



The Happening

JULY 2026

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Lord's Lighthouse

On behalf of all the families who come to us seeking food, hope, and prayer, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for selecting The Lord's Lighthouse Ministry as your Mission of the Month.

The Lord's Lighthouse Ministry is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the Wimauma community. Every week, we witness the strength and resilience of our neighbors. Many families walk to our food pantry because they cannot afford transportation. Some mothers make the journey carrying young children in their arms or on their backs, trusting that there will be enough food to help sustain their families.

Each Thursday, our ministry provides food assistance to the local community. In May, we served 450 households with approximately 1,500 individuals. These are not just numbers, they represent hardworking families, seniors living on fixed incomes, and individuals facing unexpected hardships who struggle to keep pace with the rising cost of living.

Your generosity does far more than provide meals. It offers encouragement, restores dignity, and reminds our neighbors that they are not alone. Through your support, families receive not only food for their tables but also hope for tomorrow.

Thank you for partnering with The Lord's Lighthouse Ministry in our mission to serve our community with compassion, dignity, and love. Your kindness enables us to continue sharing God's love in a tangible and meaningful way, bringing hope to those who need it most.

Together, we are making a difference—one family, one meal, and one act of kindness at a time. We invite you to join us in this journey of compassion and service. Whether through donations, volunteer work, or spreading the word about our mission, every effort contributes to a brighter future for those we serve. Let us continue to stand together in faith and unity, bringing light to the lives of our neighbors and strengthening the bonds within our community. Your ongoing support is a beacon of hope, illuminating the path toward a better tomorrow for everyone. Thank you for being an integral part of The Lord's Lighthouse Ministry family.

A Word From Our Senior Pastor - Dr. Cynthia Weems

Dear Friends,

Happy Birthday! Or, better said, Happy Birthday, America!” You don’t look a day over 249!

What an exciting summer to celebrate the 250th birthday of our nation. Wow! I have found myself getting very excited for the summer events that are being planned for the celebration. I have watched the coverage of the opening of the Barak Obama Presidential Center, the World Cup soccer games being played around our country, the international tall ships coming into harbor in Baltimore, MD and the various historical documentaries airing on PBS and other stations. There are so many things to celebrate – history, hope, courage, sacrifice and the many stories that make up the beautifully textured fabric of our nation. I hope you will join me in tuning in to the many celebrations and historical tributes.

Here at the church, we spent the last month interviewing several of our members with this question in mind, “What does America mean to you?” We learned a bit about their personal stories, the virtues and symbols of our nation that are important to them and how their faith has impacted their life and work. The interviews were so enlightening and joy-filled. I am delighted that we will be sharing them during worship beginning on June 28 and running through the month of July. Be sure to worship online if you are not with us in person so you can see each of the short interviews. I want to thank all of our participants for their willingness to participate so thoughtfully. We all have a story to share about “What America means to me” and I encourage you to share your story with family and friends during this next month.

As a scripture focus, we are preaching on the book of Philippians during the month of July in a series called, “Living like Christ.” I hope you will join me in reading the entire book of Philippians (it is a letter to the church in Philippi by the apostle Paul). Like Jonah last month, Philippians only has four chapters so I encourage you to read it start to finish!

See you in worship or online!

Pastor Cynthia



VBS 2026
SAVE THE DATE!!
Register Today!!

The Adventure Begins
July 7-9 | 6-8PM
Family Dinner Hour starts at 5PM



**We are taking VBS on the road this year and will host at:
Iglesia De Dios Nuevo Pacto - Wimauma**

Vivacious Ministries - with Victoria Sorensen

“July is a month of vibrant energy and steady progress. As the summer heat intensifies, so does the potential for growth.” – Melinda Paul

Welcome to July! As we move deeper into the summer months, we continue to work in our community and God continues to answer prayers and perform miracles! Do you believe in miracles? I certainly do, let me share a few with you that have recently happened.

