

Gulf Breezes

Monthly Newsletter of Gulf Cove United Methodist Church

Helping Everyone

EXPERIENCE EMBRACE ENGAGE

Jesus & Community

From the Pastor

March is here, and with it comes the searching, steady season of Lent—that stretch of time that walks us toward Easter morning. Somewhere in this month we will wave palm branches and shout “Hosanna!” on Palm Sunday, celebrating Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem. We know how that story unfolds. The cheers don’t last. The road turns. The week grows heavy. And yet, Jesus keeps walking. If that doesn’t feel relevant to where many of us are right now, I’m not sure what does.

When I was a kid, I thought Lent was basically a 40-day spiritual grounding. Give up candy. Give up soda. Give up fun. Try not to smile too much. It felt like when my Game Boy was taken away and I was stuck sitting with “Old Man Ralph” while he pondered stories that seemed to have no end. I was convinced I was being punished. Years later, I realized something. My parents weren’t punishing me—they were protecting space. They didn’t want distraction to drown out wisdom. And that man I once endured? He became one of my dearest buddies. Lent is not about punishment. It’s about protected space. It’s about turning down the noise long enough to hear the voice of Christ—often not audibly, but through the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit.

And let’s be honest: we live in a world that is very, very good at filling our ears.

Picture a dog who absolutely loves tennis balls. Not just one—three. Maybe four. He stuffs them all in his mouth, tail wagging, proud of his accomplishment. Then someone tosses him a rawhide bone. Now he’s at a fork in the road. He wants the bone. He sees the bone. He knows the bone is better. But he cannot carry the bone unless he drops what’s already filling his mouth. Sometimes Lent works like that. We give up things we secretly wanted to give up anyway—dessert, social media, maybe that third cup of coffee that already makes us jittery. And that’s fine. But the deeper invitation of Lent is not subtraction for the sake of suffering. It is exchange. What if we released something that holds us back from Christ and intentionally filled that space with something that moves us toward Him? Less scrolling, more Scripture. Less noise, more prayer. Less outrage, more compassion. Less hurry, more listening. You can’t hold the bone if your mouth is full of tennis balls.

As your pastor, I know many of us are carrying heavy things this March. Health concerns that won’t seem to resolve. Unanswered “whys.” Grief that shows up when we least expect it. Doubts we never thought we’d wrestle with. Some of us are tired. Some of us are quietly overwhelmed. Some of us are praying prayers

that feel like they're bouncing off the ceiling. Lent meets us right there. It reminds us that faith is not pretending everything is fine. Faith is walking toward Jerusalem even when we don't fully understand what waits there. The disciples had questions too. They didn't grasp the cross. They certainly didn't see the resurrection coming the way it did. And yet Jesus kept walking. And He still does.

Later this month, we will celebrate Palm Sunday. We'll remember the palms, the hope, the joy of welcoming a King. But Holy Week teaches us something important: the same voices that shout "Hosanna!" can struggle days later. Isn't that us sometimes? One week we're full of confidence and praise. The next week we're whispering, "Lord, where are You?" Lent prepares our hearts for both. It trains us to stay near Jesus—not just when the crowd is cheering, but when the path grows uncertain.

There is so much competing for our attention right now—news cycles, notifications, endless commentary, strong opinions, constant noise. In the middle of all that, the Holy Spirit often speaks in a whisper. Lent invites us to tune in again. Maybe it's five quiet minutes in the morning. Maybe it's opening your Bible before opening your phone. Maybe it's pausing before reacting. What if the very thing that feels like it's being "taken away" is actually making room for something better? Just like my Game Boy. Just like those tennis balls.

Easter is coming—not just as a holiday on the calendar, but as a declaration that light overcomes darkness, life overcomes death, and hope overcomes despair. But we don't rush there. We walk there. Step by step. Release by release. Prayer by prayer. This March, may we not treat Lent as punishment. May we see it as preparation. May we have the courage to let go of what clutters our hearts and the faith to receive what draws us closer to Christ. And if you happen to see a dog juggling tennis balls this month, just remember: sometimes growth requires dropping something good so you can receive something better. We are walking this

road together, and I am grateful to walk it with you.

Love you Church,
Mike

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 8am** **Traditional Worship Service**
 - 9:30am** **Contemporary Worship Service**
 AND Kids Church (PK-5) #109
 - 9:30am** **Adult Sunday School #D**
 - 11am** **Traditional Worship Service**
 - 4-6pm** **Youth Group (gr 6-12) #D**
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WEDNESDAYS AT GULF COVE

- Midweek Boost** ~ meets with Pastor Mike at 12pm.
 - Pastor's Bible Study** ~ meets at 4:30pm.
 - Jesus Rocks** ~ Grades K-5 meet from 6-7:30pm.
 - Youth** ~ Grades 6-12 meet from 6-7:30pm.
 - Praise Band Rehearsal** ~ 6pm.
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March 8, 2026



Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed on Saturday. (We know, most of you use your phone alarm and it is automatic, but for us Luddites....)



