



## **The Masthead**

**The Newsletter of Mayflower United Church of Christ**

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**Office Hours: 9:00-1:00 Monday-Friday**

**July 2025**

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## **Farewell to Rev. Dr. Richard Wolf**

We are sad to report that Sunday July the 27th will be Dr. Wolf's last service with us at Mayflower. We want to thank him for his time and energy and guidance during this time of his pastoral leadership.

We knew at the outset that July the 27th would be his last service as he and Margaret wish to retire full-time.

They plan on traveling to Massachusetts and beyond to visit old acquaintances and relatives.

Thanks for all your help and leadership and safe travels.

You will be sincerely missed!

Jeff Stephenson  
Council president



**Mayflower will be observing our nation's independence on Sunday, July 6th with an indoor picnic after our worship service. Traditional picnic fare will be served, including hot dogs, burgers, baked beans, potato salad, and possibly ice cream. If you would like to contribute anything, please inform Janice, Nancy, or Lou.**



# **DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF A BACKSTAGE TOUR OF GULFSHORE PLAYHOUSE**

**Saturday, August 2,  
Sept. 6 or Oct. 4 at 11  
AM**

**Join your Mayflower friends  
for a guided tour of  
the Baker Theatre and  
Education Center, the  
stunning new home of  
Gulfshore Playhouse.**

**Experience the beauty of  
this state-of-the-art facility  
as you explore its  
thoughtfully designed  
spaces while learning about  
our vision to inspire and  
educate all of Southwest  
Florida.**

**On the first Saturday of  
every month, free guided  
tours are offered to the  
public once they make a  
reservation. Mayflower is  
able to reserve four tickets  
on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, six tickets on  
Sept 6<sup>th</sup> and five tickets on  
Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>. These are all at 11  
AM.**

**If you are interested, please  
contact the office and Judy  
will put you in touch with  
Lou, who's coordinating  
this. Sign-ups will also  
happen after church  
starting on July 13.**

**If there's an interest, lunch  
at a nearby restaurant may  
be possible.**



### Fire transforming us for the good

For many people, relaxing by a campfire is a favorite summer activity. Nestling into the surrounding darkness while gazing into dancing flames, we sense God's love and let the day's chaos go. In contrast, Exodus 24:17 describes, "Now the appearance of the glory of God was like a devouring fire."

Pastor Steve Garnaas-Holmes offers another take, writing about God using flames to change us. (The full poem is here: [unfoldinglight.net/2025/02/24/fire](http://unfoldinglight.net/2025/02/24/fire)) God, your presence is like a consuming fire —

not destructive, but transformative,  
not the fire of anger but the flame of love,  
the fire of glassblowers and bakers  
the grace to make us more beautiful,  
strong and useful.

Your glory is no tame campfire  
where we sit and make s'mores.  
It burns out of our control.  
The furnace of your love  
roars about our hearts, remaking us  
Teach us to be unafraid. ...  
When you bask in firelight glow — and  
maybe eat some s'mores! — ponder  
how God is transforming you with love,  
and for the sake of love.

### Complete joy

Because Jesus came to do such serious work, we often imagine him straight-faced. Yet Jesus also enjoyed fun times, such as the wedding celebration at Cana. When the wine ran out, Jesus miraculously produced more.

Jesus also warmly welcomed children. Picture him lifting an infant into the air or tickling a giggling youngster while another child, grinning, climbs on his back.

Summer usually allows more time for fun and play. So use these months to teach the kids in your life — and to remind yourself — that Jesus came so our "joy may be complete" (John 15:11). Laughing, playing, having fun, relaxing and enjoying life are part of living and loving as faithful disciples.

### Christian symbol



**PELICAN** — In the Middle Ages, the pelican came to represent Jesus' sacrifice of his blood for the world. According to legend, a mother pelican, in times of famine, would pluck open her chest and feed her young with her own blood. An alternate myth was that she fed her dying young with her blood to revive them, losing her own life in the process. The depiction of a pelican with a drop of blood on her chest is called "the pelican in her piety."

