

The Messenger

A Monthly Publication by
First United Methodist Church of Lutz
No. 134 - April 2020



SERVICE TIMES

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A Word From Pastor Rick

April, 2020

Easter Resurrection Power Experienced in Cuba

My how your prayers, supplies and monetary gifts spoke volumes to your sister church! It is an example of the reality of 2 Corinthians 9:11 which says, **"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, AND THROUGH US YOUR GENEROSITY WILL RESULT IN THANKSGIVING TO GOD."** But to paraphrase Sherry Rodriguez Craig, it is not so much what we did for them, but what they did for us. **The trip was a huge success, and God's covering was very evident.**

The details are so powerful, but space forces severe editing in this written celebration of resurrection power at work in us on the Cuba mission trip. You will get the ideas here, and perhaps we can post fuller testimonies on-line.

You've heard of the harassment Christians receive, like our sister church being confiscated in the past, but glory to God, it all legally belongs again to the Methodist Church of



Pastor Darier & Pastora Dayani

Cuba. In like manner, on this trip, our **Pastor's wife** (Dayani) was arrested in El Bon while Pastor Darier was in Havana picking us up at the airport. The charge:

Hoarding building materials. Yet the only materials they had were those legally obtained for their house expansion project to increase classrooms and to provide a little privacy at the parsonage. Only I knew first and the Pastor required my confidential prayer so that we did not put any fear in the team. He made a plan so that when we arrived at our sister church many hard miles away, he could turn himself in (while I was with the team in other activities at the church). He sat in jail for hours, but finally was temporarily released being told that they were not through and he was not in the clear. His courage and faith in our resurrected Lord allowed him to continue joyous service to

us and his church throughout the week. He was not cleared till after we were safely home in America. Side Note from Vicki: I asked Pastor Darier if they hurt his wife. **He said, "No, they just harassed her verbally." Then his face lit up and he added, "She was braver than me!" THAT'S OUR PASTORA!** A mighty woman of God!



Here are some other examples of God at work for which you can praise Him:

Vicki continues to praise God for all of the unseen miracles and travel mercies when so much could have gone wrong. God provided everything needed for the largest mission team from First Lutz to ever enter El Bon. **Psalm 91:4 says, "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."**



You may not understand the amount of intense spiritual warfare that went on before we left, and the miracle of our departure when things had just begun to get scary with the virus, but we travelled in prayer and discussion. The trip was almost cancelled. Seventy seven year old Ed said, **"I'm definitely going!"** After much instruction about the sobering care we should give to protect ourselves and others, Dianne shared how she was called by God and felt she must go, and she would use her nursing skills to protect and help the team if others decided to go. Nancy



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Church News

“...Your face, Lord, I will seek.” Psalm 27:8



Unusual Times Call for Different Ways to Worship
As you well know, nothing has **been as we've known it to be** with the COVID-19 safety precautions in full swing. While we are currently asked to stay home and to worship online or by television, we look forward to the day when we will be able to gather together again as a Church family. One of the newest ways to attend church is online at our website! Another way to communicate and learn is **through a free app entitled "ZOOM"**.



WHAT IS ZOOM? ZOOM is a modern way of communicating face-to-face online. More will be understood as you continue reading this newsletter and exploring our website. The ZOOM schedule can be found on our website, and it offers prayer, Sunday School classes, meetings, devotions and more. Just follow the directions below. **Don't miss out on the fun! Vicki Apple says, "The link is all over our home page, and in emails, and can even be texted to family and friends." Questions? Call the church at (813) 949-1751.**

HOW TOs

HOW TO GET TO OUR WEBSITE: Type in to your computer browser www.fantasticfirst.org, and then click on all of the tabs to get to know us better.

HOW TO ACCESS FREE BIBLE STUDIES & VIDEOS through Right Now Media for ALL AGES: You can also view many, many free Bible studies at www.righnowmedia.com. Right Now Media login: media@fantasticfirst.org
Password: [mediaviewer](#)

Here's what they offer: Kid Episodes, Training, Bible Studies, Easter, Youth, Marriage, Parenting, Women, Men, Books of the Bible, Apologetics, Christian Living, Doctrine & Theology, Small Groups, Mental Health & Recovery, College & Young Adults, History, Missions & Gospel Outreach, Biblical Finance, Work, Science, Worship, Leadership, Popular Teachers, Funny Video Clips, Real-Life Stories, Video Devotionals and even classes in Spanish! Be sure to check it out. This will be a great tool to be enjoyed with your daily devotionals!

