomplished alone. The Apostle Paul teaches in his letter of Romans that, though Christian discipleship is intensely personal, it is corporate in character (Romans 12: 3-5). Regularly meet with a small group and commit to the study of the Bible using this basic structure: Read, Reflect and Respond. Additionally, small group members hold one another accountable for spiritual growth and offer encouragement.



Time Sharing Your Faith with Another

Our daily conversations do more than provide a running narrative of our lives; such conversations shape our experiences, practices and life with one another. Ultimately, spiritual formation is the quality of life we live. That life develops positively in the manner of Jesus as we regularly make time to share with another our personal growth in faith.

© W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

Deacons' Corner

by Siena Del Mastro



Walking into the Narthex of the Sanctuary and seeing the traditional Christmas Tree aglow with lights and tags always warms my heart. The Deacons' Christmas tree always makes me feel so bubbly inside because our church cares enough to make children's Christmases a little bit brighter.

I remember gazing up at the Deacons' Christmas Tree when I was a little girl and thinking about how "Oh so tall" it was and just how "Oh so small" I was. The tree branches hovered over me like a thick fog and I was quickly enraptured by just how realistic it looked. Back then, I thought that the Deacons' tags were just a part of the general display and ornamentation of the tree. It was a child's notion, but I was still excited to see all of the pretty colors on the tree during the Christmas season.

Now, during the time of the Deacons' Christmas Tree, I always look back to the time where the most exciting thing in

the world was seeing a decorated Christmas tree. To some people, looking at a tree is the only true present they get for Christmas.

When I was younger, I was always so ecstatic to see a huge pile of gifts under the tree, plus cookies for Santa. Our stockings would be hung up and there was a subtle

Christmas chill in the air. But what if that were all taken away and all there was left was that simple Christmas tree with those simple but colorful tags?

For a second, let's take a step back and think about the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus was born so He could save us from our sins. He did incredible things with His life. But what I think the most significant part of His existence was: His uncanny ability to help others. And why not honor Jesus by helping others to have a better Christmas; to give some child that delightful feeling of getting a present.

If each of us were to take a tag off of the Deacons' Christmas Tree and help a child have a brighter Christmas, not only would we be helping others but we would also be living the life of Jesus Christ, or at least trying to follow in His footsteps. And really, what's better than that? ❖



Thank You

A big "Thank You" for everyone that helped with Amanda's injury. There were so many people from our church from the night of the injury, to picking her up from school. I don't know everyone's name, but one big "Thank You" is not enough for our church family. The prayers and help were greatly appreciated.

Lynda Avampato and Mandy Tidmore

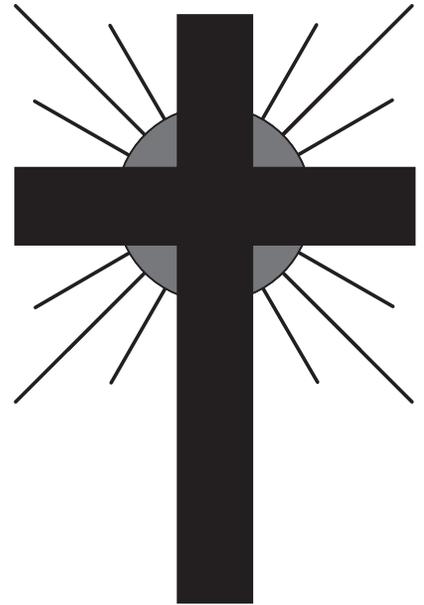
The Meaning of Advent

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."' (Matthew 3:1-3)

Happy New Year! Advent is the official beginning of our Christian year. There are four Sundays in Advent preceding Christmas Day. The word advent comes from the Latin, *adventus*, which means "coming." In reference to Christ, the first advent is His incarnation; and the second advent is His future second coming.

In this season of Advent, as we "prepare the way of the Lord", we have an opportunity once again to prepare ourselves for the Birth of Christ, our living God, in many different ways. These four weeks help us to refocus with intention the traditional themes of the Season ~ expectation, hope, preparation, and longing.

