

The Peaceful News

The Peace Presbyterian Church of Lakewood Ranch, Florida Newsletter

Summer 2023

Last fall we invited you to participate in a Vital Congregations Survey to help us determine where we are strong and where we have room for growth. You received the results earlier this year, but it is time to share again as we work on it.

The good news is that 96% of you believe that our congregation is spiritually alive, with two-thirds of you saying that Peace Presbyterian is a very vital congregation. Our strongest attributes are caring relationships and ecclesial (church) health, followed by empowering servant leadership and spirit-inspired worship. We have room to grow in lifelong discipleship and in comfortably sharing our faith with others. We scored high in what the church offers in faith formation but lower in people being confident in their practice and expression of Christian faith.

This makes me wonder how we might continue to encourage one another in speaking authentically about our life of faith—when we gather in ministry teams, when go to classes, when converse over coffee at the fellowship tables, when we participate in small groups or walk the Peaceful Path. Our strength in caring relationships should make it easier for us to share our challenges in faith.

Keep up the good work of ministry, my friends.

New people are coming each week to Peace, looking for a safe community to talk about things that matter most. I trust you are welcoming, listening, and sharing, trusting that God is with us on this amazing journey of life. We will continue to love one another so well that people may wonder what motivates us. When they ask, let's aim to have an answer: the Spirit of the Living God is among us, filling us with the peace and joy that surpasses understanding.



Prayerfully yours,

Elizabeth

Rev. Elizabeth M. Deibert
Pastor, Peace Presbyterian Church



Peaceful Path News

Recently featured in the *LWR Life* magazine on their short list of popular nature trails, the Peaceful Path continues to welcome and enchant guests.

A new plant identification trail has opened with fifteen plant identification markers installed along the new path. Visitors to this path will learn facts about the trees and plants as they walk by. Do you know what a Snag looks like? Is it valuable to our environment? What about Bracken ferns?

A Kids' Zone is under construction for kids OF ALL AGES. Balance beams, stacking games, small tables and chairs, and Tic-Tac-Toe games are guaranteed to keep the young and old busy and happy! A special message slate invites everyone to create positive messages out of rocks for all to see.

This spring has been dry, but the plants are alive and well thanks to our Water Patrols. Rafael and Ofelia Uribe, Jeff and Diane Muckefuse, Carolyn Levins, Mary Anne Wampole, Jamie Reagan, and Tom Finnerty have been hand watering every



plant on the path for the past seven weeks. What a blessing they've been! The Orchids, Tillandsias, Bromeliads, and Saw Palmettos are all in full bloom. Come check it out.

If anyone is interested in joining the Peaceful Path Team or has an idea you would like to share, we'd love to hear from you. You can contact either Jamie Reagan or Toni Muirhead.



A picnic on the Peaceful Path for the dedicated Path volunteers.



Dog and Sheep from Animal Blessing in February.



Chris helping with Property clean-up in the courtyard.



The Lakewood Ranch Wind Ensemble formed in 2019 makes Peace their home base. They concluded a successful concert season at Peace as part of our community Outreach events. After their final concert, the Outreach Team hosted a “cookies and conversation” table underneath the portico to mingle with the musicians. The Wind Ensemble has already reserved our Peace venue for next season! Mark your calendars for October 15, February 4 and May 5. And if you have not had an opportunity to hear them, I bet your foot will be tapping before the end of the show. Hope to see you next season.



Lakewood Ranch Wind Ensemble concert



Gratitude Team

Were you aware that Peace Presbyterian Church of Lakewood Ranch, Inc. has an endowment?

Certain members of Peace have contributed seed money of \$7,400 to Peace’s “Legacy Funds” to kick off the fund which will be used to build a lasting legacy for the stability and viability of our church into the future!

