



MARCH 2026

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First United Methodist Church of Pinellas Park



BRITTANY'S BITS

March arrives carrying both ashes and green shoots. We are going deeper into Lent together as a season of holy attention. In worship we are continuing our *Something Good* sermon series, listening for the goodness of God that keeps showing up in ordinary places, unlikely people, and even weary hearts. Lent asks us not simply to give things up, but to notice what God is growing (sometimes beneath the surface, sometimes in us).

If you've ever wondered whether anything good can still come from hard soil, this season is for you. We are practicing hope with all we are.

A quick practical note: **Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 8th**. Set your clocks forward one hour Saturday night so we can greet one another bright-eyed (or at least caffeinated) on Sunday morning.

This month also brings the remembrance of St. Patrick. One of the prayers associated with him, often called the Breastplate Prayer, has been lingering with me. It speaks of Christ before us, behind us, within us, beneath us. It is a prayer for courage in uncertain terrain. And friends, uncertainty is not new to the people of God. Yet neither is accompaniment. We never walk alone.

As many of you know, we continue discerning a path forward regarding our church property. This is sacred work. We are seeking a future that is missionally faithful

and that helps sustain ministry for the long road ahead.

We may be smaller than we once were, but smaller has never meant insignificant in the Kin-dom of God. The Spirit has always done surprising things through communities willing to love their neighbors well.

Our commitment remains clear: we will continue God's work in prayer, in justice, in compassion, and in presence. Two miles from the jail, in our neighborhoods, in the quiet spaces where people carry heavy stories, we will keep showing up as best we can, trusting that something good is still unfolding among us.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your courage, and your tenderness with one another in this season.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Brittany

RUMMAGE SALE: APRIL 11TH AND 18TH



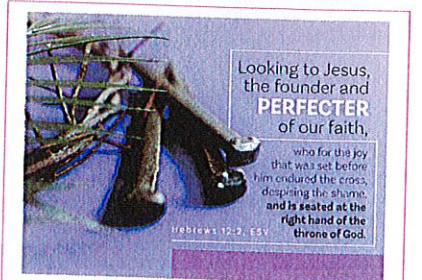
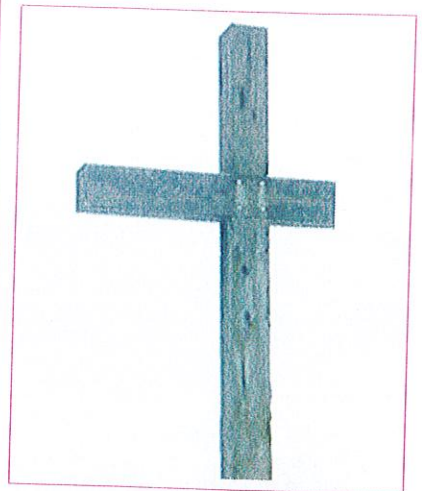
We are now starting to accept donations for a church-wide Rummage Sale. The donations are being stored in the room to the south of the garage in the parking lot. We will accept *housewares, small furniture, toys, games, crafting supplies, tools, books, holiday items, etc.*

The children and youth will offer lunch for a reasonable cost to help cover expenses for their summer activities.

Baked goods will also be available for sale.

We need to line up several volunteers to set up for the sale, to price items, and to be there on the day of the sale. Set-up will start after lunch on Wednesday and will continue until 3 pm; the same on Thursday and Friday. I will post a sign-up list by the end of March and you may contact me with any questions.

- **Loretta Wilcox**
637-3534



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR ANTI-RACISM REPRESENTATIVE

In case you missed it when our Pastor read this from the pulpit on Sunday, February 8th, here's the GCORR Statement on Racist Video Shared by President Donald Trump.

Feb 6, 2026

The General Commission on Religion and Race strongly condemns the racist video recently shared by President Donald Trump that includes imagery portraying former President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama as apes. This imagery is not accidental, nor is it harmless. Comparing Black people to primates is an abhorrent racist trope deeply rooted in the history of anti-Black racism and white supremacy, used to dehumanize Black communities and to justify exclusion, violence, and white supremacy.

