

# MISSION OF THE MONTH Under the Cross (UTC) Youth

We are so grateful for your generous support of our youth ministry. Your contributions have been instrumental in making this youth group a great and trusting place for students to grow in their faith, and we look forward to 2025!

As our surrounding communities continue to grow, so does our ability to spread the message of God's love.

Every Sunday morning and Monday evening, our youth gather to dive into a Bible lesson, engage in group discussions, play games, and foster fellowship. These activities not only deepen their understanding of the Bible but also lay a strong foundation of faith. In addition, we organize various outings and fundraisers to promote participation and cultivate a sense of unity among our youth. Through the dedication of our volunteers, our youth are enveloped in the warmth of God's love.

A highly anticipated event for our youth each year is the summer camp held at Warren Willis United Methodist Camp in the Leesburg area. The anticipation of returning campers as well as the excitement of potentially new campers constantly surrounds the youth area. The transformative experience at camp leaves our youth inspired and invigorated in their spiritual journey, forming lasting bonds. Your unwavering support is crucial in making all these uplifting experiences possible.

We humbly urge you to consider contributing to our March Mission of the Month, supporting this meaningful ministry, and helping us extend God's love to even more students. If you are interested in learning more or volunteering with our youth, please reach out to Faniel Pradel at faniel@sccumc.com or call the church office at (813) 634-2539. Your involvement can make a profound difference in the lives of our youth and the community. Thank you once again for your constant support and belief in our mission.





#### **A Word From Our Pastor**



#### Lent in the Year of Our Lord

Growing up in an independent Baptist congregation, we never celebrated the seasons of the Church. I mean, we celebrated Christmas Day and Easter, but significant seasons like Advent and Lent were largely ignored. We didn't even come to church on Christmas Eve, let alone observe Ash Wednesday or Holy Week services! In fact, it wasn't until I joined the United Methodist Church that I learned about something called *The Liturgical Calendar*. I remember sitting down with our Director of Adult Discipleship, a man named John Wortinger, who was a wonderful resource for a young developing methodist, and him patiently walking me through the Church year: Advent to Christmas, Christmas to

Epiphany, Epiphany to Lent, Lent to Easter, Easter to Pentecost, Pentecost to Kingdomtide, and Kingdomtide to Christ the King Sunday (last Sunday before Advent). I remember him explaining to me the meaning of *liturgy* (the work of the people), the significance of colors, and how each season would bring a change to the altar parametrs.

I remember feeling completely captivated by this new idea that the Church would mark every day of the year by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Honestly, while I'm grateful for my Baptist heritage, I still feel a little cheated by my church's failure to observe such spiritually significant seasons.

I remember my first Ash Wednesday, coming forward with Sarah, our pastor placing ashes on my forehead. I remember him saying my name and telling me to "Repent and believe the gospel." I remember coming home that night and looking at myself in the mirror for a long time, studying the little ashen cross on my forehead. I remember not wanting to wash it off so quickly and talking to Sarah about what we might "give up" for Lent.

The liturgical calendar opened my eyes to a new way of marking time, and *Lent* introduced me to the intentional spiritual discipline of fasting: intentionally denying myself of something good so that I might hone my heart for a season. Remembering the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, that I might "... take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).

Ash Wednesday is March 5<sup>th</sup> and we'll be holding two services: one at noon and one at 6:30pm. I hope you'll come receive the ashes and begin a new season of spiritual awakening.



### Visits & Visions with or Pastors

Calling all Snowbirds!

Pastors Cynthia and Travis warmly invite those who missed our "Visits & Visions" sessions in the fall to join in one of the upcoming dates.

The fall sessions were not only enjoyable, but also immensely helpful for our new pastors to connect with and understand our congregation better.

During these sessions, the Pastors are eager to hear your thoughts. They will open the floor for you to share your thoughts and visions for our church. Join in for a wonderful time with our Pastors allowing for deeper connections and insights into our congregation.

Sessions will be held in the Life Enrichment Center (LEC)

Dates: Wednesday, February 26 at 10:00 AM Monday, March 10 at 6:30 PM

No Sign Up Necessary!

### **Honoring Our Volunteers**



As we walk into our beautiful sanctuary and look toward the chancel area each Sunday, everything is in place for worship.