The liturgical color of this season is purple, which denotes repentance and royalty. Amidst the whirlwind of material preparations, perhaps we might each apportion a time in our days for remembrance of the deep meaning that is in these days - the gift of grace and mercy and forgiveness we are offered by God each and every day. What might our gift to the Christ Child be this year? ❖



Our church Fall Festival on November 18th was a great success! With over 50 people in attendance and a beautiful day, we couldn't go wrong! Fun was had bouncing away in the bounce house, munching on hot dogs and playing many exciting games, like potato sack races and relay races. Thanks to Tony Golovan and his Shriner friends for "clowning around" with us, Jo Garnett for providing the food, Cheryl Ramich for planning the awesome games and, of course, Aaron Strippel and Miles Knapp for always setting up and tearing down for all events!



First Presbyterian Church Fall Golf Tournament

by Linda Prior



It was a perfect day for the First Presbyterian Church golf tournament at Lakeview Golf Club on Friday, November 2nd. The sun was bright and the air was cool. Non-golfers joined the golfers at the Delray Beach Golf Club for a buffet with salad, pasta, meatballs, chicken parmesan, and dessert. Banjo Jack Williams entertained us with his humorous songs. Great fun and fellowship!

Contest	Prize	Winner
Hole in One	\$15,000	No winner
Putting Contest 50/50	Cash	Jack Williams
Longest Drive (Male)	Golf balls	Jimmy Lawrence
Longest Drive (Female)	Golf balls	Sally Brush
Closest to the pin (Male)	Golf balls	Skip Georgi
Closest to the pin (Female)	Golf balls	Mary McNamara
Straightest ball	Golf balls	Garland DeMoss

First Place **4 free rounds of golf**
 Dick Brush
 Sally Brush
 Skip Georgi
 Leanne Georgi

Second Place **Tokens**
 Allan Barkoff
 Mike Gentry
 Larry Jacobwitz
 Lou Partenza

3rd Place **4 Sleeves of golf balls**
 Garland DeMoss
 John Hertvik
 Ken McAuley
 Jim Stephens



Presbyterian Women's Christmas Luncheon

by Patty Years



The Presbyterian Women's Christmas Luncheon will be on Friday, December 7th at noon at the Delray Beach Club. Tickets are \$30 and are on sale in the Courtyard following the worship

service. Come hear a fabulous performance by Mei Mei Luo, one of Florida's finest violinists and her piano accompanist. You can expect good food, fun and great fellowship. ❖

Annual Blessing of the Pets – *What a Success!*

by Scott Del Mastro



On Sunday, October 28th, the Deacons welcomed 30 pets and their humans (54 in all) to a Blessing of the Pets service honoring those who continually bring us unconditional joy and love. The service was sponsored by the Board of Deacons and the proceeds (over \$700) from this event will go toward the Deacons' Scholarship Fund that is awarded annually to a deserving high school graduate to assist them and their family in their pursuit of continued education.

A beautiful service titled "Unconditional Love" was delivered by Rev. Jo Garnett to a captive audience and everyone, even the humans, behaved themselves. There were lots of treats, water and plenty of room to walk around. All the animals showed their excitement and got along marvelously.

After the sermon, as part of the service, Rev. Garnett offered individual pet blessings for all those that were interested. And everyone was interested. Pictures were

taken and certificates were offered to anyone who wanted a lasting memento.

With another successful year, we are likely to see the Blessing of the Pets service again in 2013. So, tell all your friends and remind your humans to mark their calendar for next year.

And a special thanks to all those that helped to make the event such a success. We simply couldn't have done it without you.

In closing, I will finish with the opening prayer from the service given to us by the Patron Saint of Animals, St. Francis:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love. For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen ❖

Donations Given in Loving Memory of:

Kittain by Alexandra Harris
Underfoot by Ginny Hertvik
Bailey by Tim and Becky Knapp
Fluffy and Panda Bear
by Jacqueline Pevny
Snoopy, Siggy and Boo
by Don and Mary Thompson



Pennies from Heaven

We can make a difference!

Help First Presbyterian Church support the battle against hunger and poverty by participating in "*Pennies from Heaven*". This is a simple act of thanksgiving for what we have received and a commitment to share with others. Collect 5 cents per family member per meal each day. Then on Sunday, December 30th, bring your "*Pennies from Heaven*" to church and we will collect it during the worship service. Monies collected will be donated on a quarterly basis to local food programs as well as regional and national hunger programs.