At the core of this harm is a denial of *imago Dei*, the Christian affirmation that every person is created in the image of God and bears sacred worth. When Black people are portrayed as less than human, that divine image is mocked and denied. Such dehumanization is not only morally reprehensible but it is a theological violation that stands in direct opposition to the Gospel.

Article V: Racial Justice of the Constitution of The United Methodist Church affirms the biblical truth that all persons are created by God,

bearing God's image, and are uniquely beloved children of God. Racism, especially when expressed through dehumanizing imagery, directly contradicts this constitutional commitment and undermines the Church's witness to God's justice and love in the world.

As the antiracism agency of The United Methodist Church, GCORR names this moment clearly: this is blatant racism. When racist tropes are amplified by those in positions of power, the harm is magnified. Silence, deflection, or minimization only deepen the damage and betray our shared responsibility to speak truth.

Although the video was later deleted, the harm caused by sharing and amplifying racist, dehumanizing imagery cannot be undone.

We call on people of faith, church leaders, and communities of conscience to reject racist rhetoric in all its forms, to speak with courage, and to recommit themselves to the work of building a beloved community rooted in justice, equity, and the God-given dignity of every human being.

To show our love to more folks in our community we have an opportunity to learn about another faith. We have been invited to visit a local mosque to develop a greater understanding of, and friendship with, our Muslim neighbors. If you're interested, please contact Mark Linneman in person or call 727-225-0262.

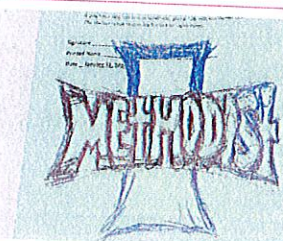
Interfaith vigil at Alligator Alcatraz



THANK YOU, COLD NIGHT SHELTER VOLUNTEERS!

We appreciate our volunteers for their support of Cold Night Shelter Season. We hosted eleven nights of sheltering this year on nights when temperatures feel like 40 degrees or below. We've had an outpouring of support from community members and we recognize we can only do this by working together. We will host a thank you meal for anyone who participated in any capacity (volunteering, donating, etc) sometime this month to show our appreciation! Stay tuned for more info.

A drawing by one of our friends who stayed at the shelter



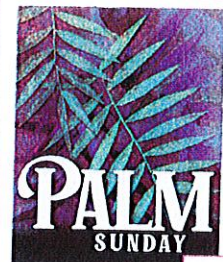
Food line and servers



Sun., March 8th



Fri., March 20th



Sun., March 29th

MARCH MEETINGS, ACTIVITIES, AND EVENTS

First Monday Group: 6 pm, March 3rd, Village Inn, 9107 – 4th St. N., St. Petersburg

Free Meals: Wed., 11:00 am, FH: March 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th, 31st

Deborah Circle: Tues., March 10th, 2 pm, FH

Third-Sunday Potluck: Sun., March 15th, after worship; Theme: St. Patrick's Day

Movie Night: Videos of the Burns and Allen Show: Sat., March 21st, 6 pm



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

03/04	Autumn Purvis
03/06	Craig Scarvelli
03/09	Mitchell Clark
03/12	Barry Stewart
03/13	Justin O'Tyson
03/16	August Rolle
03/22	Bobbi Stockslager
03/30	Lia Postle

Notes from The Messenger

We usually print the Shut-In list during Lent so you can send Easter or Spring greetings to those we don't see in church. Regrettably, we don't have an updated list at this time.

If you have joined the church in the last year, please send me a note with the day of your birthday so it can be printed in the birthday list:
messenger9025@gmail.com

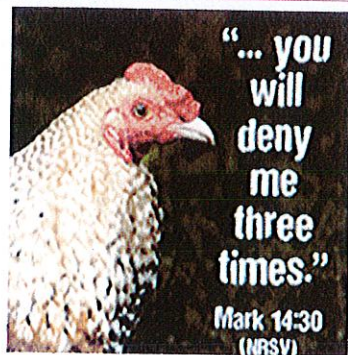
Puzzle!