## NEW BIBLE STUDY BEGINS

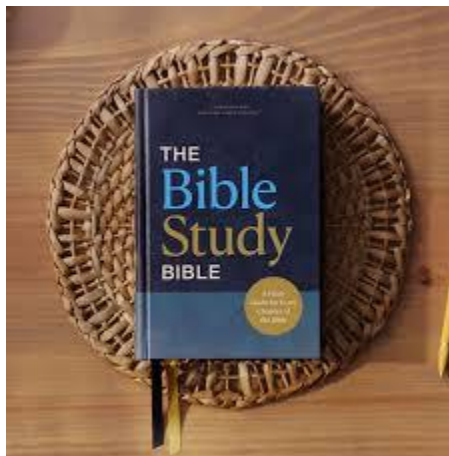
On Wednesday, July 9, from 11:00-12:00, and for six Wednesdays, Rev. Bev will begin a new series called "Drop-In Bible Study." The topic will be the Revised Common Lectionary. That is, the four readings each Sunday used by 19 Protestant denominations in the U.S. plus 34 others worldwide. The UCC preachers at Mayflower typically use two of the four. We'll discover at how the Common Lectionary came to be, then participants will read together the four Scripture passages prescribed for the following Sunday and discuss what jumps out---to you---as preachable (a key idea). There may or may not be a thread that holds them all together. Dr. Wolf is preaching the Ten Commandments in July, but he will also use one of the Lectionary readings. **NO NEED TO PREREGISTER.** Bring your Bible, and **DROP IN!** July 9,16,23,30 and August 6 and 13.

## Tips for gardeners

"Love is to the heart what the summer is to the farmer's year," said evangelist Billy Graham. "It brings to harvest all the loveliest flowers of the soul." Without summer, our gardens would disappoint, and without love, our hearts wouldn't bloom.

The warmth of summer and love aren't the only ingredients required for abundant physical and spiritual crops, however. Discernment and persistence ensure fruitful yields in both areas.

"Unless we know the difference between flowers and weeds, we are not fit to take care of a garden," advised Clyde Francis Lytle. "It is not enough to have truth planted in our minds. We must learn and labor to keep the ground clear of thorns and briars, follies and perversities, which have a wicked propensity to choke the word of life."





## Perspectives on patriotism



While pondering differences between patriotism and nationalism, Ryan Hamm looks to Jesus' example in Luke 19:41-44. "Jesus, it seems, loved his people, his city, his nation — so much so that he cried over it," he writes in Christianity Today. "He didn't despise his country or wish ill upon it — instead, he wanted nothing but the best for it, and it grieved him to see how his people had rejected his teachings."

This example of "patriotism perfected" can serve as a guide for modern-day Christians, according to Hamm. "It's an example that's both pragmatic and romantic, shot through with justice, truth and love. It's not a nationalistic patriotism — it's a love for nation that doesn't pit it against other nations. Instead, it's a recognition of love followed by a mournful recognition of shortcomings."

Put another way, God doesn't love America more than any other nation. And he doesn't want us to worship our nation alongside him, because that is idolatry. Instead, we are to love and proclaim God above any earthly realm.

## Holy ground

For me, there's nothing quite like taking off my sandals in the summer and walking through the grass. But when our sons were infants, neither shared that love of going barefoot. When we'd attempt to lower them to play outside, they'd raise their legs, trying not to touch the tickly, prickly, green ground.

"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned Moses through the burning bush. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5, NIV). In God's presence, Moses faced a turning point: either resist God's instructions or obey, leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Maybe taking off my sandals this summer can remind me that I'm standing in God's presence. I may not hear a booming voice, and I might just be standing at the kitchen sink doing chores. Or I might be at a barbecue, with the opportunity to truly listen to my neighbors. God's presence permeates life's big moments as well as the mundane.

How can you "take off your sandals" and enter what God has for you?

## Special dates

- **Canada Day, July 1, 2025**
- **U.S. Independence Day, July 4, 2025**

### **The gift of the Bible**

Certain parts of the Bible are hard to understand — and even harder to explain to children. But the late Rachel Held Evans made a start, and then coauthor Matthew Paul Turner completed *What Is the Bible?* This picture book can help adults as well as kids receive the gift of Scripture.

The Bible is often described as a library of books. Held and Turner explain that it's also many different kinds of writing: stories, poems, wise sayings, songs, letters. Scripture tells of Creation, good and evil rulers, miraculous events, animals that spoke or brought food to hungry people, even monsters!