The Legacy Fund is money that will not be spent in a budgeted manner. Legacy Fund money will be accumulated in an investment account and will grow in perpetuity. Once established, up to 5% of the money in the fund will be distributed yearly to one or more of three areas—the Mission and Benevolence fund, the Capital Facilities fund, and the General Operating fund. This will allow Peace to be more generous in our charitable giving, enhance our church campus, and supplement areas of our operations to serve the members of our congregation better.



Besides the seed money already given, many members of our congregation have already included future giving to Peace by making Peace a beneficiary in their final wills. These members wish to help ensure that all of the hard work that we have accomplished over the past fourteen years allows Peace to be an even brighter beacon of light for our community in the years to come.

Proposed giving is in two forms—restricted giving where money goes to one or more of the three fund areas and unrestricted giving where funds are distributed evenly among the three areas. Of course, other non-legacy fund gifts will still be accepted for any purpose and will be put to immediate use and not invested for the long term.

The Gratitude Team will focus this year on making sure everyone’s questions about the Legacy Fund are answered. If you are interested in learning more about The Legacy Fund (including receiving a copy of the Legacy Fund parameters), please contact Beth Walch, Sue Seiter, John Warburton, Henry Sunkenberg, Dirk Brinkmeyer, or Pastor Elizabeth.



This winter the Fellowship Team has had several accomplishments.

1. We celebrated several baptisms this quarter.
2. We have also had several memorial services for members of our church family.
3. We have continued doing Friday Musical Movie nights on the last Friday of each month. Our April movie is **Man of La Mancha** on April 28. We are looking forward to seeing many of you there. Free popcorn, candy, coffee and water.

4. Adventure Seekers are going strong. They are in process of planning another exciting trip for the end of May. More info below.

5. We will be having special treats for Mother's Day.
6. We will be celebrating our graduates on May 21st. Wally Cheso and Zoe Thornton will be graduating from high school this year.
7. We continue with Sunday Fellowship time and appreciate all the contributions.



May Outing at Manatee Performing Arts Center, Behind the Scenes Tour & Lunch

Tuesday, May 30, 2023 - 11:00 am - FREE!

This 1-hour guided tour of the Manatee Performing Arts Center 502 3rd Ave W,

Bradenton, FL 34205 will show all aspects of the beautiful facility where you will hear historical and fun facts, visit the extensive costume shop, learn about their technical booth, check out the VIP lounge, and much more. Accessible for those with mobility issues. Carpool with Cains leaves Peace at 10 am sharp! Please arrive at the Arts Center no later than 10:45.

Lunch to follow at 12:30 at Riviera Dunes Dockside, 102 Riviera Dunes Way, Palmetto, 941-304-3689, near the Manatee Convention Center; ample parking available. Pre-select your order from the following choices; pay on your own at the restaurant.

Classic Cobb Salad – greens, diced egg, tomato, cucumber, onion, carrots, avocado, bleu cheese crumbles - \$14 Add a protein: grilled chicken +\$6; grilled shrimp +\$7; crab cake or salmon +\$10; prime steak +\$11

Fish & Chips – Beer battered cod, seasoned fries, jicama citrus slaw, tartar sauce - \$19

Chicken Bruschetta Sandwich – marinated chicken breast, bruschetta, lettuce, balsamic vinaigrette, on

brioche bun - \$14 (with fries, fresh fruit, or jicama citrus slaw)

Steak Burger – ground steak, cheddar cheese, crisp lettuce, tomato, red onion, on brioche bun - \$14 (with fries, fresh fruit, or jicama citrus slaw)

Please make your lunch selection when you register for the event and advise if you wish to carpool.

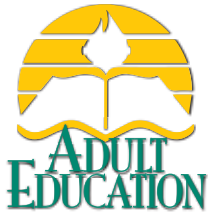
Sign-ups begin Sunday, April 30 with Cora Lee Cain and Gwen Certo.