The altar cloths are current, and the candles are ready for lighting. Karen Ransbury, joined by Karen Koszoru, Seville Norton

and Joanne Dion come in every Tuesday to serve in this ministry. With smiles, they said, "Our hearts are in this church, and we serve with joy and gratitude."



# SHROVE TUESDAY Pancake Jinner

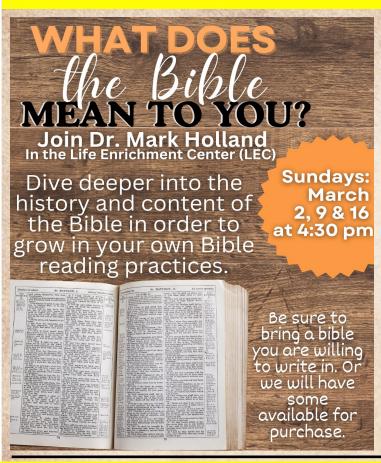
# Tuesday, March 4th 5:00pm - 6:30pm

Are you curious about Shrove Tuesday?
It's a fascinating day with rich traditions and history. Celebrated in many countries, Shrove Tuesday is also known as Pancake Day in some places. It's the day before Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of Lent in the Christian calendar, a period of fasting and reflection. Traditionally, it's a time to indulge in rich foods before the Lenten fast begins.

Last year marked our first Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner, and it was met with great enthusiasm. This year promises to be just as wonderful! Come and indugle in the syrupy goodness. Join us anytime between 5:00 and 6:30. Tickets are free and can be picked up in the office. Donations will be warmly accepted at the door that evening.



## **Upcoming Bible Studies**

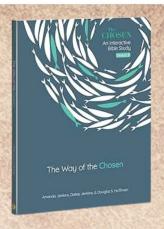


"The Way of the Chosen?"

Starting March 11 Weekly Tuesdays

4:30PM | Room 30

Led by: Victoria Sorensen



We all have to choose: the wide road that leads to destruction or the narrow path that leads to life. The third season of the groundbreaking television show, The Chosen, picks up with how Jesus' followers apply His teaching to their lives. This study works in tandem with each episode of the show. In modeling "the narrow road that leads to life" it includes: Forgiving the way Jesus does, Going when and where He says to go, Grieving what He grieves, Standing firm on His words and character, Delighting in the things that please Him, Asking because He says to, Welcoming those He welcomes, and Trusting His will and way.

Sign up in the church office. Study books available for \$10.

## 'Happenings' with Next Gen -Faniel Pradel

Hello Sun City Center, UMC! This month we had a very Super Sunday! We had a great turn out for our Super Bowl Sunday Flag Football game! Around 16 students and about 10 volunteers were out and about. Tons of highlights filled the afternoon along with some fun conversation among players and onlookers. A big thank you to our friends over at South Shore UMC for letting us use their field. We are looking forward to making this a staple for our ministry and see if we can have new friends join in on the fun next year! We also had our Super Bowl watch party over at Creason Hall. Unfortunately for our Chiefs fans, the night wasn't as great as they'd hope, but overall it was nice to share some food and laughs and lots of cheers! Thanks to our volunteers who came out and watched along with us.

Finally, we are so used to hearing about Valentine's day, and all the things that come with it during the month of February, but here at UTC Youth, we talked about Love in many of its ways and what Jesus says about the term "Love". From learning our love languages (Physical touch, Words of affirmation, Gift giving, Quality time, and Acts of service) and how to give and receive said language to Loving your neighbor and enemy and what that looks like in today's world, February has been filled with good chats and lessons!

#### **Upcoming Events:**

**Bowling Night:** We are planning to take our youth as well as invite our friends from Cypress Mill over to the Alley to show off their skills at the lanes! Sunday night, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 5pm - 7pm at The Alley at South Shore.

UTC 9 Square Tournament: Join us on March 30th at 2 PM in the LEC for an exciting event! Remember the simple yet enjoyable schoolyard game, 4 Square? Well, this tournament takes it to a whole new level! We're hosting a 9 Square Tournament, which includes even more rules and five additional squares! We invite our church family to come and cheer on our UTC Youth as they compete. Concessions will be available for purchase, and during a brief intermission, adventurous attendees can try their hand at an amateur face-off. If you're interested in sponsoring a player, please email faniel@sccumc.com for more information. Be there or be squared!