HOW TO GET TO A ZOOM MEETING:

On your cell phone or tablet, go to your App Store or Play Store; then load the free app entitled ZOOM Cloud Meetings. You can do this on your computer, but you have to have a camera and a microphone connected. Click on Join a Meeting; On the Meeting ID line, it should say 440 152 9666 (if not, type it in); then click on Join Meeting; click on Join with Video; once

connected, you can swipe to the left to see who all is connected (may need to swipe to the left more than once to see all in the meeting room). You can swipe left or right during the meeting to **see the face of the one who is speaking. When you're not speaking, you can mute your speaker at the bottom left. Just touch the screen, and the options appear. It's fun!**

Ministries that are Still Happening
Bible Classes: We are offering classes, prayer and sharing times through the ZOOM app (see above paragraph above for how to become involved).

Lenten Prayer via ZOOM: **Since we can't physically pray in our Lenten Prayer Nook at the Church, you are invited to pray in the safety of your homes by joining our virtual Prayer Nook, which will draw us together in a time of community when we are having to social distance.** If you join us for any of these times, there will be someone hosting with a brief devotional or sharing of scripture, sharing of prayer requests between people, and then a short time of prayer. You can share requests and pray or just be there to participate in quiet spirit - it's really up to you.

Here is the Prayer ZOOM schedule, which is open to anyone to join: Monday through Friday, 8 AM & 8 PM, daily
Prayer Ministry: **Did you know there's a team of Prayer Warriors waiting to pray for and with you? Here's how to submit prayer requests:** Write them & place them in the Prayer Box on the Usher Table in the back of the Sanctuary, or E-mail them to prayer4first@gmail.com, or call the church office at 949-1751, or Submit them on our website: <http://www.fantasticfirst.org/prayer>. Please send updates and praise reports to Christine (757.608.8539) or Natalie (813.382.0594).

Online Giving: Did you know that you can give online? E-Giving is available at fantasticfirst.org. FMI, call Vicki Apple at (813) 949-1751.

Walk for Life - Virtual Walk: LIFE IS A GIFT! If you have a heart for the unborn, that they would have a chance at life, and **also for the moms, that they would know God's love and hear His gospel, then please become a Pledge-Raising Walker and make a difference for LIFE!** Since this year it will be a virtual walk, and there is no date, you can walk on your own anytime you like. Sign-up online at iwalkforlife.com. For more information, visit iwalkforlife.com, or contact Crystal at 727-216-1410 ext 402 or crystal@newlifesolutions.org. Thanks!

Worship Arts Department of Fantastic First: The music team is ministering with devotions and times of prayer through email. **If you'd like to join them, email cliff@fantasticfirst.org.**

Sew & Sow:

Rebecca Lehman shared a great tutorial for face masks. An idea for sewing at home. I have attached a link for a pattern and video tutorial for face masks. <https://www.cleveland.com/news/2020/03/how-to-help-sew-masks-for-hospital-in->

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coronavirus-crisis.html. If you would like to make masks to donate, please let me know. Also, if you know a contact person we can take masks to, let me know that, as well. Be blessed and happy sewing! ~Chris Giordano, (813) 838-5748

Youth Group - Keep Growing & Get Connected
LOFT LABS - Teacher - Matt Sargent
Go to: Fantasticfirst.org, click on the youth tab
Students can participate through games & lesson challenges!

Plus, the "Where am I at?" Challenge (figure out which student's house I am at!). And, yes, I will be wearing a mask & gloves and maintaining a safe distance.



To join in on the fun, send an email to matt@fantasticfirst.org or text to (813) 370-8360.

I John 5:2: "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands."

Our Heartfelt Condolences are Extended To Rick Faucher and his family on the loss of his sister Diane Reeves 72, of Ocala, FL. She had Stage 4 Colon Cancer, which was diagnosed just a few weeks ago. She fought hard, but unfortunately passed away on March 26th, surrounded by family. Rick says, "We will all miss her dearly, as this was a shock to us. Please thank those who prayed for her." Cards may be sent to Rick and Jian at 4506 Gulfwinds Dr., Lutz, FL 33558.

Chris Giordano and her family on the loss of her father, Tom Vest, who passed away on March 27th. Please keep the family in your prayers during this time of restrictions with the Coronavirus that the family will still be able to celebrate their Father via technology or other means. Cards may be sent to Nathan & Chris at 812 Brooker Village Circle, Lutz, FL 33548.

Steve Ryan, family & friends on the loss of his wife, Barbara Ryan, who passed away on March 25th. Cards may be sent to 4810 Country Hills Dr., Tampa, FL 33624.