Manatee Performing Arts Center



Riviera Dunes Dockside

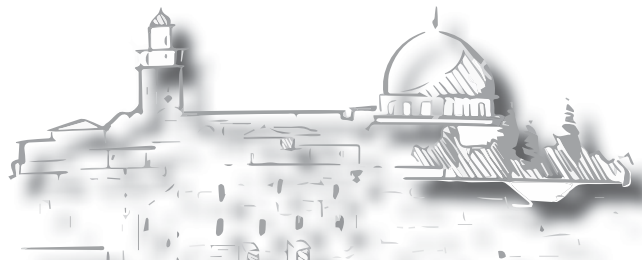


The Adult Education Team met on April 16 and discussed multiple learning opportunities for the congregation through the summer and into early fall as well as the resulting completion of recent offerings.

Living Fully, Dying Well had good attendance with special appreciation for Richard's provision of resources for writing our own memorial services, Advanced Directives, Necessity of DNR on FL orange paper, etc. (different than living will, health care surrogate, etc.). Steve Kersten presented a summary of the **2023 Lenten Small Group Campaign**: there were 6 small groups; 60+ participants; 3 or 4 will continue to meet in some form; positive evaluations.

This spring will finish with a class on *Ezra & Nehemiah* (see adjoining article), before celebrating *Pentecost* on May 28. This summer we will present a class on *Theology of MASH*, led by Rev. Craig Miller probably beginning June 25 through July 23. The Sundays in early June will be filled with class offerings by Rev. Elizabeth Deibert dealing with *Problematic Scriptures*. The next team meeting on June 4 will provide the team with time to develop and decide on the schedule for the remaining Sundays of the summer along with the fall schedule.

With team meetings scheduled on multiple Sundays throughout the year, members of the congregation are encouraged to find a team meeting of interest to them and drop in to experience how that team functions. Adult Education welcomes input and fresh ideas to better educate the congregation. If you have experienced a class at another church or long to know more about an area of your Christian faith, drop by at our June 4 meeting and voice your insight.



Ezra & Nehemiah

In 538 B.C.E. the Babylonian empire fell, and the Persian empire gained control of Mesopotamia and most of the Middle East. One of the first rulers of the empire, Cyrus, issued a famous edict allowing Jews who wished to return to "Jerusalem that is in Judah" and build a "House for the God of Heaven" to do so.

Ezra and Nehemiah tell a frustrating story. In many ways, the reality of the return to Zion did not measure up to the returnees' expectations. The temple they rebuilt was smaller and far less glorious than Solomon's had been, and religious challenges such as intermarriage and resistance to observance vexed their leaders. But the persistence and doggedness with which the Jews of the period confronted these challenges became a model for the generations that followed. "It is not incumbent on you to finish the work, but nor are you free to desist from it."

Join with Dr Bill Clough as he leads a class in studying the Israelites' struggles with their freedom on Sundays following Worship in Trinity Square through May 21.



FAITH AND FILM

Second Fridays at 2:30 p.m.
Peace Mask Policy will apply

All movies will begin at 2:30 pm in
Trinity Square at Peace

May 12, 2023

The Most Dangerous Year (2018, 1:30 NR)

Amy Cerniglia, Discussion Leader

Documentary. In 2016 a small group of families with transgender kids joined the fight against a wave of discriminatory anti-transgender legislation that swept the nation and their home state. With the help of a coalition

of civil rights activists and ally lawmakers, these families embarked on an uncharted journey of fighting for their children's lives and futures in this present-day civil rights story.



Mission News

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10.

God uniquely gives to all of us and these gifts are meant to be shared! The Mission Team helps us put our gifts to meaningful use by providing opportunities for all of us to give and serve. Our team has big hearts and a passion for helping others. Everyone is invited to join us—whether for a specific event, an ongoing volunteer opportunity, or as a team member.

The Mission team is grateful for our generous congregation (especially our Youth) who raised ~ \$2,800 in the Souper Bowl and ~\$1,500 with a Car Wash to benefit Beth-El and Turning Points. We also held another successful Crop Walk on the Peaceful Path, raising over \$2,000 to fight hunger for Church World Services and Our Daily Bread. Another big thank you to those who generously gave at our first Blood Drive since the pandemic began!