Tickets are now available during the 8:00 and 11:00 services. Call or text Sue at 860.608.3686 with questions.



Scout Troop 776 Presents:



Saturday, March 28, 5 – 7:30pm

**Gulf Cove United Methodist Church
1100 S McCall Rd, Port Charlotte**

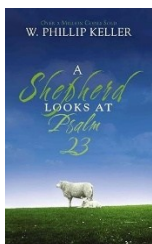
Menu Includes:

- Spaghetti
- Sauce – Meat or marinara
- Garlic bread
- Beverage
- Dessert

Tickets: Available Sunday, March 22 or at the door.

- \$15 - Adults
- \$8 - Ages 5-11
- FREE - Children under 5

LENTEN STUDIES



SUNDAY MORNINGS - 11am – 12pm – Book Study

March 1, March 8, March 15, March 22 Facilitators: Steve and Pat Langford

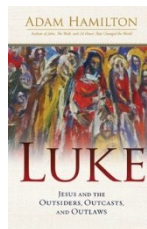
This 4-week book study includes weekly handouts and readings. The class will meet from 11am – 12pm in Room #109 on Sundays in March.

SUNDAY EVENINGS - 4:30PM – 6PM

Soup Supper and Video Study

February 22 – March 29, excluding March 8.

Facilitators: Steve Langford, Andy Frick, Patty Frick



Based on the Adam Hamilton book *Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts and Outlaws*, this study will meet on Sunday evenings during Lent. We will begin with a light supper of soup and bread, followed by our video and discussion time. We will be done by 6pm and it should still be light out! Please sign up so we know how many people to expect.

HOLY WEEK

Sunday, March 29 - Palm Sunday

One combined Service at 10am followed by a potluck.

Thursday, April 2 – Maundy Thursday

Simple “Last Supper” Service & Potluck at 5pm in the sanctuary.

Friday, April 3 – Good Friday

Service in the sanctuary at 6pm.

Saturday, April 4 – Easter Festival

Egg Hunt, Activities, Food for kids and their families. Volunteers needed. 11am – 1pm.

Sunday, April 5 – Easter Sunday

6:45 am - Easter Sunrise Services
Bring your lawn chair and bug spray.

8am & 11am Traditional Easter Service

9:30am Contemporary Easter Service

Continental Breakfast will be available between services.

HELP WANTED!



What
CAN
you
do?

Nurture Team – Thank you to Billie Jones for agreeing to join our nurture team. If you are still interested in helping with this ministry, please contact the office. We are always happy to have more helpers.

Greeters/Ushers-sign-up at the back of the sanctuary for 8am and 9:30am services. Talk with Nancy Spaulding at 386.868.8604 for 11am service.

Hospitality -Help when you can- one week or one month. It's up to you! Make beverages first thing, set out goodies before and after 8am service, or clean up at the end of the morning. Sign-up in the back of the sanctuary or call the church office at 941.697.1747.

Barn Boys-Mowing and trimming-contact John Furtado at 941.830.0121.

First Impressions-Weeding and pruning – contact Ken Priest at 941.769.0581.

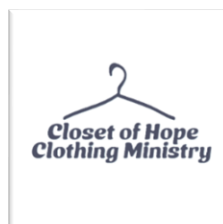
Community OUTREACH



Englewood Helping

Hand needs the following: bar soap, toilet paper, shelf stable or powdered milk, condiments, instant mashed potatoes, ramen noodles, rice, tuna, canned chicken, canned beans (kidney, black, refried, baked), canned pasta, canned chili, soups, peanut butter, cereal, or any shelf stable foods. Donations can be

placed in the EHH bin in the Narthex entry. Please be sure items have not expired.



The Closet of Hope at Gulf Cove United Methodist Church offers free clothing for children and adults of all ages.

The Closet is open the first and third Saturdays of the month (except holidays), from

9:30am until 12pm. Donations can be brought to the Closet on Thursday mornings at 9:30am or when they are open on Saturdays. Anyone interested in helping with this outreach ministry should contact Sandy Palmer at 941.204.3322.



STEPHEN MINISTERS ~ If you or someone you know needs one-on-one, confidential, Christ-centered care due to grief, illness, caregiving stress, job loss,

transitions, and more, contact Andy Frick, our Stephen Minister Leader at 520.309.0098 or andrewfrick30@gmail.com.