**Friday Fun Night (Camp Night):** On April 11<sup>th</sup> we are visiting our friends at Cypress Mill to hang out, eat some food, and play some games. We are also going to have Corey Jones, director of the Warren Willis United Methodist Camp, with us to talk to our Cypress Mill residents about Camp and how we can help them get there this summer!

### Thank God It's Variety (T.G.I.V.) -Larry Hirchak

As we continue to travel down the 2025 highway, there are many more great concerts on the horizon! The concerts thus far this year have been very well received and the artists have all expressed their appreciation for the beautiful venue as well as the audience response during the programs!

We are kicking off the month on March 7th with a returning artist that is teaming up with another performer in **Barbra and Frank**, "The Concert That Never Was". Sharon Owens and Sebastian Anzoldo captivate audiences world-wide with their original self-produced Las Vegas show that brings laughter, tears and joy to every person. Sebastian's crooning sounds of Sinatra bring "memories" of "ol' blue eyes" himself while the uncanny looks of Sharon bring out the Funny Girl, Streisand herself, and does it the only way she knows how...Her Way.

On Sunday afternoon March 9<sup>th</sup>, we will be presenting our **Annual Handbell Concert**. Under the direction of Jeff Jordan, Nancy Harris and Holly Bowes, the three ensembles - Bellissima, Jubellation and Glory Ringers - will be playing a varied program including original works as well as traditional hymns and spirituals and also some contemporary favorites. Larry Hirchak will perform a piece with Jubellation as well as an original arrangement on the Bell Tree.

Get ready for some lively sounds from the past out of the Detroit, Michigan area! The **Sounds of Soul** – Motown and Beyond will take the stage on Friday March 21<sup>st</sup>! This exciting, high-energy group unleashes superior vocals and slick dance moves powered by pure soul! Delighting audiences across the nation since 1996, the group is comprised of five seasoned performers who have excelled as outstanding singers, dancers, songwriters and recording artists. The show is a combination of Motown classics mixed with some of the greatest hits of all time from The Temptations, The Four Tops, Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, The Supremes, Lionel Richie, Tina Turner, Barry White and more.

Closing out the month on Friday March 28<sup>th</sup>, you will be treated to the amazing trio **Jive Talkin'** who will present a Bee Gees Tribute. As you all know, The Bee Gees produced multiple platinum albums, many hits and movie tracks such as the legendary *Saturday Night Fever*. Close your eyes and you will think the real Gibb Brothers are performing! Open your eyes and experience the illusion that they're standing in front of you! An unforgettable night awaits you as you hear the hit tunes *Stayin' Alive, Night Fever, More Than A Woman, Jive Talkin'*, *Nights on Broadway* and many more!

Thank you once again for supporting this wonderful outreach music ministry!

Larry Hirchak, TGIV Concert Series Coordinator

### **Update from VRT**

Happy St. Patrick's Day from the VRT! We are a dedicated group of Christian volunteers engaged in community projects, His Helpers, church maintenance, disaster response, and recycling. (Remember, you can contribute even if you are not a VRT member.)

The VRT is currently seeking volunteers for the Team Recorder and Youth Volunteer positions. For more information, please reach out to Linda McGovern at lwmcgovern@gmail.com.

ERT Basic (new member) training is set for Saturday, March 1, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Our meetings take place on the third Wednesday of each month in room 19 from 2:30 to 4:00 PM. The next meeting will be on March 19, 2025.

The Volunteer Response Team (VRT) of Sun City Center is always on the lookout for individuals with diverse skills to join us. In addition to those with handy skills, we need cooks, organizers, administrators, and individuals who can provide a caring Christian presence.

If you are interested in becoming an active member of our VRT, we encourage you to join our monthly meeting and register for our VRT email database at http://eepurl.com/gew3MD.



#### THURSDAY, MARCH 20TH AT 8:00AM

Please plan to join this month's Men's Breakfast. It'll be a good time with good guys, so don't be afraid to bring a buddy with you. This is a great opportunity to make new friends and meet some new brothers.

Men's Breakfast is the 3rd Thursday each month. Cost is \$10.00. Please sign up by March 16th.



SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH

SET YOUR CLOCKS ONE





#### NEW MEMBER FELLOWSHIP

Tuesday, March 18 @ 4:00 PM in the LEC

All are invited who are new to the church or have an interest in joining the church in membership. This will be

a time to hear from our pastors and our lay leaders as well as learn about opportunities to serve and about the foundational principles of United Methodism.