Our Habitat for Humanity volunteers pulled out our toolboxes again with the interfaith build-project for Yvette and Jose's new home



– which is now complete! We were thrilled to celebrate at the Dedication ceremony and are looking forward to starting a new build project in the fall.

The Peace Beth-El team put the Souper Bowl funds to good use with a much-needed restocking of the Beth-El food pantry! Our Turning Points volunteers played a big role in helping the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness complete data entry for the annual homeless census. We had a great time

at the Turning Points Volunteer Recognition Event – and the McSwain family continued to bless and brighten Turning Points with their cheerful artwork!

In our exploration of new opportunities, we joined Christ Church of Longboat Key (CCLBK) at a seed packing event for Hope Seeds International—who sends the seeds to impoverished people around the world to relieve hunger and provide income. We enjoyed the time with our CCLBK friends and helped them break their record for most seeds packed at an event—enough to support 1,050 families in Haiti!



Dedication of the Habitat for Humanity home that Peace volunteers worked on.

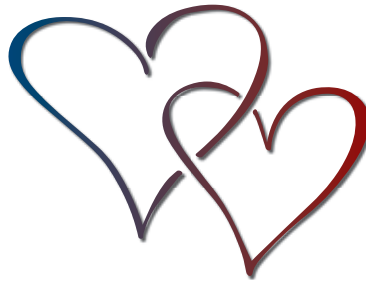


Blake and Zachary hoisting the Souper Bowl of Caring pots.

Congregational Care

The Congregational Care Team would like to welcome our newest Peace members. Peace is fortunate to have many Ministry Teams and Congregational Care is just that - "caring" for our members in a variety of ways. Our stated purpose is to nurture authentic relationships and pray for the congregation, with special attention to those in great need and through Stephen Ministry to provide one-on-one confidential care to people after a divorce, a death or another life crisis.

In addition to Stephen Ministers we have a group of 7 Prayers who pray each day of the week for each member of the congregation. Another group of 7 also pray daily for prayer needs mentioned in the Sunday bulletin as well as concerns that we receive during the week.



Congregational Care Leaders shepherd groups of families, known as Care Groups, as they become members. We stay in contact via emails, cards/notes, phone calls, and during Sunday worship and are available to answer new member questions, prayer concerns and joys, and friendship. Once you have settled into membership you will be contacted by one of our 17 Care Group Leaders and a new relationship begins.

We are so pleased that you have chosen membership in this wonderful Peace family.

Sally Schoeffel, Team Elder
Anne Warburton, Team Leader

Celebration of Charlotte's baptism, a family affair.



Maci, Tim, Jonathan, Jason and Connor working on nursery sound barriers.

Worship Events



Among recent accomplishments, Lenten and Holy Week services were very well-attended and successfully live-streamed.

Liturgists, Soloists and Voices of Peace have supported the Pastor's sermons, and Team members have assisted with Communion at all Services. Drama Ministry contributed with eight Peace actors participating in an enactment of John 9: 1-12 for the worship service March 19.

On Palm Sunday, seven actors gave a dramatic presentation of Matthew 21:1-11.

Maundy Thursday Service: Congregants attending gathered around tables of 12 in the sanctuary to have their hands washed and enjoy simple appetizers, before sharing some of the events of their lives and the Last Supper. They practiced loving one another via guided table conversation, scripture, songs, and prayers. As the sanctuary dimmed, those attending went with Jesus to Gethsemane, removing sacred pieces from the chancel while meditating on the final gloriously somber organ piece by Arvo Part. Eirinn and Lisa hosted a children's table.