The best part, the authors write, is that “in the Bible we meet Jesus, who teaches us new things about God, faith, and ourselves” — above all, that God loves us. “And if a story in [Scripture] is confusing or scary or sad, we can imagine how Jesus, who loves us, might tell us that story.”

Bible scholars call this “the canon within the canon.” As Christians, we read all other parts of Scripture through the lens of the Gospels, where we meet God *in person*, as Jesus. Similarly, 500 years ago Martin Luther called the Bible “the cradle that holds the Christ.” That’s a word-picture even children can grasp!

### **A prayer of praise**

Creator of the heavens, the sun, the moon and the stars,  
Who have determined the mind-boggling number of the stars  
and given names to every single one of them,

We can't begin to fathom why you would bother yourself  
with mere human beings and care for mere mortals.

Yet you stoop to lift up the downtrodden,  
heal the brokenhearted, and bind up their wounds!

We call on sun, moon and shining stars to praise you!

By Jesus, our Morningstar, lead us out of darkness

into the light of your truth and grace,  
and fill our mouths with praise to you!

Make us wise, O God,  
so that we may shine like the bright stars in the sky,  
leading many out of darkness to see your righteousness.

By the transformative power of your Spirit, we pray. Amen.

—from *The Wired Wor*

## Prayer Team

### What is the Prayer Team?

The Prayer Team is a group of Mayflower members and friends who meet on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10:00 am in the conference room to pray for individuals and concerns on the prayer list. Meetings last about 45 minutes. Prayer Team members can participate as much or little as they like, and they do NOT have to pray “out loud” unless they want to! Everyone in the congregation is welcome—and encouraged—to join. If unable to attend meetings, the prayer list will be shared by email, and members are asked to pray as often as possible.

### Who/what is on the prayer list, and how is it disseminated?

The Prayer Team prays for individuals in the congregation who request prayer—whether it is for themselves, family members, friends, or other special needs—and for Mayflower Church and its missions, statewide, national, worldwide issues, and many other concerns. The prayer list is updated as requests are received and emailed to the Prayer Team and anyone else in the congregation upon request.

### How to be added to the prayer list

Prayer requests can be made by (1) calling or emailing Shirley Smith or the church office; (2) completing a prayer request form located in the friendship pads, and placing it in the prayer request box at the back of the Sanctuary; or (3) submitting a request on the Mayflower website.

## Confidentiality

Individuals who request prayer are assured confidentiality. Whatever information is given to the church office or Shirley Smith or written on the prayer request form will not be shared with anyone or disclosed on the prayer list without the requester’s permission. The prayer list itself is NOT confidential—it is passed on by email and can be shared with many people. When requesting prayer—whether for yourself or someone else—it is sufficient to say “health issue”, “healing”, “personal”, or no reason at all. We should rest assured that God knows the details of every concern.

## Bible Quiz



In a parable of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, someone named Lazarus features prominently while other characters go unnamed. Who is Lazarus in this story?

- A. a friend Jesus raised from the dead
- B. a rich man dressed in fine linen
- C. a poor beggar at the rich man's gate
- D. the brother of the poor man
- E. an angel who carried the poor man to heaven





Thank you for your continued support to the Grace Place Food Pantry. For the 2024/2025 academic year Grace Place welcomed more than 1,300 students to their campus and provided food to weekly 350 food pantry families in

Golden Gate. They are deeply grateful for our Mayflower weekly food donations and our volunteers helping at the Friday Food Pantry.

The Mayflower Mission team also received a letter from Grace Place updating us about key changes that are affecting their programs.

Copies of the letter are available in the Narthex on the table near the bulletin boards.

To summarize the highlights, we are sharing a condensed version of important concerns:

Dear Grace Place Community, Partners, and Supporters,

As we move through 2025, I want to update you on key changes that may impact Grace Place programs and the families we see. We are navigating a rapidly shifting landscape - one that affects not just policy, but people. Many recent federal actions and proposals touch the lives of our students, parents, and staff in deeply personal ways. These changes create uncertainty, pulling our team's focus from programs to planning for an unpredictable future. Our areas of concern include:

- **Federal Food Assistance Cuts**  
Proposed reductions to programs like SNAP, TEFAP, WIC, EFSP and school meal programs could significantly affect our families' access to food, Cuts may also impact our pantry operations- even though we don't receive direct federal food funding, our supporting partners do, and they are projecting supply reductions of 8-37% over the next two years.
- **Immigration- Related Policy Shifts**  
Rollbacks on visa protections, changes to asylum, student, family reunification, and deportation policies could impact Grace Place families, adding fear and uncertainty to their daily life.
- **Freeze on Discretionary Federal Grants**  
Grants, like the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC), which funds our after-school and summer programs, face delays or reductions.