Search for these words that are all associated with the Lenten journey.

crown donkey hosanna penance Pilate sins
colt crucifixion forsaken kiss prayer suffer
confess death Gethsemane lots repent thorns
cross denial Golgotha palms silver vigil

E N A M E S H T E G R L W Y
C L E U X B M T H B U C W B
N R I K Y P A T E T I Y X Y
A V J G A L B R E Y A R P B
N G N L I S N L A I N E D X
E W M P R V R D H B N R D F
P S O G O L G O T H A B S C
D L N R O C O N F E S S I K
O T H T C P E K W U O U N D
M N S H N P W E D R H F S K
U N F O E T K Y C S G F O E
H E C R E V L I S W Q E C M
H V H N C X S O C C J R L O
F Q E S U D S H C A A Y M C
C R U C I F I X I O N S R V

Lent



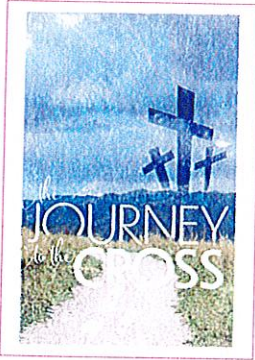
W.A.W. BEYOND THEATRE AND STAGE PRESENTS
Beyond the Wings Theater
PRESENTS
TOO MANY DETECTIVES AT THE MURDER MANSION
A Family Friendly mystery/parody by Ken McWilly
Friday, March 6th, 2026 @ 7pm
Saturday, March 7th, 2026 @ 7pm
Sunday, 8th, 2026 @ 3pm
\$15 General admission
\$10 10 & under
9025 49th St N
Pinellas Park, FL 33782
PRODUCED WITH SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH STAGE PARTNERS WWW.YOURSTAGEPARTNERS.COM



United banner at Studio 5663 during Mural Fest

MARCH 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:30am Sunday School - Adult (E3, E4) 9:45 – 10:45am Book Study: Wesleyan Vile-tality 11:00am Worship in Person & FB (Sanc)	2 9am – 3pm Victory High School First Monday Group, 6pm (Village Inn, 9107 – 4 th St. N., St. Petersburg)	3 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 10:00am Ladies Prayer & Study - by Uber Conf.	4 8:30am Mulligan Food Pantry (E1, E2) 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 11:00am Wednesday Free Meal (FH/Kit) 6:30pm Youth Meeting (FH) 6:30pm Choir Practice (PAR)	5 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 6:30pm 2 Cor Bible Study (Someone's Home)	6 9am – 3pm Victory High School 7pm <i>Beyond The Wings Spring Show</i>	7 9:00am Thrift Store (TS) 4 – 8pm <i>Vendor Market at 5663 Studios on Park Blvd.</i> 7pm <i>Beyond The Wings Spring Show</i>
8 <i>Time Change: Spring Forward</i> 9:30am Sunday School - Adult (E3, E4) 9:45 – 10:45am Book Study: Wesleyan Vile-tality 11:00am Worship in Person & FB (Sanc) 3pm <i>Beyond The Wings Spring Show</i>	9 9am – 3pm Victory High School	10 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 10:00am Ladies Prayer & Study - by Uber Conf. 2pm Deborah Circle, FH	11 8:30am Mulligan Food Pantry (E1, E2) 9am – 3pm Victory High School 11:00am Wednesday Free Meal (FH/Kit) 6:30pm Youth Meeting (FH) 6:30pm Choir Practice (PAR)	12 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 6:30pm 2 Cor Bible Study (Someone's Home)	13 9am – 3pm Victory High School	14 9:00am Thrift Store (TS) Inclusion Game Night, TBD
15 9:30am Sunday School - Adult (E3, E4) 9:45 – 10:45am Book Study: Wesleyan Vile-tality 11:00am Worship in Person & FB (Sanc): Reception of New Members Potluck Lunch, FH after worship	16 Victory School <i>Spring Break</i>	17 Victory School <i>Spring Break</i> 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 10:00am Ladies Prayer & Study - by Uber Conf.	18 8:30am Mulligan Food Pantry (E1, E2) Victory School <i>Spring Break</i> 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 11:00am Wednesday Free Meal (FH/Kit) 6:30pm Youth Meeting (FH) 6:30pm Choir Practice (PAR)	19 Victory School <i>Spring Break</i> 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 6:30pm 2 Cor Bible Study (Someone's Home)	20 Victory School <i>Spring Break</i>	21 9:00am Thrift Store (TS)
22 9:30am Sunday School - Adult (E3, E4) 9:45 – 10:45am Book Study: Wesleyan Vile-tality 11:00am Worship in Person & FB (Sanc)	23 9am – 3pm Victory High School	24 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 10:00am Ladies Prayer & Study - by Uber Conf. 6:00pm Finance Committee (FH) 7:00pm Ministry Council (FH)	25 8:30am Mulligan Food Pantry (E1, E2) 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 11:00am Wednesday Free Meal (FH/Kit) 6:30pm Youth Meeting (FH) 6:30pm Choir Practice (PAR)	26 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 6:30pm 2 Cor Bible Study (Someone's Home)	27 9am – 3pm Victory High School	28 9:00am Thrift Store (TS) <i>Easter Egg Hunt</i>
29 <i>Palm Sunday</i> 9:30am Sunday School - Adult (E3, E4) 9:45 – 10:45am Book Study: Wesleyan Vile-tality 11:00am Worship in Person & FB (Sanc)	30 9am – 3pm Victory High School	31 9am – 3pm Victory High School 9am – 3pm Clearview ESOL Rooms 204, 205 10:00am Ladies Prayer & Study - by Uber Conf.				