Good Friday Service: It began and ended with two meditation stations in the narthex. There was prayer and accompanying beautiful music (Barber's Adagio), as all considered Peter's denial, the fickle crowd, and Jesus' forgiveness of the criminal. Children, teens, and adults pondered together the gift of life that comes via Christ's loving sacrifice. A sextet from Voices of Peace sang two selections and portions of the passion narrative were read, finishing with standing "Beneath the Cross of Jesus."

Easter Service was presented to a full Sanctuary with the children's Passion Play, multiple musical offerings by Voices of Peace, the bell choir, and Congregational singing, culminating with the Hallelujah Chorus and organ joined with trumpet in Widor's Toccata.

Members: Chet Day, Leader; Kathleen Forrester, Elder; Amy Cerniglia Music Director; Elizabeth Deibert, Staff Support; Natalie Bouchard, Terry Carlson, Karen Day, Don Deibert, Larry Forrester, Terri Holbrook, Karen (Klo) Wolfgang, Jane Miller, Luke Giaccone, David Howard.



Voices of Peace singing on Easter Sunday.



Elizabeth reading Good Friday scripture.



Cross covered with flowers on Easter Sunday.



Diners on Maundy Thursday in guided table conversations.



Congregation on Easter Sunday.

MATTHEW 25/EARTHCARE TEAM



In Matthew 25 Jesus tells us “In as much as you have done unto the least of these, you have done it to me.” Toward this end, we are working for a strong turnout from Peace at the Nehemiah Action meeting at Harvest United Methodist Church, 6:30 PM, May 8. Representatives of 15 congregations in STREAM

will meet with government officials seeking more affordable housing and reforms in the administration of justice using the **Adult PreArrest Diversion** program. The county is on its way

to create more than a thousand affordable housing units in the coming year. These modest reforms in the **Adult PreArrest Diversion** program and affordable housing can make dramatic differences, especially in the lives of “the least of these.”

Earthcare means caring for God’s amazing creation by practicing wise, humble, responsible stewardship of the earth. The team is working on responsible ways to keep mosquitoes and weeds under control without injuring wildlife, to reduce “our carbon footprint” with more efficient lighting and cooling, and to encourage our participants and the community to do the same. To that end, we are handing out laundry sheets to show an alternative to the plastic jugs. Eco friendly, staff tested!



It has been a wonderful spring with the Children, Youth and Families at Peace. We celebrated four baptisms, what a blessing! There will also be a baby shower on Mother’s Day for the new mothers! The Youth group worked on the creation and installation of sound buffers for the nursery and balanced out that work with a mini-golfing adventure. The Easter Play

filming was an energetic event for the children, during which Rev. Kelly Fitzgerald led a class for parents about Family Faith Formation at home. We hope you all enjoyed the kids’ drama efforts. Remember you can always view the children’s plays on our Peace YouTube channel.

Mark your calendars for Graduation Sunday on May 21st, where we will send our graduates off with our blessings. Zoe Thornton is graduating from Manatee High and Wally Cheso is

graduating from Parrish Community High School. Our prayers & best wishes go with them!

Thanks to the generosity of Peace folks, we raised \$2,500 at the Souper Bowl of Caring (which benefitted Beth-El) and another \$1,500 at our car wash to benefit Turning Points! God’s children of all ages believe it’s important to support those in need.

After we close out the school year, we look forward to summer camps! **Cedarkirk** offers camps all summer long. In addition, we are taking our kids to **Montreat** for Music and Worship in June and the teenagers to the **Montreat Youth Conference** in July. Our **Peace VBS Day Camp** will run July 24-28 and is \$40 for the week. It is called “Operation Restoration, mending God’s world” and is for kids starting K-5th grades. We would love to have some Peace adults run one of the Activity Centers for an hour (or more) that week. Can you offer up some time to come here for our Peace kids? All materials and plans are provided. Contact Eirinn to help out and join the fun!



Children actors from the Easter Play.

Children waiting for the Easter egg hunt.



Sabrina at the Manatee Pride festival.



Peace Youth playing minigolf.

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