We collected \$220.20 from the October Offering. ❖



Church Improvement

by Barbara Vanderkay

Where shall I begin to thank all of the willing people who pitched in to help the Holly House workers make the 2012 bazaar a success? The letter A is a good place to start, and since Aaron Strippel even has two A's, he really leads the list. Aaron and Roger Johnson were everywhere doing all sorts of things. The men's club donated the materials for big fabric cutting tables designed and made by Bob Kay with Ed Jessell and Stu Lyon doing the building. Other men helped with the lunches enjoyed by shoppers and workers. Thank you, gentlemen.

Women of all ages acted as salespeople often selling things they had made themselves. If you asked, they could really explain how it was done. Thank you, ladies.

What good cooks and bakers contributed to our popular bakery table! Ruth Rusk and Pat Moss ably managed the presentation of delectables, aided by a succession of helpers. Thank you, bakers.

The jewelry department did well, of course, with some higher end items selling quickly. Thanks for your fine contributions, ladies.

The Christmas Boutique will be open every Tuesday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. until December 22nd in the New Holly House. Come for last minute gifts and enjoy our long awaited new home.

**Merry
Christmas!**



Celebration of Eternal Life...

Our Deepest Sympathy as a congregation is extended to the family of the following member upon the death of their loved one:

– Elaine Haggood –
October 26, 2012



Remember the Church When Estate Planning

Our Endowment and Remembrance Funds are two excellent opportunities for your giving consideration, be it your will, stocks, or as a named beneficiary of an insurance policy. This financially wise method of stewardship helps ensure the long-term financial stability of the church and provides a planned means for the church to continue its role in the lives of our members and those to whom we reach out, in our community and beyond. For more information on long-term giving, call the church office (276-6338). ❖

Thanksgiving in a Box – *We Did It Again!*

Partnering with The Caring Kitchen, First Presbyterian Church once again provided the fixings for Thanksgiving Dinner to 80 deserving families in Delray Beach. Since 2003, we have participated in this worthwhile effort.

Members and friends of the church filled boxes with the promised traditional Thanksgiving ingredients for a family of 5-6 people. Through your generosity we purchased turkey pans and butter, as well as 74 turkeys.

Thank you to the volunteers Roy Deng, Nancy Fine, Becky Knapp, Tim Knapp, Mary Jane Sickel and Aaron Strippel for helping to load and transport the boxes, pans, butter and turkeys to The Caring Kitchen. Also a big thank you to everyone who helped to decorate the boxes.

Your participation is our tool for providing God's love and hope in our community. Thank you for taking the time to care. ❖



Caroling by Trolley

Hop aboard the trolleys as we visit and wish our shut-ins a very Merry Christmas. On Sunday, December 9th, we will gather for a pizza dinner at 4 p.m. and then, with our best voices, enjoy an evening of sharing the joys of songs of the Christmas season. This is an intergenerational event and all are welcome. Space is limited so RSVP on our website (www.firstdelray.com) under Upcoming Events or call Paula Hare at 276-6338, ext. 23. ❖