Our hymnal has many selections for the Lenten season; all of which force us to reflect on the reason that Christ had to die. It was for our salvation. Grace freely given, not earned, and completely undeserved.

All we have to do is believe in Jesus as our savior, and strive to live as he taught us by his words, and especially by his example.

One of my favorite hymns is #289 *Ah, Holy Jesus*. The text causes us to consider why Jesus had to die. How or who did he offend? Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon him? The answer to those questions is clear; it was for us. "Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee! 'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee." Verse three explains it clearly; "For me, kind Jesus, was thy incarnation, thy mortal sorrow, . . .thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion, for my salvation."

A classic Lenten hymn is # 286 *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*. The first verse describes the suffering that our Lord endured. Verse two tells us that his suffering was for us. "What thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinners' gain; mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain. Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve thy place." Finally, verse three asks how can we repay and thank him for his sacrifice. "What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend. . . Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee."

Hymn #290 *Go to Dark Gethsemane* takes us through Jesus' praying in the garden to his resurrection. Verse one describes Gethsemane and invites us to share in his grief at the events before him. Verse two talks about the judgment by Pilot and bearing the cross to Calvary. In verse three is the crucifixion, and verse four describes the empty tomb.

One of the best-known hymns is #297 *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*. Verse two is my favorite. "Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see the very dying form of One who suffered there for me; and from my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess: the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness."



Lent is often felt as a dark time leading to Jesus' death, but in the midst of the season of sacrifice, we know that there is a light shining on the other side. *What Wondrous Love Is This* (hymn #292) is a joyful song that recognizes God's unending love for us. "What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul. . . To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing. . . while millions join the theme I will sing. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on. I'll sing and joyful be, and through eternity, I'll sing on".

This Lenten season, as we sing the words to these mighty hymns, let's focus on the message as a way to draw closer to Jesus, recognizing his sacrifice for us and our joyful response in gratitude.

- *In His Service, Betsy Larson*
Adult Music Director

Thrift Store News

The Thrift Store is doing great. We have some of the nicest customers who regularly come to shop. Our volunteers do a great job of pricing and displaying donations nicely. They help bring in funds which go toward our church's apportionments to the conference.

We really do **need more volunteers**, though. Those we have are priceless and we thank them for their hard work. Please consider coming in to help. We are open 9am til 2pm on Saturdays. Please talk to Joan or me or stop in on a Saturday; we are usually there.

- *Loretta Wilcox*



First United Methodist Church of Pinellas Park
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office@fumcpp.org

<http://www.fumcpp.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/fumc.pinellaspark>

https://twitter.com/#!/FUMC_PPark

Church Office Hours:

Tuesday through Thursday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Sunday, Monday, Friday, and Saturday: Closed

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pastorbleclair@gmail.com

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The Messenger: Joyce Bernotas
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JStewart1713@yahoo.com

Thrift Store

Loretta Wilcox 637-3534
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Nominations

Chair: Pastor Brittany 546-5741