If you wish to become a member of the church, we will be welcoming new members during all three services on Sunday, March 30th If you are interested in joining but unable to attend the New Member Fellowship with the Pastors, please contact Aisling at aturner@sccumc.com.

#### **Memorial Garden**

Our Memorial Garden with columbarium was established in 2010 as a final resting place symbolizing peace and love. Under the leadership of Pastor Debbie and our Trustees, a second columbarium has been placed with 48 additional niches to meet the needs of our church family.

Through a generous donation, there are plans for additional landscaping and beautification of this sacred place. Thank you to Mike Schoonover, Gene Valcke and Ron Windsor for their volunteer assistance.



If you have questions about our process, or are interested in purchasing a niche in our columbarium, please contact Aisling Turner, either in the office or by email at aturner@sccumc.com

# Break Away with Breakaway - Renee Tisdale

Hello from Breakaway! As always, it doesn't matter what activities we're doing; being together equals a fantastic time! We're currently loving the Foosball and Air Hockey games that have recently been added to Creason. Although they were donated to the



youth ministry, please know that Breakaway is truly appreciative of your generous contributions!

Even though we didn't see any snow during that crazy cold front, it didn't stop us from enjoying several snowball fights! These playful battles are a blast; they warm us up and prepare us for lunch! Every afternoon, after we eat, we play a game of balloon volleyball, which is a favorite for many. It helps us stay energized - no need for after-lunch naps - and gets us excited for dessert!



We did a few crafts for Valentine's Day, creating "icy hearts" for our windows with Jennilyn, and making paper garlands, and foam hearts that our friends practiced sewing with Carrie. Lynette also brought over some delicious cookies for everyone to decorate and enjoy!

Thanks to a few amazing volunteers, we have managed to feed ourselves daily, but we are always in need of more assistance! If you enjoy shopping and cooking for around 40 to 45 people, we still require many

lunches for March and beyond, and we would love for you to become part of our family! If you're interested, please reach out to me directly, by email at breakawaymin@sccumc.com or call 813-634-2539 x 1011.

We are looking forward to our Third Volunteer Appreciation Party, scheduled for the end of February. I often mention that Breakaway has the very best volunteers, and this event provides a wonderful opportunity to gather off campus for a night of food, dancing, celebration, and recognizing the amazing work they do!

If you're on Facebook, please check out the Breakaway Respite Ministry page, you can get a glimpse of what we do each day. It might spark your interest, and who knows, you might want to become part of the Breakaway family as well! If you're interested in volunteering, please feel free to stop by any Monday or Wednesday between 10AM and 2PM.



# Center 4Life Learning Come Learn and Be Entertained

#### 2025 Spring & Summer Classes

Embracing Detox!... Chemicals Aren't Our Friends Saturday, March 15 | 11:00AM - 2:00PM

**iPhone Tips and Features** Wednesday, April 9 | 10:00AM - 11:30PM

**Sign Language** Mondays, 4/14-5/19 | 10:30AM - 12:00PM

Vitality Though Our Ages! Saturday, May 10 | 11:00AM - 2:00PM

For class descriptions and instructors' bios, visit our website or Center office.

# Center 4Life Learning's upcoming trips and tours!

Sylvia, Early Bird Dinner Theater, Clearwater

March 20, 2025





Visit Tarpon Springs

May 13, 2025

StarLite Luncheon Cruise with Entertainment, South Pasadena

May 22, 2025





Jesus Christ Superstar, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota

June 4, 2025

Visit Downtown Mt. Dora

October 1, 2025



# Reservations Fill Up Fast – Register Today!

Contact the Center 4Life Learning office at 813-634-8607

email at center4life@sccumc.com, or visit our website at www.sccumc/4lifelearning



# CALLING ALL WOMEN! COME TO BRUNCH! WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025, 10:00 AM

Reservations must be made and paid for on or before Sunday, March 23, 2025. Cost for the March brunch will be \$10.00 and will be provided by Fred's Marketplace.

The menu will be items from their famous Southern-style breakfast offerings, including scrambled eggs, biscuits and sausage gravy, bacon, sausage, possibly cheese grits, pancakes, and muffins. If you have ever been to Fred's on 301 in Riverview then you know we will be in for a scrumptious meal.