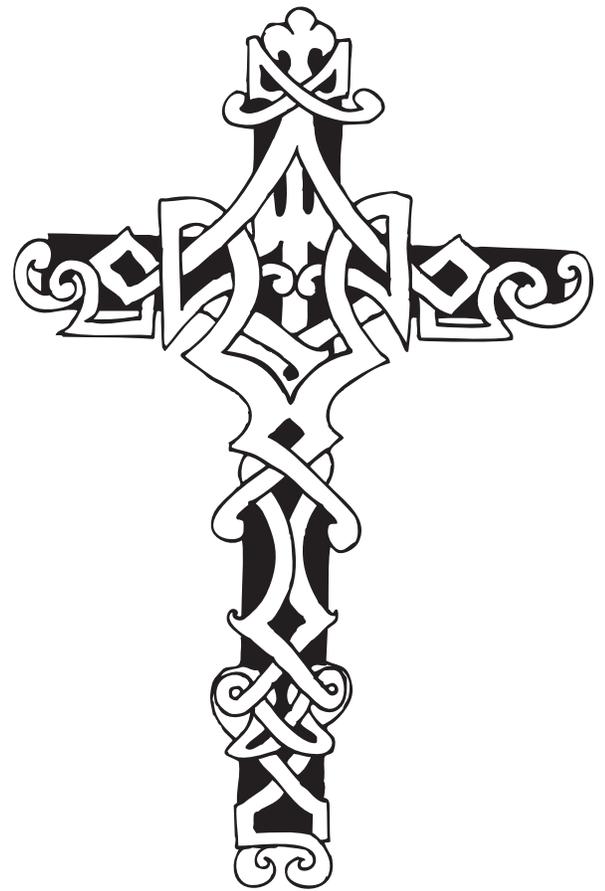


Deacon Appreciation Sunday

Have you taken time to thank our Deacons for everything they do for us? From ushering during the worship services, to contacting members of their flocks, to sending out Christmas and Easter cards, our Deacons truly care for the members of our church.

On Sunday, December 2nd, we will be showing our appreciation to the Deacons during the worship services. Following that, we are hosting a luncheon for the Deacons and their families to say “thank you”.

Take a moment and say “thank you, job well done” to a Deacon. Don’t just do it on December 2nd, but continue to do it year round. After all, they work tirelessly for this church throughout the year. ❖



Christmas Pageant ~ December 9th

The children have been rehearsing each Sunday morning to prepare for our annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 9th at both the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship services. This year’s pageant is “Radio J.O.Y. – Where the best songs are songs about Christmas”, telling the familiar Nativity story from the perspective of a radio news team, a church Children’s Choir, and the traditional characters, as well. Make sure to come to the worship service and support our children as they share their talents with us.

Don’t miss it! ❖



STEPHEN MINISTERS:

by David Fellows

Christmas!

It seems that the older we get, the faster it gets here. Why didn't it get here this fast when we were little kids? I can still remember the joy and wonder of outdoor Christmas lights brightening our snowy neighborhood. Unwrapping the cherished old family Christmas tree ornaments and decorating the tree were also special times. I can still recall sitting in front of our finished tree and being mesmerized by the lighted bulbs filled with liquid that bubbled after they warmed up.

And then there was the excitement of Christmas morning; first checking to see if the milk and cookies left for Santa had been eaten (clear evidence that he had visited) and then the excitement of seeing the gifts under the tree. The presents from Santa were the best: they were the most fun to play with and I didn't have to write the obligatory Thank You note that Mom otherwise made sure I did.

Now that we're all "grown up," why don't we try to put a little spin on the gifts and lights of this Christmas season? While we're out shopping for presents and, especially on Christmas morning, let's take a moment to recognize the spiritual gifts that our Heavenly Santa has given to us. (See Romans 12:4-8) He might even have gotten us a new one this year. He didn't give each of us the same thing. Our Heavenly Santa took the time to give each one of us our own special gifts: gifts that have created our own spiritual uniqueness.



Just like the gifts from the North Pole Santa, these gifts are the most "fun to play with," because they give us the most satisfaction when properly used. Remember that these gifts come with directions. We are to use them in service to the world around us on an as-needed basis, for it is in the giving that we truly receive.

Whenever you see a lighted Christmas display this year, remember that it will go dark and come down after the Holiday Season is over, but such is not the case for us. The gifts that we have been given emit their own light when we use them. We are "the light of the world" (Matthew. 5:13) and we have a charge to ... "let your light shine before men, that they may see our good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16. Together, let us light up the world and let us do so with an attitude of gratitude for the gifts our Heavenly Father has given and continues to give each one of us.

*Merry Christmas to all,
Your Stephen Ministers*

PS: Note from Mom: "Don't forget your Thank You's."



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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@covad.net.

Sunday Morning Worship Services

9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

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

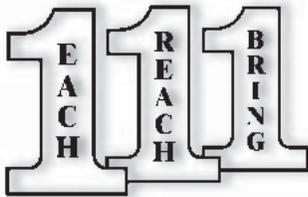
Church School

Adult Church School 10 a.m.

Education Hour Sunday School 10 a.m.

Worship Hour Sunday School 11 a.m.

Youth Fellowship 5 p.m.



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.