On behalf of St. Matthew's House and the people we serve, thank you for your generous gift of \$410.00 which was received on 5/19/2025. We wanted to let you know how grateful we are for your generosity.

**"Thanks to St. Matthew's House I've been sober for almost four years, and I'm in College working towards and associate degree."**

With your support, we're able to provide immediate relief to those experiencing hunger, homelessness, and addiction while also giving them hope and opportunities to find long-term transformation. Your faithfulness continues to make a difference.

Yours Sincerely,  
Steve Brooder, President and CEO



Dear Friends, Thank you so much for your gift of \$400.00.

Support like yours changes lives.

Hello Cherished Friends!  
Thank you so much for this lovely gift  
and for your faithful partnership!

Yours in partnership,  
Lisa B. Lefkow CEO



# Sponsor a Classroom School Supply Bin

Our After-school Tutoring and Summer Enrichment programs give K-2 students in Immokalee the academic support and fun learning experiences they need to thrive. Each year, we reach over 1,100 young minds across all five elementary schools-with your support we can create endless possibilities for their future-one child at a time.

## **EACH BIN INCLUDES**

- 22 boxes Crayola Crayons**
- 22 boxes Colored Pencils**
- 22 packs 3x5 Index Cards**
- 22 double pack glue sticks**
- 22 clear Binder Pockets with closures**
- 22 one subject wide ruled notebooks**
- 100 count #2 pencils**
- 45 count Expo Dry Erase Markers**
- 1 Electric Pencil Sharpener**
- 3-4 Math games (ages K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**
- 3-4 Language arts games (ages K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**



Last week, we had the joy of celebrating our **Tutor Corps Class of 2025** at the annual Celebration Dinner, hosted at Twin Eagles Country Club. It was a beautiful evening honoring 30 remarkable seniors who have worked tirelessly to turn their dreams into reality.

**Together, these students have earned an incredible \$3.23 million in total scholarship funds**—including awards beyond their Guadalupe Center scholarships through grants and college partnerships. Their accomplishments are a true testament to their hard work and determination:

**Collective GPA:** 4.3

**College Credits Earned:** 259+

**Guadalupe Center Scholarships:** \$403,000

These successes are made possible because of supporters like you. Your generosity isn't just changing the lives of individual students—it's creating opportunities that will impact families and communities for generations.

**We invite you to hear from one of our amazing students, Zitlalit Martinez Villa,** who shared her inspiring story at the Celebration Dinner.

To see this amazing video, please click on the below link:

<https://youtu.be/ocPmGa1KZj4>.

## Calling all Readers!

It is time to read! Starting in September, Mayflower's Book Club meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the Family Life Center. Books are chosen by members who share their love of reading and encourage open exchange of opinions and ideas. The 2025/26 list contains a selection of fiction and non-fiction books with content representing other cultures, life experiences, and viewpoints—all chosen to encourage contemplation and discussion. Everyone is invited to join the conversation!

Information is available on the Mayflower website on the Book Club page, and the list with book descriptions is available on the table in the Narthex. If you would like more information, contact Shirley Smith. Following is the list of books for the 2025/2026 season:

9/2/25 *Watership Down* (F) by Richard Adams

10/7/25 *The Tell* (NF) by Amy Griffin

11/4/25 *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk* (F) by Kelli Estes

12/2/25 *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* (F) by James McBride

January No meeting

2/3/26 *The Light Keepers Daughter* (F) by Jean E. Pendziwol

3/3/26 *The Ride of Her Life* (F) by Elizabeth Letts

4/7/26 *The Forest Lover* (F) by Susan Vreeland

5/5/26 *Frozen River* (F) by Ariel Lawton



## **A modern Noah and his ark**

A commercial mariner in the Gulf of Mexico makes it his business to save animals from drowning — not just two by two, but hundreds over recent years. In 2018 Brandon Upton first saw shadows floating near his boat. Realizing they were sea turtles, he contacted animal-protection authorities. The creatures were “cold-stunned” because the water had dropped below 56°F. Sea turtles become comatose in such conditions, putting them at risk of drowning, boat strike or, if washed ashore, land predators.