We were blessed with grants that will help us do more in the lives of others. On June 2nd, I received a letter in the mail. To my surprise, because of our good work providing food to those in need, we received an unexpected grant from the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay in the amount of \$30,000. This wonderful blessing will help us continue our Food Pantry Ministry and make a lasting difference in our community. The grant covers three years, providing \$10,000 each year. Combined with your generous food donations, this support will help keep our pantry open and feeding families, seniors, and others in need.

Another wonderful gift we have received is our partnership with Wawa through the Food Donation Connection program. Bruce Daugherty and I attended the grand opening of the new Wawa at the intersection of US 301 and Paseo Al Mar on June 4th. Over the past month, Wawa has provided food to our church that otherwise would have found its way into the garbage. Already, this partnership is helping us better provide for individuals participating in our Mary Petro Food and Medicine Ministry, those visiting our Food Pantry, and members of the community who come to Meet Me in the Streets to receive meals on Tuesday evenings. So, if you happen to find yourself visiting this Wawa, please take a moment to thank them for their generosity. Their support helps our church continue making a meaningful difference in our community.

I also want to give an update on our Tag-along Tutoring initiative. Jan Caruthers and I are working on how best to utilize the program's \$5,000 grant to prepare tutoring materials and programming for this fall. As mentioned in my previous newsletter, this ministry focuses on reading, work knowledge, and critical thinking skills, along with providing tutoring tote bags. Volunteers will work with students in need at three elementary schools, helping them build a strong foundation that will benefit them for years to come. I am excited for Jan and her team as they move toward launching this ministry. If you are interested in becoming a Tag-along tutor, contact Jan Cauthers at janetcaruthers@gmail.com.

Planning carries on in full force for our 4th Annual Community Back-to-School Fair scheduled for Saturday, July 25th from 9am until 1pm. School supplies arrive daily, and my office is quickly filling up - which is a wonderful thing to see - I am probably one of Amazon's best customers at this point! Thanks to your generous donations of supplies and financial support, we are well on our way to making this event a great success. I am still looking for volunteers to help distribute supplies and help with cleanup after the event. If you are interested in volunteering and seeing firsthand how we support students in our community, please contact me for more information.

As I sit at my desk finishing my final newsletter, I have been reflecting on my time here at this wonderful church, serving along side you and worshipping our amazing God. It is hard to believe I have been with you for the past four years and all of the amazing things we have accomplished together for our church, our community, and most of all God's Kingdom.

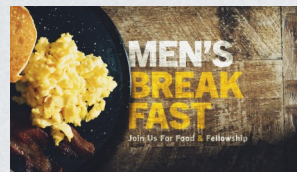
With a grateful heart I want to thank each of you for the privilege of serving alongside you. Thank you for continuing to make a difference in the lives of individuals and families throughout our community. As I always say, “It take a village to make a difference and lasting impression.” I am forever grateful for your generosity, your willingness to share your time, talents, gifts, and especially the love you show to those to others. May you continued to be blessed in all you do for each other and for God's Kingdom.

Until we meet again, I wish each of you much love and many Blessings!



Friday Night at the Movies July 10th | 6:00PM

Movie night will kick off with an Ice Cream Social! “Ride Above” follows Zoé, a girl growing up on her parent's race horse farm, whose dream of becoming a jockey is abruptly derailed by a life-changing accident. With resilience, family support, and the help of those who understand horses, she strives to reclaim her place in the saddle. Bring a friend, and enjoy the Ice Cream Social at 5:00pm, and the movie at 6pm. We hope to see you there!



Thursday, July 16th 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. Enjoy a hearty meal and engaging conversations, all in the spirit of fellowship. It's a fantastic opportunity to meet like-minded individuals in a relaxed and friendly environment, united by faith. Come hungry and leave inspired! We can't wait to see you there, and may God bless our gathering!

Men's Breakfast is the third Thursday of each Month.
Cost is \$10.00. Sign up by July 12th.