Members of the Pelican Players will provide us with another one of their great performances!

Brunch this year will be much different than the last two years as we live into a new normal at the church. We, (Victoria and Debbie), have decided to do brunch quarterly, sort of. The dates for this year, 2025, will be March 26, July 23, and October 22. The themes, as well as the entertainment are yet to be determined. Since we will be having our meals catered, we are going to do our best to keep the cost between \$10 and \$15. Now, if some of you are interested in cooking for us, we would be most happy to entertain your offer, but most of us would rather someone else do the work and allow us to sit back and enjoy!

A probable theme for July is Summertime cookouts, barbecues, and picnics! You can see where we are going with that menu! Brunch isn't always breakfast! A possible theme for October is a Costume Party. Not sure where that will go for menu possibilities, but there may be some tricks or treats, and you may want to wear costumes! We have some possibilities for programs but would be glad for any suggestions you may have using those themes.

Victoria and Debbie are willing to take the responsibility for all the above, but we wanted to make sure you know you are not forgotten, that we love you and enjoy being with you, even if it isn't every month. That may change in the future, but we like change, don't we! Change can be an opportunity for adventure and growth!

So for now, we hope to see you in March, and don't forget to register in the church office by Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The sibling trio called "Cain" has become a very popular Contemporary Christian group, especially since their hit song *Rise Up (Lazarus)* came out in 2020. Another of the songs that our praise band shares [and will be sharing on March 2<sup>nd</sup> again] is *I'm So Blessed*. Here is a bit of the lyrics for the song...

... on my best day, I'm a child of God, On my worst day, I'm a child of God, Oh, every day is a good day, And You're the reason why

I'm so blessed, I'm so blessed, Got this heartbeat in my chest, No, it doesn't matter about the rest, If I got You, Lord, I'm so blessed

I'm so blessed, Hallelujah, I'm blessed, I'm so blessed, Hallelujah, I'm blessed

OK, so why are you sharing this in your newsletter article this month, Jeff? For starters, those first two lines [the beginning of the so-called "Pre-Chorus"] are words to live by, right? More importantly and the main reason I'm sharing this is because... I AM... I AM VERY BLESSED!

And I thought it might be a good thing to share some more personal stuff this time, especially as I think about the last several weeks, so here goes. As many of you have heard, Kai, my seven-year child-rearing 'project' turned 20 on January 17<sup>th</sup>. The next day we [finally] found him a place of his own! He's living with another very nice young man over on Shell Point Road. This is a blessing, perhaps a miracle given the fact that he had a VERY difficult young life with several traumatic episodes. There have been times in the last several years that he was unable to leave his bedroom because of some serious psych issues, but now I'm thrilled to tell you that he seems to be doing very well on his own, AND he's just a few miles away from 'Dad', praise God! Thank you for all your encouragement, gifts and prayers for Kai – y'all have helped me through this sometimes-very-difficult time!

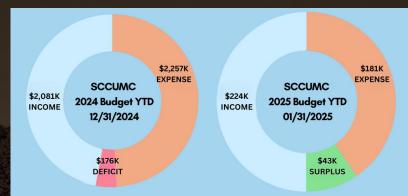
The second more personal thing I'd like to share is the joy that I've found in my life partner, Lisa. This past Valentine's Day we celebrated four years together, the happiest four years of my life, for sure. I know that doesn't sound like many years to those that have been married for fifty or sixty [or more!] years, but it means the world to us! Yes, we are wearing rings that we exchanged a few years ago because we have 'promised' ourselves to one another [ask me about THAT story some time!]. We are not married and still have separate houses, but that may change in the future [fingers & toes crossed!].

Finally, I feel very blessed to be a part of this amazing family of faith. Thanks to all of you for your never-ending love, encouragement and grace!

Soli Deo Gloria

### **Finance Update**

The first word for this financial update is THANK YOU. As a congregation, you have been incredibly faithful to the needs of the church. You are also encouraging and curious. This is very meaningful to your pastors and leaders. To report, we ended 2024 with a greatly reduced deficit compared to earlier reports. Financial giving in November and December was tremendous and the final deficit to be addressed is \$176,000. The finance



committee is working with our accountants to best rectify the deficit in a way that protects our restricted accounts and sets us on a healthy course going forward.