Every winter since, Upton pulls an airboat alongside his main vessel, rescuing any stunned turtles he sees. He brings them to San Padre Island

National Seashore workers, who gradually warm them in a rehabilitation center. Then they release the turtles back into the wild.

As Christians, we often focus on helping people in need. But God created and cares about animals too. Perhaps you share love with a pet or donate to protect endangered species. Maybe you’ve taken kids to a zoo to learn the wonders of animal life. Perhaps you take pains to carry a spider outside or, like Upton, own special equipment to help animals. We can care for God’s creatures in countless ways — no need to build an ark!

—based on a story at  
[GoodNewsNetwork.org](http://GoodNewsNetwork.org)

## **Preventing blind spots**

About 40% of any vehicle consists of blind spots, which are responsible for an estimated 800,000 accidents each year in the United States. People also have blind spots, and when they’re spiritual, they can have tragic consequences.

Pastor Rick Warren suggests these steps for discovering and overcoming blind spots:

Pray, asking God to remind you what is true about him — and about you. “Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (Psalm 139:24, NLT).

Ask some trusted Christian friends or family to point out things in you that you can’t see. “Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others” (Proverbs 12:15, NLT).

Finally, ask Jesus to change you. The Bible says the truth will set you free (John 8:32), and Jesus calls himself the truth (John 14:6). So the closer you are to Jesus, the more he will fill you with the truth. As God’s truth helps you see clearly, you’ll be less vulnerable to self-deception.





**Happy Summer To All!!**

**Check out some of our Thrivent Events for July 2025**

JULY 15, 2025 | 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM ET

**Thrivent Market & Economic Update**

Are the current markets making you wonder how to best navigate your financial strategy?

Join us for a livestream of Thrivent's Market and Economic Update, presented by Thrivent leaders. Don't miss the opportunity to hear Thrivent's perspective and what the latest trends may mean for you.

*Available on-demand following the event.*

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/MarketUpdate725>

JULY 26, 2025 | 5:30 PM ET

**Thrivent Night with the Daytona Tortugas**

**Jackie Robinson Ballpark, 105 E. Orange Ave., Daytona Beach, FL**

Join us for Thrivent Night with the Daytona Tortugas at the Jackie Robinson Ballpark. Enjoy an exciting evening of baseball as the Tortugas take on the Palm Beach Cardinals. This special event, hosted by Thrivent, offers a wonderful opportunity for members and guests to connect and enjoy America's favorite pastime together.

**Tickets are only \$10 each!**

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/Tortugas725>

At Thrivent, we believe money is a tool, not a goal. We've inspired generations to make financial choices guided by their Christian values. We provide the expertise and support that enable our clients to take care of themselves and others.

*No products will be sold at our events. For additional disclosures, see [Thrivent.com/social](https://thrivent.com/social).*

We help Christians find financial clarity, enabling lives full of meaning and gratitude. All are welcome to attend our free virtual events. Feel free to share these events with your friends and family.

**Want to know more about Thrivent? Call Thrivent Financial Associate David Contessa at**

**(239) 300-5139.**



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Bob & Ellen Davis – Anniversary	2 Potluck Dinner 7pm	3	4 	5 LaVerne Spotts - Birthday
6	7	8	9 “Drop-In Bible Study” 11am	10 Alice Upshaw - Birthday	11 Prayer Meeting 10am	12 Ladies Lunch at Lely Palms 12pm
13 Bob Upshaw - Birthday	14 Bev Greenia – Birthday	15	16 Council Meeting 10am  “Drop-In Bible Study” 11am	17	18 Bob Welsh - Birthday	19
20 Leora Batson - Birthday	21	22	23 LaVonne Peters – Birthday  “Drop-In Bible Study” 11am	24	25 Dwight & Linda Eddy – Anniversary  Prayer Meeting 10am	26
27 Rev. Dr. Richard Wolf’s Last Day	28	29	30 “Drop-In Bible Study” 11am	31		