I'm writing the day after our piano recital, and I'd like to begin by thanking Teo for sharing the stage with this old second-class pianist! But it sure was fun. And special thanks to Lorenzo Hirchokomo for the comic relief. June ends with our annual Patriotic Cantata that is always well received. Thanks to Teo and the Choir for the extra hours that make that presentation possible. The Choir has been asked to 'take it on the road' over to the Wimauma Convention Center for the Southern Gospel Music gathering in early November! More on that later.

For Lisa and me, July begins with a short vacation to... NIAGARA FALLS! She's never been, and I was lucky enough to see them nearly every year growing up as my grandmother lived just across the border in St. Catherines, Canada. I distinctly remember watching in wonder those horseshoe falls [from the Canadian side], entirely mesmerized by their beauty and power. It didn't hurt that we also did all the touristy things like riding on the Maid of the Mist, walking under the falls [which I don't think they do anymore] and everything else Falls-related! I looked forward to visiting "Gran" every summer from our home in northern New Jersey. I'm very excited to share this truly awesome experience with Lis, and I can't wait to see them again from an adult perspective; it's been more than 50 years for me!

Why do I share this with you in our newsletter? Because places like Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon and our beautiful Gulf of Mexico remind me of the incredible nature of God's awesome creation. As a child I never questioned God's nature, and it was experiences like our visits to the Falls that convinced me of his power and his might. And, thankfully, I learned of his infinite love at the Episcopal church at which my parents taught Bible classes. I was very blessed with a loving Christian home and childhood.

And most mornings I'm reminded again that God is 'in charge'. You see, Lisa and I send pictures of the sunrise to one another nearly every morning. And almost every day they are spectacular in one way or another. Sometimes all we need to do is LOOK UP – God's all around us and he certainly loves us.

God of the ages, God near at hand, God of the loving heart

How do your children say joy, how do your children say home. [from UMH #122]

May the rest of your summer be joyful and AWESOME!

Soli Deo Gloria

Center 4Life Learning Classes & Trips

Come Learn and Be Entertained!!

2026 Summer Classes

Register Today!

- **Olives, Grapes and Democracy:** Beginning July 23 | 3-weeks, Thursday mornings. Led by Robert Silverman
- **Sign Language:** Beginning August 10 | 6-weeks Monday mornings. Led by Bonnie DeVagno

SPECIAL EVENT: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH

Center 4Life Learning with The Pelican Players Community Theater will host registration day and comedy production *Love Or Best Offer* in the Life Enrichment Center (LEC).

There will be two shows: 1:30PM. and 6:30PM.

Fall class registration will be held 1:00-3:30PM and 6:00-8:30PM in the LEC Lobby.

2026 Fall Semester begins the week of October 5. Registration will be on August 24



Visit Mt. Dora

Tour the city and lunch on your own

October 1, 2026

A Christmas Carol

Musical and buffet
Suncoast Broadway Theater

December 23, 2026



Les Misérables

Musical and buffet
Suncoast Broadway Theater

April 8, 2027

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 lovethelight.org/4lifelearning

'Break Away' with Breakaway - Renee Tisdale

We recently welcomed two student volunteers into our Breakaway family, and word on the street is they LOVE it! We're super excited they chose to spend part of their summer with us. They're earning their community service hours, and we're enjoying having young people in the house.

To celebrate Festa della Repubblica (Italian Republic Day), we got into some Italian themed art projects, and Ricardo played his guitar and sang Italian songs - it's hard to believe he's 96 years old!

We love projects that allow us to serve others! We helped Mary Petro with bagging dog food for their clients. Another day we painted fabric that will be turned into favors for the upcoming Alzheimer's Association fundraiser. We also made cards for our sister church in Cuba and get-well cards for one of our own whose son is healing from a heart transplant!

We observed World Ocean Day with projects that went home with our friends or will be used for decoration. Our mermaid shell trinket dishes were such a hit that we made extra for *Breakaway Creations*. We also spent some time exercising our brains with ocean themed quizzes, puzzles and games. Plus we created a list of items to bring to the beach, and let me just say, there were some very interesting but hilarious items suggested!