COMING SOON:



Our annual Easter Festival will be held on **Saturday, April 4** from 11am – 1pm. Keep your eyes open for volunteer opportunities.

Contact: Holly Tozer.

PIG PICKIN' FUNDRAISER ~ **SAVE THE DATE** -- **Friday Apr 10, 11:30am-6:30pm**. Watch for Details & Sign-Up Sheets!

**United Methodist
South West Florida District**

Lay Servant Ministries upcoming classes for all UMC Laity. Sign up NOW!

For more information CONTACT: Rev. Ken DeWalt, Co-Chair kendewalt1@gmail.com OR Bobbi Ballardene, Co-Chair tumcnorthport@gmail.com OR Dr. Pamela Craig, Manatee County church contact and Instructor pamelascraig@gmail.com OR Barbara Patton, Lee County Instructor Barbara-patton@comcast.net

All classes 10 hours long, \$5 registration fee, purchase the text before class, three tracks of certification after the basic introductory class: Lay Servant, Lay Speaker, Lay Minister.

BASIC Introduction to Lay Servant Ministries. 5 ZOOM classes, 10am to noon Saturdays,

Saturday, February 28 until Mar 28, 2026
Purchase this book and read and complete before the class begins. Register by mailing a check for the \$5 registration fee made out to Ken DeWalt (instructor), 7 Jute St, Alva, FL, 33920. Kendewalt1@gmail.com

Each One A Minister: Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts, 10 Hours

Required Book: Each One A Minister, William J. Carter

Mondays, 6:00 – 8:00 VIA ZOOM, Course Dates: April 13, 20, 27; May 4, 11

Register before April 12, 2026, by emailing Pamela Craig @ pamelascraig@gmail.com. Include your name, email, and telephone/text number, along with any questions you might have.

Registration fee - \$5.00. Send check made out to Pamela Craig (instructor) and mailed to 6507 Drewrey’s Bluff, Bradenton, FL 34203

Living Our United Methodist Beliefs, 10 Hours

Required Book: The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs By Kenneth L. Carder
Mondays, 6:00 – 8:00 pm VIA ZOOM, Course Dates: June 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29

Register before May 31, 2026, by emailing Pamela Craig @ pamelascraig@gmail.com. Include your name, email, and telephone/text number, along with any questions you might have. Registration fee - \$5.00. Send check made out to Pamela Craig and mailed to 6507 Drewrey’s Bluff, Bradenton, FL 34203

Stewardship

is heart work



"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
Matthew 6:19-21

COMMUNION OFFERING ENVELOPES

Each month a different fund is chosen by our church leadership to receive these special gifts. If you wish to give above and beyond your usual tithe **for March, the Communion Offering is designated for the Outreach Ministries Fund.**

SECOND SUNDAY ~ SECOND MILE

GIVING is another opportunity to go above and beyond your normal giving to support the church. This collection always goes to our reserve fund, so that we may pay our bills when gifts and tithes will not cover our regular monthly expenses.

	JANUARY	2026 YTD
Spendable Income		
Received	41,193.32	41,193.32
Expenses	44,354.59	44,354.59
Surplus/Deficit	(3,161.27)	(3,161.27)
Reserve Funds Used	0.00	0.00
Designated Funds Rec'd	7,145.16	7,145.16



Charlotte Halbert	3/1
Weylin Carlton	3/1
Janet Followell	3/2
Bruce Halbert	3/3
Heather Gilchrist	3/4
Shirley Marken	3/5
Mark Johnston	3/6
Liana Corn	3/7
Cindy Gettle	3/7
Al Marken	3/10
Bob Wollmacher	3/11
Dallis Walchle III	3/11
Derek Hughes	3/11
Ginny Torr	3/15
Russ Treible	3/21
Jean Burrows	3/21
Doris Hixson	3/24
Joyce Furtado	3/25
Kathy Green	3/30
Ian Newton	3/30
Chuck Mortensen	3/31
Chet Hallett	3/31
Charlotte Shea	3/31

Bruce & Charlotte Halbert	3/2
Alfred & Karen Current III	3/16
Jess & Mary Hollenbeck	3/25
Jerry & Billie Jones	3/29

MARCH SERMON SERIES

- March 1 ***Are You an Optimist?***
Psalm 121:1-8

- March 8 ***A Chance to Drink***
John 4:5-29

- March 15 ***Naked and Ashamed***
Genesis 2:15-17, 25; 3:1-7

- March 22 ***No Bones About It***
Ezekiel 37:1-14

- March 29 - **ONE COMBINED SERVICE @ 10am**
The Guy With the Donkey
Matthew 21:1-11



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