Mary Rasmussen and her family on the loss of her father, Donavon Bonney, who passed away on March 18th, at the age of 89, in Virginia Beach, VA. Cards may be sent to: Jeremy & Mary at 18103 Fairmead Ct, Lutz, FL 33548-4482.

Judy Sebastian, family and friends on the loss of Judy's beloved Mom, Jane Snook, our oldest member, who passed away at the age of 102 on March 12th. Her Celebration of Life was held at our church on March 18th, with interment at Trinity Memorial Gardens. Cards may be sent to her daughter, Judy Sebastian, at 22307 Carson Dr., Land O' Lakes, FL 34639.

Suzanne Wilson, family and friends on the loss of her beloved mom, Edith Wilson, who passed away on Saturday, March 7. Edith was 94 years old, and a lifelong member of our church. Cards may be sent to her family in care of her

daughter, Suzanne Wilson, at 112 Debuell Rd, Lutz, FL 33549-5442. To read the full obituary and see photos, go to <https://www.macdonaldfuneral.com/obituary/Edith-Wilson>.

Wonder Walk Thanks

Cornerstone Family Ministries raised \$40,000 overall. We had 22 walkers, plus Mary, the sweet, golden retriever who lives with the Martin family. Our church raised \$3,323.00. I am thrilled to report that six of our Youth walked for this worthy cause! For the 5th year in a row, they won a pizza party & a bowling party worth \$400! Thank you to everyone who participated and/or donated. ~Sandy Stack

Congratulations To Eddie & Sherry Craig on the birth of their granddaughter, Violet Cabrera, born on Leap Year Day (2-29-20). Mom and baby are doing fine. Praise God!



Violet Cabrera

April - Volunteer of the Month
The United Methodist Men are pleased to announce that Elaine Howell has been chosen as our Volunteer of the Month for April! She became active as a volunteer when she first came to our church.

Elaine says, "Even at the age of 85, you can still seek to serve our Lord." Elaine has



Elaine Howell

made herself available to serve through our church in a number of capacities. She has helped with Vacation Bible School, which is a large and demanding ministry. She has also been involved regularly with the hospitality team by serving in the kitchen. Touching people with Christ's love by filling their

tummies has gone a long way to helping people want to come back to First Lutz. Of course, it is all about Christ, but when people know they are loved and cared about, they want to come back. Elaine is one of the ones who is behind that loving ministry. She helps with the tutoring ministry, as well. She even started coming on a Friday when she realized one of the students who needed help couldn't come on Thursdays. She has helped with our Seder Meals during Holy Week, too.

If you ask Elaine about her activities, she will be more than glad to share with you about the fun ways she serves. She truly enjoys serving! She is always willing to help if she can, with whatever needs to be done. And, she serves well beyond the walls of the church, with an organization that is dedicated to serving. She has even used her contacts with that organization, and also her contacts with the church, to help raise funds for our sister church in Cuba.

Elaine, we love how you shine for Jesus! You are a blessing to all you meet! Thank you!

Discipleship Opportunities

RESURRECTION COOKIES RECIPE AND STORY

SUPPLIES

1 Zip Top Plastic Bag
1 Wooden Spoon
Hand mixer
Wax Paper
Masking or Painter's Tape
Bible

INGREDIENTS

1 cup Almonds or Pecans, whole
1 tsp Vinegar
3 Egg Whites
1 pinch Salt
1 cup Sugar

A meaningful
experience for
your family on the
night before
Resurrection
Sunday!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 300°
2. Place nuts in zip top bag and let kids beat them with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Explain that after Jesus was arrested He was beaten by the Roman soldiers. Read John 19:1-3
3. Let each child smell the vinegar, then put 1 teaspoon into a mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross He was given vinegar to drink. Read John 19:28-30
4. Add egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave His life to give us life. Read John 10:10-11
5. Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it, then put the rest into the mixing bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers and the bitterness of our own sin. Read Luke 23:27
6. Add 1 cup sugar. Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us. He wants us to know and belong to Him. Read Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16
7. Beat on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. Read Isaiah 1:18 and John 3:1-3
8. Fold in broken nuts. Drop by teaspoon onto a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid. Read Matthew 27:57-60
9. Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF. Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed. Read Matthew 27: 65-66
10. GO TO BED! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. Read John 16:20 & 22
11. On Resurrection Sunday (Easter) morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter Jesus' followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty. Read Matthew 28:1-9

DISCIPLESHIP OFFERINGS via ZOOM

Prayer Nook: Monday - Friday, 8am & 8pm

Anxious for Nothing Bible Study by Max Lucado:
Monday, 6pm with Bev Owen (FULL)
Tuesday, 10am with Lynn Bordelon
Wednesday, 9am with Janell Lockhart (FULL)
Wednesday, 6pm with Frank Hearne (FULL)

Please contact Janell (813 786.9847) if you are interested in this study. Another group can be formed to include everyone who is interested.

Kingdom Men Sunday School, Sunday, 9am
Sisters In Christ Sunday School, Sunday, 10:30a
Heart to Heart Sunday School, Sunday, 9:45a Contact
Rebecca Lehman (727 543.1005) for meeting info

To participate in any of our Discipleship Opportunities, enter our Virtual Room through our website: FantasticFirst.org
Click on the Zoom Meeting Icon



All kids, 3 years through 4th grade (and their parents) are invited to join us for Praising in Our PJs! It's a FUN-tastic time of games, sharing and an important message about God. This week, in honor of Palm Sunday, it's our very first Palm Sunday Pet Parade!! So dress up your pooch or your panda or your piranha - whatever kind of pet or stuffed animal you have - and join in our parade! Everyone will have an opportunity to Show & Tell us all about your special friend!

Praising In Our PJs gives our kiddos a time to meet together and then we break into our Family Groups for our lesson time. PreK & K Kids will watch A Happy Sunday found on both YouTube and YouTube Kids.

1st - 4th Graders will check out Crossroad Kids' Club's latest Kid's Club Family Experience video posted on both YouTube and YouTube Kids.



ZOOM ROOM FUN jump back into the Zoom Room on Tuesdays at 2 for some big time fun!

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reminded us of the courageous story of Joshua and Caleb who believed the Israelites should go as they were called. It was the team members themselves who decided they had put their hand to the plow and God did not want them to look back (see Luke 9:62). Thank you, again, Church, for all of your prayers. God used them to help us experience another resurrection power victory!

Dianne received many unexpected medical supplies that came in for this trip, with extras of the type to help fight the virus. She cared for each one of us and many Cubans, as well.

Lynn, our team leader, has also been praising God with us all, due to the fact that all of the specialized medications made it **safely through Customs. At the time, we didn't know how** important nebulizers and Albuterol would be in helping to fight the COVID-19 virus! **It's a miracle to know that our little village** of El Bon now has plenty of these medications!

Among other things, Charlie brought strength and peace to the team. Sarah danced before the Lord, and Jordan summarized the Youth Sunday School lesson for the whole Church.

In La Irma, a village time forgot, a missionary asked Lynn for a **book bag for a child. Lynn gave her Jordan's. Inside was a Children's Bible, placed there by God! Dianne also had a** wooden prayer cross at hand to give her. The missionary clutched it to her chest as a dear treasure! As we were leaving, Vicki handed chocolate candy out of the window of the bus to the kids. Smiles abounded for this very rare treat!

While there, Jordan got a touch of something requiring an antibiotic. Before leaving on our trip, Dianne had picked up **some prescriptions and she saw an antibiotic she hadn't** requested in her bag. It was just what Jordan needed. Jehovah Jireh - God our Provider! Jordan enjoyed the trip, and he has been fine ever since. Praise God!

Jackson saw that some regions had no gas and was grateful God guided us so that we could get back in time safely, and that we could go again some day. Some of the people there took time off from their much needed work just to help us and **be with us. Seeing the children's faces when they saw us was** something straight from God. It was like they were welcoming us home. I had really looked forward to seeing them again and **worshipping with them. During the trip I felt like I can't believe I'm down here again, sharing my love with the Cuban people I** love. Now that I am home, I think about how that bus ride was long; but man, was it worth it. Wow, when can I go again?!!

Tim shares his God Moments - The first God moment I had was when I decided to not take my sons on the trip because of the virus. But during our meeting (the night before leaving), something just didn't feel right about not taking the boys. After listening to the others on the team share about their conviction in going, I felt my boys had to go. Even if the worst happened, we were meant to be together and experience whatever lay ahead. It was the right decision! As Pastor Darier later preached, we need others to fan the flame of our faith, and that is what happened during that meeting. There were so many little obstacles, some of which could have had major consequences, but it seemed like we were too busy traveling **on God's mission to let those things slow us down. In addition** to what has been mentioned, some examples included surviving the insanely rough roads for 17 hours of driving without blowing a tire or having some other major mechanical failure. And, the bus starting after completely dying for several minutes in a very remote area of the country. Hearing the great news about our Pastor no longer being harassed by Cuban authorities for the church project brings great joy.