The new year is beginning well. As you know, we approved a balanced budget for this year. January was very positive and several of you pre-paid your pledges for the entire year. Let's not get too comfortable, though! Keep up the good and faithful work. Our staff and ministries are working daily to monitor expenses, and our congregation is faithfully offering resources to support the ministry that is happening. Together, we will live into a very fruitful year ahead. Our hope is to keep you informed at all stages. Please communicate any questions to the church office and we will get answers to you. Thank you!

#### Vivacious Ministries -with Victoria

"Spring: a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be." – Unknown Welcome to March!

As I walk with my husband in our neighborhood or even here on the church campus, it is hard to believe that we are experiencing the beginning of Spring all around us. Our flowers bloom and we hear the chirps of newly born birds all around and we see how God has brought things into a new season for us to enjoy.

February has flown by so fast, but as I sit and am reflecting while writing to you, so many things have happened on our campus in the month of February. As we started the month, we were blessed to have the Mission Smiles Mobile Dental Clinic on the campus. What a wonderful sight to see twenty-two individuals from our community receive dental care. I want to thank our wonderful dentists and hygienists who served those in need, and I also want to thank our wonderful volunteers, Karen Koszoru, Lindy Langlois, Linda Raymon, Mary Beyersbergen, Sheila Thurston, Madeline and Shaquitta Hughes, Sue Holter, Barb Geist, and Linda Whitt for their care of our community members, we could not have had such a successful day without you.



Our dear friend Rick Norwood left for Cuba on Thursday, February 12th to meet with our sister church. Rick arrived safely and had wonderful visit

with our brothers and sisters in Cuba, and we can hardly wait to hear about his visit. In the meantime, I am including a picture he's shared. Hola Rick!

On February 18<sup>th</sup> and February 20<sup>th</sup>, we had the pleasure of hosting Tampa General Hospital for two health classes, one on sleep disorders, and another on A-Fib. Both classes; assisted individuals in understanding more about how to deal with sleep disorders and living with A-Fib. What a wonderful gift to be able to help those in our community.

On Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, we hosted the Annual Military Order of World Wars (MOWW) Youth Leadership Seminar. It was wonderful to host students from around our community to learn leadership skills, and what it means to work as a team. Seeing these young leaders come together and learn brings me such joy as I see our next generation in action.

Just a couple more things before I close. On Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, we will be hosting Moffitt Cancer Center SouthShore in the Life Enrichment Center from 2pm until 4pm to hear about the newest addition to our community. Ms. Jeannette Palencia will come and share all that the new cancer center is offering to our community so please come and listen to how Moffitt is helping us.



Additionally, on Tuesday March 11<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30pm, I will start Season 3 of *The Chosen-The Way of the Chosen*. This is a change because Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, will be our Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner from 5pm to 6:30pm. If you are interested in signing up for this class, please stop by the church office and see Heather. Books for this class are \$10. I hope to see you in class!

In closing, I know that I always say how grateful I am for each one of you in our congregation. This may seem a little redundant, but I am profoundly grateful for each of you and what you do to help on the church campus through our different ministries and with our continued outreach into our local community. We truly are the hands and feet of Jesus to so many in our community, and it is because of your generosity and love that we are able to continue to accomplish so much. Thank you for answering God's call to love each other fully.

Much love and many blessings to each of You! Victoria

#### **Attention Online Viewers!!**



We would be delighted to feature a photo of you or your family in our Welcome video, that is shown at the beginning of each Sunday service.

Please send your photo to Aisling Turner at aturner@sccumc.com and let us know whether you attend the Traditional or Contemporary service.

If you have any questions or need assistance with sending your photo, feel free to reach out.

Thank you for being a valued member of our church family!



Saturday, March 15th 10AM - 1PM Sunday March 16th 9:30AM - 12:30PM

Do you have an overwhelming number of handbags? Perhaps some jewelry that you no longer wear and are unsure of what to do with? Pages of Life Bookstore is currently accepting donations of gently used handbags and jewelry for a fundraiser to send our youth to summer camp.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the sale where not only will you find unique treasures, but also support a wonderful cause!

Donations can be brought to the Pages of Life Bookstore during normal operating hours: Mon - Thurs | 10 AM - 2 PM Sun | 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM