



The Life and Times

Florida's Light & Life Park, Inc.
Newsletter

June 1, 2024

Volume 12 Issue 6 Page 1

FLORIDA'S LIGHT & LIFE PARK, INC.

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Lakeland, FL 33810

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Park Administrator: Stan Welton
(Cell: 863 608-3982)

Email: floridallpark2@gmail.com

Website: lightandlifepark.org

Office Manager: Greg Thomas
greg.t@lightandlifepark.org

Office Assistant: Lori Jones
lori@lightandlifepark.org

Resource Specialist
sherry@lightandlifepark.org
(Cell: 863-255-3776)

Office Hours:
November 15-April 14: 8 am- Noon
April 15-November 14: 9 am - Noon

Lots Available for Lease

There are currently no lots available to lease for a RV or Park Model.

The following lots are available for a modular home to be put on them:

5359 Beulah Land

5885 Shiloh Path

Call the Park Office at 863-858-7504 for information.

News from the Park Administrator

Recently I had a conversation with a Park visitor. I now relay their thoughts to you.

Hi, I have been a frequent visitor to your Park this year and was asked to share some of my thoughts and observations. When I showed up early this year, the Park was really, really busy. I frequently saw many people taking walks, riding bikes, and driving golf carts. Where DID everyone go? There are still a few people getting their exercise, but there aren't nearly as many.

To begin, I have to admit that I've been walking through the Park late at night. Usually, I don't see anyone else. But, one night I saw a person that I had not seen during the day. Surely, I thought, he's visiting someone in the Park and just can't sleep. Is it possible, though, that he is looking for an unlocked residence that he could call "home". I thought maybe I should call someone, but then it was very late at night, and I didn't want to disturb the administrator. Besides, I didn't have a phone with me. Maybe I will let the administrator know later. Just in case, I hope everyone has their residence secured.

As things stand now, I guess I will be here during hurricane season. I heard that there is a copy of a hurricane preparation poster in Hood Hall, so I checked it out. Man, there's a lot to do. One thing that I read was that I need to make sure I don't have anything outside that can be picked up by the high winds. It's easy for me to prepare, but I noticed that not all residents have tidied up and tucked things inside to avoid creating hurricane driven missiles like last time. I sure wouldn't want to be responsible for damage to someone's residence because I left some yard ornaments outside. Oh, and it said I should have lots of drinking water and ready-to-eat foods in case of a long power outage. I have that covered. There are many more things to do. I just hope that everyone still in the Park has their to-go bag packed and ready to go in case they need to evacuate. I'm pretty sure I'll have everything ready when a hurricane approaches.

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This winter, I saw some people feeding the alligator down at the pond. At other times, I saw someone throwing things at the gator. Don't they know it is illegal and can result in them getting fined or even serving jail time? Even worse, they should realize that those activities can cause the gators to become aggressive towards people. When that happens, it can lead to injury or death to a person. Man, I hope no one in the Park is hurt because of these prohibited and dangerous activities.

Oh, did I not introduce myself? I am Ally, the Park's visiting alligator, just passing on my observations and reflections.

I hope you all have a great summer. If you are in the Park, please follow the gator's advice.

Office News

Hello, from the **HOT** South. We are almost caught up with work left over from the winter season. Now begins the process of preparing for next season. Please let the office know if you are going to rent your residence for any portion of the 2024-2025 season. I have a list of people looking to rent private residences.

The office will be sending reservation confirmation letters in June to those who have been assigned guest rooms, cabins and RV sites for the upcoming season.

We have received reports about suspicious persons in the park. I have a couple of suggestions for crime prevention that I want to pass on. Please consider putting up solar powered motion lights on the corners of your homes. Also, I suggest putting tamper proof tape on your doors. The red sawtooth security tape works best. It is impossible to remove this tape without tearing it. If you have someone who checks on your place during the summer, they will be able to tell if someone either entered or attempted to enter your home by looking at the tamper proof tape. We have some samples of the tape if you want to use it.

Continued next column.

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If you have family or friends, come to the park and stay in your place during the summer, please let the office know. Also, have them stop at the office and let us know they have arrived. We will be talking to people who we aren't familiar with as we see them in the park to make sure they belong here. We also need know who is here for accountability reasons during hurricane season.

There were two closings at the end of April.

Craig and Cinda Ewing purchased 5378 Bethel Dr.

Steve and Linda Zimmerman purchased 5876 Moriah Place.

The Following Places are For Sale:

1. Rex and Bethel Root, 5311 Sharon Trail
Block Home, \$120,000.00
2. Doug and Lori Jones, 5352 Bethany Way
Block Home, \$65,000.00
3. Michael Gardner, 5333 Hebron Ct
Travel Trailer, \$7,500.00
4. Deano and Darlene Pulice, 5337 Ebenezer Pl
Travel Trailer, \$16,000.00
5. Estate of Julia McDonald, 5315 Hebron Ct,
Travel Trailer, \$8,000.00
6. Dean and Barbara Rockwell, 5319 Hebron Ct.
Park Model, \$35,500.00
7. Debbie Roberts, 5326 Ebenezer Place,
Travel Trailer, \$38,000.00

Greg Thomas

Check out the park website!

Copies of the newsletter, the Park calendar, places for sale, and much more can be found there.

www.lightandlifepark.org

News from the Board of Directors

It was May 7th, a typical spring weather day in Southwest Michigan, warm with a chance of severe weather in the afternoon. Then just before 5 PM our cell phone alerts went off "tornado warning". Within 90 minutes there were 4 tornados confirmed, all just north or south of our home in Schoolcraft. The worst was in Portage about 5 miles north, where our church lost roofing over the Sanctuary and took out all of the trees on property. For the most part the building structure was spared with just some interior water damage. We are fortunate compared to many other areas in Portage. There was no loss of life!

It is now June and is pretty quiet in Light and Life Park.

The contractors have completed their portion of clean up next door at 5580 Deeson. Stan sent out some great pictures of the new property. There is still some work to be done like cleaning up glass, tires, and small debris as well as treating for pests. But it certainly has opened visual possibilities for the future.

The office has been communicating with the county concerning the zoning for 5580 and 5570 (the former Lower residence). Once we understand the current zoning for those areas, we will be able to determine the future of the eastern border of our Park. That is: from Deeson Road south and west to behind the wood shop.

These areas will be topics of discussion in our future board meetings.

1. Will we need to ask for some zoning changes from the county,
2. Do we add any residences and if so where will they be located,
3. Putting in some type of meeting area for church outreach,
4. Installing a garden prayer area
5. RV area expansion.

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This is another example where committees provide valuable input into the decisions being made. Examples: Building and Grounds will be determining the status of the house at 5570, Future Planning will be exploring ideas as to what to do with the properties, Finance will be evaluating the cost and investments into these properties. And we will be in constant communication with the county as to zoning and regulations (those are particularly different challenges).

It is very important to us that these decisions are made carefully and deliberately after research and discussion. Be in prayer for all of us as we move forward. This is another responsibility of the Board, to develop long-term plans.

God Bless

Larry Putnam

Summer Dinners

Monday, June 3 at 5:30 pm.
The cost is \$6.00.

The menu is as follows: Stuffed Green peppers, yellow gold potatoes, green bean casserole, fruit cocktail cup, and dessert.

Please sign up at Hood Hall by Saturday, **June 1, 2024**. Come for good food and fellowship.

If you are willing to help with set-up or clean up, please let Dave Cook know.

Dinner at the Max!

6:00 pm Friday evenings

Bring a dish to pass and
enjoy both Dinner at the Max and
Game Night at 7:00.

Of course, you may enjoy either dinner or
games...whatever fits your schedule!

Where to Donate your Goods

The donations given at the Park to help others are appreciated. **Please take your donations to the following places:**

Food donations for Briarwood may be left on the designated table in Hood Hall.

Slightly used linens may be donated for Senior Orphans in Hood Hall. Please refer to Senior Orphans article in this newsletter.

Jean Whipple takes several items to Talbot House weekly. See that article in this newsletter for details.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Metal Cans

There are containers over in the enclosed space by the Garbage containers for recycling your metal cans and are picked up by Errol.

Pop/Soda cans are to be placed in the bins designated for aluminum cans and are to be separated from other metal cans.

Errol uses the proceeds from the metal to support his son who is a Pastor of a very small church.

Thank you for your support.



Talbot House Ministry

Put on HOLD:

The ongoing deliveries of prescription bottles, unused medicines, good clean clothing that you no longer use, and small household items is an ongoing project. Please continue to save these helpful items for the homeless shelter and the Good Samaritan Clinic.

I will be out of town until June 10th. Please do not leave anything in my porch or anywhere on my property. There is a note on my door, and it will be taken down when I return. Thanks for your cooperation.

Should you wish to help financially or take your own items yourself the address is: 814 North Kentucky Avenue, Lakeland.

Thank you! Jean Whipple

Stamps for Missions

I'm not interested.

What difference does it make anyway?

I can't be bothered.

Who cares?

I don't have time.

Those who do CARE, are INTERESTED or take a little TIME, and can be minimally BOTHERED you do MAKE a DIFFERENCE to the recipients of the more than 50 lesson series in Spanish Christian literature used in Sunday Schools of 40 different denominations in Latin America, Spain and the USA.

YOU can MAKE a DIFFERENCE by doing something as little as:

carefully cutting (1/4 - 1/3-inch border) postage stamps.

Save them until fall;

take them to Hood Hall.

Thank you for your participation!

Marilyn Stone
Coordinator



Medical Equipment Available

Maxwell Commons at The Villa has some medical equipment available that can be borrowed by any Park resident. Call someone you know in the Villa to help you. Please sign out the equipment you are borrowing. There are wheelchairs, walkers, rollators, portable pots, and shower seats. Please notify a Villa member when you are returning an item, so we know it has been returned. Please **don't** leave it on the porch. We are **not** presently accepting any equipment donations due to lack of storage space.

SENIOR-ORPHANS

In need of your help:

As you know, John and I have moved to an area about 2 hours east of Lakeland. Therefore, I am looking for someone to oversee the Senior Orphans donations ministry here in the park. It would require that you transport things from Hood Hall on an as-needed basis when the bins have enough donations to warrant a trip to the coordinator's house right off N. Galloway Rd. It is right on our way to Wal-Mart, so it is very convenient to drop things off if/when we're

making a Wal-Mart run. 😊 **I ask that you prayerfully consider becoming the coordinator of Senior Orphans donations in our park,** and if you have any interest or any questions, please contact me. 🙏

Thank you, and God's blessings to you.

Humbly,
Terri Boda

Fellowship Dinner with Programs

The Nov-April season for our monthly event is over. We greatly appreciate your attendance, support, and encouragement. The numerous volunteers are warmly thanked for graciously contributing ideas, inviting others, participating in programs, greeting, hosting, promoting, providing food, setting up/cleaning up etc. Our committee thanks ALL of you for helping in big or small ways. This is especially

for those who like reviews, closure. 😊

The fall schedule begins Nov 4 with Carol Zeller planning another interesting program, then a Dec 9 Christmas event under the guidance of Carolyn Lindley. 2025 dates: Jan 6, Feb 3, Mar 3, Apr 7, Nov 3, and Dec 8. **Easy way to remember** always the first Monday except Dec when we give more time after Thanksgiving dinner. This is especially for you

future planners. 😊 God bless you all and hope you join us in the fall!

Marilyn Stone, chairman jaxstone68@gmail.com

The Board has authorized several projects to which you can make donations.

1) chairs & tables in Hood Hall, 2) the purchase of 5580 Deeson Road, 3) the improvements to the pickleball court, and 4) installation of a new tennis court.

Blood Pressure

Since many people are heading north for the summer, the blood pressure clinics have come to an end.

However, since I am here year-round you can still get your blood pressure taken on a regular basis if necessary.

I can come to your house, or you can come to mine, 5437 Bethel Dr.

JoAnn Willet RN
989-615-8430



**MY GOD WILL MEET
ALL YOUR NEEDS
ACCORDING TO
THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY
IN CHRIST JESUS.**

PHILIPPIANS 4:19



Gad-About News

The Gad-Abouts is not a club. All ladies in the Park are invited to go on the trips and get to know others!

As Peggy & I wrap-up another awesome season of Gad-Abouts trips, a huge "thank you" to all our lady drivers whom we cannot do without. Many thanks to all the ladies who joined us this season.

Flo Grabowski Cell 931-797-2639
coachflllc@gmail.com

Peggy Dunn Cell 248-766-5537
pegjim2000@yahoo.com

L & L Aqua Splash Water Aerobics

Come & enjoy fun in the sun with a low-impact workout in the water to enhance health & wellbeing.

It has come to my attention that our Aqua Splash year-round attendees are currently out of town.

We will take a respite & reevaluate interest during the month of June. Looking forward to reconvening whenever some of you return to the park. **Watch FB for updates.**

As always, remember to go at your own pace, modify moves as needed and drink water after

participating 😊 See you poolside 🌴

Happy Swimmers!

Karen Castle-Williams
allforyum@aol.com
 704-502-0466.



Are you celebrating 50 years of marriage in 2025? If so, we want to celebrate with you on February 1st at Hood Hall. Please contact me and I'll get an information packet to you.

So far, we are aware of four couples who are choosing to celebrate with us:

Chuck & Annie Frankenfeld, Bruce & Debbie Fitch, Myke & Pamela Merrill, and Mike & Roxanne Smarszcz.

PLEASE NOTE: Traditionally, the 50th anniversary celebration has been held on the Friday before Valentine's Day. Due to increased activity in Hood Hall in February and a scheduling conflict, the day has been changed to Saturday, February 1st.

GOLD DOLLAR CHALLENGE: You are encouraged to give each couple a gold one-dollar coin in lieu of an anniversary card. Homemade cards will be available at the reception for you to sign if you choose to bring gold dollar coins instead of purchasing cards at a store. Gold dollars can be obtained at your local bank or credit union. If you do not have a bank in Lakeland, you can get them at your bank this summer and bring them with you. Each couple's display table will have a container for gold dollars. Let's bless our anniversary couples with enough gold coins to enjoy a nice dinner date out!

Carolyn Lindley
carolyn_lindley@yahoo.com
 50th Anniversary Chair

Bucket Listers



These activities will be back during the next winter season!

Hot Dog Lunches



Homemade Cinnamon Rolls



Tuesday Night Trivia



Continued next column.

Continued from previous column.

Beautification Parade / Häagen-Dazs Bars

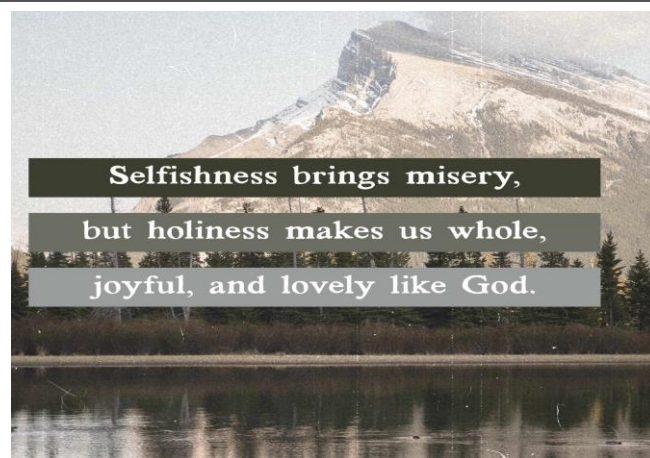


Tuesday Night Movies

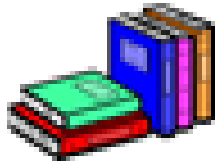


Because of your support at these fundraisers the park is looking amazing!

Enjoy your summer wherever you are! See you next fall!



Library Information



Library Notes

What's Happening

We have updated the fiction books in the library. At present, we are working on doing the same with the nonfiction which is in the front room. The database is being updated and each book will have typed labels. In some instances, books may have new numbers and the goal is to make them easier to find. Look for changes to 242 and 244 which will be respectively devotionals and inspirational writings such as true stories of faith.

The goal is to have all the books in the back room with sign-out cards and we will no longer be able to take them out if the card is not there. The goal is to provide an opportunity to research the book and find it easier.

Have a great summer and see you next fall!

Book Review

Indigo Isle by T. I. Lowe

Indigo Island is a book which takes sensitive issues that may cause us to flee or hide from the world, such as bad relationships or traumatic experiences that need healing and interweave them into a very touching story. Such is the case with Sonny Bates who left South Carolina Fifteen years ago. She is a scout who travels the world looking for those unique settings for movies. It causes her to live a fast-paced life, never having to settle in one place to call home, until she finds an island near where she came from, which would be ideal for one of her movie scenes.

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The island is inhabited by a grumpy, unfriendly hermit who is hiding from the world. Once a successful New York attorney, Hudson Renfrow's grief has exiled him to his refuge for several years. He spends his days alone, tending his fields of indigo, then making indigo dye--and he has no interest in serving the intrusive needs of a film company or yielding to Sonny's determined curiosity.

Suddenly a hurricane makes landfall on the Carolina coast, stranding them together and an unlikely friendship form between the two damaged souls. Soon the gruff exterior Hudson has long hidden behind crumbles--exposing the tender part of him that's desperate for forgiveness and a second chance.

This is a story of hanging on and letting go, of redemption and reconciliation, and of a love that heals the deepest wounds. It is also a story similar to Beauty and the Beast. Indigo Isle is one book to read, contemplate, and learn from the lessons taught. Well worth the read! You'll find it in the new book section.

Gloria Welton
Librarian

Library2Go

If you are looking for other books that are not in our Library, Library2go will be in our Park **Thursday June 6, from 10 am to 11:00 am** at Hood Hall.

Each stop provides an opportunity to:

- Register or renew a library card.
- Place holds on library materials.
- Pick up materials placed on hold.
- Return library materials.
- Check out from a selection of popular materials: regular print fiction & nonfiction books, large print fiction books, magazines, and DVDs.
- Use wireless Internet access for personal devices.
- Print wirelessly.

2025 CPC Golf Tournaments!
Mark your calendar!

January 17th, 2025
Two-person (men and women) Tournament (18 holes Scramble)! Bring your partner! Men & women divisions. New date (Friday) Start time 10:00 AM

February 21st, 2025
Club Championship Tournament (two flights each for Men & Women (18 holes) (Friday) 10:00 AM start time.

(Note: closest to the pin and longest drive contest will be held as part of the Club Championship)!

March 21st, 2025
Two-person Blind Draw tournament (18 holes) Men & Women Categories (\$50 to each winning team). Plus, names on a trophy in Hood Hall.
(Friday) Shot gun start at 10:00 AM.

April 1st, 2025
Three club Co-Ed tournament (Play your own ball).
(Monday) 18 holes. 10:00 AM

FYI, the above dates are subject to change if they conflict with more important events in the park.

Cars and Coffee

2nd Saturday of every month

June 8th, 2024, 8:00 – 10:00.

Everyone is welcome to come and view great restored autos and custom hot rods. There will be vehicles of all years, sizes, and shapes.

Join us in L&L Park at the Church parking lot!

Come, join the fun, and have a cup of coffee and a doughnut!

Larry Thomas 540-447-0458

In Case you missed this. Thanks Stan

The property at 5580 Deeson Road is vacant of all buildings except for one. I thought you might like to see the view from the road.



Salvation Army Crafting Event

Join us in Hood Hall

Friday June 21, starting at 1:00 pm

Saturday June 22, starting at 8:00 am

Bring your projects to work on in a light hearted atmosphere.

Come and go as you please. Cost is \$20.00 for a half of an eight foot table where you can work on your project.

All proceeds go to the Salvation Army Transitional Housing Program.

Please RSVP by May 13th to Cindy Lower at cindylower950@gmail.com

We will be collecting **Paper towels**, which you can bring to HH anytime during those two days **BUT anyone is welcome to just come and watch. Also, some of the ladies have things to sell.**

Best Regards

Cindy Lower

Our beautiful Park



Summer days in May!

It has been around 95 degrees for many days this month and extremely dry. I actually feel so sorry for our alligator. All we have is a mud puddle!!!

Marva Peck

The Bowling League

Our next season will start January 7, 2025, the organization meeting will be January 6 at 1pm at Hood Hall.

If you haven't joined our league, please consider doing so.

Barb Hartson, President.

Shuffleboard

Welcome to the Florida summer - The courts **are always** open, and the pucks will be waxed.

You are always welcome to play if the heat, humidity, sun and love bugs don't deter you. Enjoy! Looking forward to resuming a regular schedule in the Fall.

Bill Sones President

Newsletter Deadline

Please be sure that your submissions to **The Life and Times** are delivered to the newsletter editor, Barb Hartson by the 20th of the month prior to publication.

Please use this email: bhartson@gmail.com Email is the preferred method.

The July deadline is June 20th unless the activity is in the latter half of the month. Then check with me to see if you can still make it in.

**EVERY BELIEVER
HAS A UNIQUE STORY
TO TELL OF HOW
JESUS MADE THEM
"A NEW CREATION".**

Beautification Committee



Beautification Parade

The Beautification Parade for 2025 will be on the 27th of February.

The theme for the parade will be.
"Individual Entrees Choice".

You decide what you want your theme to be, remembering that the scoring is based on originality, 360-degree visualization, identifiable theme, and an incorporated biblical affirmation.

If you have any questions, contact:

Tom Lake

Laket001@yahoo.com

Beautification Committee President



Thank you
to all who
helped get
the Mini
Golf court
looking so
nice.

Puzzles

I got two interesting Puzzles submitted for this month.



This one submitted by Kathryn Hewgill completed during the winter months, I am assuming because it is too **cold** to go outside.



This one submitted by Marva Peck started quite recently, during the summer months, and again I am assuming because it is too **Hot** to go outside.

**Light and Life
Free Methodist Church**

5730 Deeson Road
Lakeland, FL 33810
Phone: (863) 858-6361
Fax (863) 858-3982
Email: church@llfmc.org

Pastor: Jeff Bellinger
Associate Pastor: Roger Haskins
Secretary: Pam Hill
Email: church@llfmc.org

A Note from our Pastor

For I always do what pleases Him." - John 8:29

I am learning not to be a people pleaser. Not always easy. I am glad when my wife and family and friends are pleased with me. But that is not the highest priority in any of those relationships.

My highest purpose in life is to love God and love others. And all of that flowing out of God's unfailing love for me.

Something happens when I get my first love in order. The better I love God and others (flowing out of God's unfailing love for me) the most important people in my life are more pleased with me.

Jesus, who ALWAYS does what pleases the Father. Love comes first. Then people are more often pleased with who we are and what we do.

Dr. Roger Haskins, Bishop Emeritus
Roger.haskins.jr@gmail.com
585.301.8610 cell (US)

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Missions Moment

Upcoming Missions Event! Sunday, June 9, 2024

10:00 am -Michael Long will be sharing in the Sunday morning service about his ministry in Greece.

Michael is one of our FM missionaries that our Light and Life Church supports.

Sunday dinner at Hood Hall following the morning service June 9th

You won't want to miss it!
Barbecue ribs are on the menu.

As an alternative to spending your money at a restaurant after the morning service, come join us for dinner and donate to missions instead. All donations will go toward our church missions.

Missions Committee members

Vonnie Denton co-chairman
Carolyn Nicholas co-chairman
Lorna Angus
Theresa Bellinger
Sandy Bennett
Annie Frankenfeld
Arlie Peck

If you didn't already notice, Arlie Peck is the only man on our committee. Arlie is beginning to feel a little outnumbered by all the women. So.....we are looking for 1-2 men who would like to serve on the missions committee.

Qualifications:

1. Have a love for missions
2. Computer skills

If you are interested in serving on the committee, contact Vonnie Denton.

Blessings,
Vonnie Denton
dentonbv@gmail.com
231-429-9697

The Light and Life Church Office Hours

New hours for the summer.

Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday

9am – 2pm

Pam Hill Secretary

HOME BIBLE STUDY

Come join us in the Church Annex for this informal Bible study. **Everyone is welcome.**

Tuesday at 2:30

We are currently studying **Romans**.

Cindy Igel: 716-803-3961

Pam Hill: 863-808-3779

Email: church.lifmc.org

REMINDERS

If you are leaving the park or shopping and find a great deal, the refrigerator is available for your donations. It is located inside the storage room where the ice machine is.

Donations placed in this refrigerator are for the food ministry not general use. Milk and eggs have disappeared recently.

We don't begrudge anyone food items but please ask first or we are left to scramble to figure things out. If you are in need, it is confidential please call Christine Aurich, Pastor Jeff, or Debbie Roberts, we love to help.

I just returned from Michigan. I also enjoyed a nice trip to Assateague in Maine, so our wonderful **summer** volunteers have been carrying on without me for a month.

Thank you so much to these volunteers and all of you who have left Light and Life but continue to support this Outreach with your prayers and donations.

Chris Aurich: Chrisaurich@hotmail.com

THE TIME HAS COME

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. — 2 Timothy 4:1–5 NASB1995

Due to some recent events, I'm going to take a quick pause in our discussion on the Free Methodist Way to address a recent event that many of you are aware of, but for those who are not, you need to be, and we must all be praying and thinking about navigating the days ahead. The event I'm talking about is the United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference and their decisions to (1) do away with the orthodox biblical concepts of humanity, gender, and sexuality; (2) do away with the biblical standards of marriage, parenthood, and family; (3) do away with the biblical standards of sexual morality; (4) affirm LGBTQ+ lifestyles and receive them into full church membership; (5) allow UMC clergy and churches to perform and host LGBTQ+ weddings; (6) ordain into ministry those practicing a LGBTQ+ lifestyle; and (7) to not allow any more UM churches to disaffiliate from the UMC over theological differences, contrary to promises made to UM churches by many UM bishops leading up to the December 2023 deadline. All of this was done in the name of love and unity and that by being more inclusive they are opening wider the gates for more to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but forgetting the words of Jesus that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) The UMC GC24 communion service ended with the UMC bishops, delegates, and pastors singing and dancing to the 1972 hit, *Love Train*. It is important to note that the UMC is not the first and will not be the last Christian denomination or group to commit apostasy and God's word has given us very clear warnings of such temptations and behaviors, but this apostasy of the UMC has several implications and impacts on the Free communities we serve that we must be prepared for.

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As Free Methodists we will continue to be confused with what is now, not just another version of Methodist, but a compromised and apostate version of Methodist. We will need to be aware, careful, and sensitive to partnerships that are directly or indirectly connected to the UMC. We will be labeled hypocrites, intolerant haters, and bigots, and all the more criticized and even persecuted for our faithful commitment to the authority of Scripture and our unwillingness to manipulate, twist, and/or compromise scripture and call it love. We will find ourselves ministering to a growing number of wounded and even bitter former UM clergy and laity who will have a high level of distrust toward church authority and anything with the names Methodist or bishop attached to it. We will find ourselves ministering to people who not only lost their church, but even lost family and friends through these changes. We will find ourselves working with a more confused and polarized unchurched society. We will find ourselves feeling a greater challenge but just as great a need to be the Jesus-loving and people-loving disciples that we are as the FMC. We will find ourselves with a greater need to *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction*. We will find ourselves with more opportunities to give an answer for what and why we believe. We will find ourselves with a greater need to *be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry*. Our hearts should be broken over the horrible compromising witness of the UMC to a lost world as well as the incredible devastation it has brought into the lives of many former United Methodists. We will need to be a praying people, a Spirit led people, and an uncompromising people in both truth and love/grace.

I'm not claiming to be prophetic; I simply acknowledge what scripture tells us: there are some dark times ahead, but this is not to be a discouraging fact. Instead, it is meant to be an alarm and an encouragement. An alarm: to wake up the saints and get focused and serious about being a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. An encouragement: because it is the very reason we are here in this world, for such a time as this to be lights in the world. The truth is,

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The world, our nation, needs the light, and as we walk with Christ and in alignment with His word, we are the lights of the world (Matthew 5:14–16). So I charge us all, to walk in the fear of the Lord, to go deeper in prayer, to be faithful to the authority of Holy Scripture, and to *sanctify* (set apart) *Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame*. (1Peter 3:15–16) This is the day and hour that we find ourselves in. The time has come when people will not put up with sound doctrine and the time has come for us to live it out with all the more faithfulness, boldness, humility, love, and passion for the glory of God and the good of the lost world that He so loved and gave His one and only Son to die for.

Have a great month and God bless!

—Supt. Mike

A soldier of Christ | 2 Tim. 2:3–4 | 24601

Submitted by:

Pastor Jeff