Thoughts from our first visit team members:

Shawn Alvelo: Before I had left, I had worried and pondered a lot of things. Why was I chosen to go? How could I be useful? I was scared to get out of my comfort zone, scared to see the suffering, afraid that Cuban Customs Agents would intercept the much needed supplies for our sister church, and even afraid that I would be affected and that my heart would be changed. Traveling to a country decades behind also had concerned me greatly. Looking back, it was silly. On arriving in Cuba, I saw the stark contrast with home. Getting food, work and even transportation is a constant daily life struggle. The Cubans we met were content and thankful for whatever they had, no matter how minuscule it was. They were deeply touched that we chose to visit them and pray for their wellbeing, and so thankful for the supplies our church blessed them with. The blessings from them in return were so numerous and touching, it was an amazing feeling. **The Holy Spirit came upon me and over flooded my cup. I wondered ...** God, why was I so special to be chosen by You and that You want a special connection with me? I am absolutely nothing and yet, here You are, knocking..... waiting for a reply, waiting for me to open the door to let you in. God I am SO SORRY that I have not focused on You! In my life, I've tried to do things that make me happy, which only led me away from You. I am sorry!" I was so touched and overcome by His Spirit and by the thought that He wanted a relationship with me, me of all people, my special pattern / my DNA, for "I was fearfully and wonderfully made..." You knew my everything and yet You still want a relationship with me..... I could not contain it and tried to

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hold back this intense emotion of Your outpouring Love and Affection, it was an amazing feeling that I will NEVER forget! I had a similar experience at another mission site. After we prayed for the missionaries, they returned it tenfold! What an experience of the devotion and power of prayer from them! It flowed out of them like a raging river bubbling forth in forms of prayer, protection, guidance, and the will to go where we are called. Now that we are back home, I realize it's so easy to fall back into ruts of our lives. We need to always keep our eyes on Jesus and focus on Him. We should ALWAYS remember that there is absolutely nothing that He cannot do, God provides! Hallelujah! I am so thankful for the life He has given me, that I can freely worship Him, and for the blessings we have compared to others around the world. I look forward to my next mission trip, wherever it may be, because I know God will provide and light our path. May God continue to bless us all at First Lutz, and to use us for His purposes and blessings.



THAN THE WHOLE TRIP, YOU MEAN?!! Lol! God's hand was truly all over everything and everyone. We had come close to aborting the trip. It makes me want to cry for joy! God is sooooo good!"

Kirby Jackson: The first day of church was something special, and the fact that they spoke a different language was not a problem. God has magnificent plans for each person and will not let a language barrier prevent you from learning His Word. The day that we got home and found out that we had to be in quarantine for 14 days, I was like "oh no"; but, then Shawn decided to stay at our house and has made this whole quarantine thing bearable. I thank God for that, because he is an amazing person.



Ed Owen: On Sunday morning, Pastor Darier was praising God and giving thanks for the visitors that were brought to the mission to share the bounty from God. The sanctuary is overflowing with the most jubilant praying strangers who suddenly became my brothers and sisters in prayer. There was

Sherry Rodriguez Craig: Sherry is praising God that the lost luggage that she was assigned to getting through Customs was found. Simple delights of God's love were experienced throughout the trip - like when we



found the missing 20th tennis ball which we took that was needed to make the teams even when we led a night of joy for the ladies at the church. The sermon preached on Sunday morning by Pastor Darier entitled "God's Got Your Back! was a stirring tribute to the blessing of God when we exercise our faith and obedience. We were all so touched and blessed to find out that the men's group of El Bon prayed on their knees on the dangerous, winding road leading in to the region of Pilon for our safe entrance and exit! God answered! And, God's timing of our flights was PERFECT getting us out of Cuba on the last afternoon of flights!



a feeling of overwhelming joy that released tears of joy running down my face and the presence of the Holy Spirit was in everyone's hearts. I know that the Holy Spirit had filled my

soul with love, compassion and humility like I had never known before. Since my encounter that day in El Bon, I am still reconciled with the idea that "Big Boys don't cry", but the tears of joy created by the Holy Spirit keep Satan at bay. Believe, Believe, and Believe! May the spirit of the Holy Ghost and El Bon Cuba continue to teach and bless us all.

In closing, we want to thank you again, Church, for everything and for traveling with us in our hearts!! Because of you, many lives were touched! Each time we leave, another little piece of our hearts remain there in El Bon.

As Always, You Are Loved,

Pastor Rick

Nancy Gray: When Nancy was asked about some of the miracles she saw, she gave a response we all feel: "OTHER

First United Methodist Church of Lutz

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Return Service Requested

April 2020

Sent with love and a prayer to:



Ladies' Tea Party

Saturday, May 2
Noon to 2 PM

(Subject to ban
being lifted)

RSVP by calling
949-1751, x245