It's never too early to start preparing for Christmas, right? Cheryl didn't think so and brought us a project to make ornaments. We tried diamond painting for the first time and had some success! You might just see them for sale soon!

We're also gearing up for the 4th of July. We've made table runners and, most recently, designed stars decorated with buttons that are now door hangers throughout Creason Hall.

We celebrated Antoinette's birthday, she has been a cherished member of Breakaway the longest of any of our friends. She keeps us in line by either telling the room to wake up or be quiet as needed, and serves as our favorite engineer during our almost daily train dances!

In July, we'll be celebrating America's 250th birthday with a delicious lunch prepared by Ray and Grace Bibisi! We'll also be celebrating Christmas in July, complete with a visit from Santa! We're hoping to create some new art, and no matter what we're doing, we'll be enjoying each Monday and Wednesday from 10-2 of being together!

Make sure to check us out in person or on Facebook at Breakaway Respite Ministry. If you've been thinking about volunteering somewhere, we might be the perfect fit, and with summer upon us, joining us now would be a great time!



Thank God It's Variety - Steve Krogh

I would like to thank everyone for their wonderful support during my first month after taking over for the irreplaceable Larry Hirschak. We were able to take advantage of Larry's talents while he is here, most recently his incredible skill in reading and performing the bells in Jeff and Teo's piano recital. Those of you who missed it can still find it online and you will surely enjoy Larry's comedic performance. Jeff and Teo weren't bad either! Their skill, timing, musicianship and pure talent were amazing! What was most impressive was how they shared one bench and a grand piano with 88 keys while deciding whose elbow had the right of way to avoid a major collision. Debbie (my wife) and I can't even share a TV remote without getting in each other's way.

It was a great honor to celebrate our nation's 250th Birthday with our annual Patriotic Cantata. This was a wonderful way to share our patriotism with participants from outside the church with a combined choir. We hope that all who came felt our great love for our country and walked away with that same feeling. If you missed this beautiful event, you can find it online and consider joining us next year.

On July 24th, we welcome back Alan Curtis Tripp, a talented pianist, entertainer, and comedian. He has been here before and folks have been clamoring for him to return. Get your tickets before they sell out!

On Friday August 28th, we're excited to welcome Lords of Pop. This one-man show includes three pop icons: Barry Manilow, Billy Joel and Elton John.

Mark your calendars for September 11th, as Jeff is working on a special remembrance event that you won't want to miss. Be sure you pick up a trifold with information about all our upcoming concerts. Our fall season line up will kick off with Tributes to The Beatles, Glen Campbell and Elvis.

Invite your friends to join you at our concerts. We can't wait to see you there. God bless you all.

2026 Annual Conference Report by Gayle Turner and Rick Norwood, lay members representing The UMC of Sun City Center

Hello Church! I'm Gayle Turner and my buddy Rick Norwood joins me for this report. We are your Lay Members to the Annual Conference and attended the conference along with our pastors. This year's conference happened June 3-6 in Lakeland, FL with the theme "Faith Rising." Several other church members attended as lay members at large for our district, volunteered in exhibit booths and helped as ushers. You were well represented! So why is this report important to you?

We'd like to share quickly the 3 resolutions voted on:

Affirming and Strengthening Lay Leadership as an Essential Ministry Strategy – *passed*

Resolution Opposing the Erosion of Voting Rights Act and Calling for the Protection of Equal Voice in Democracy – *passed*

Establishing a Process for Public Responses related to Government Actions and Justice Issues or the need to raise awareness of addressing such issues -*sent to the newly formed Conference Social Justice Committee*

And while there were many reports and celebrations during annual conference, THIS is what we want to share with you.

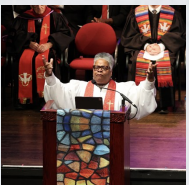


From Bishop Berlin's opening address, to Rev. Matt Miofsky's teachings, to Bishop Easterling's final sermon, we were challenged to be the hands and feet of Christ; To be open to all the people God is giving us, and to be like Jesus and just meet people where they are, (whether they are in Nineva, Sun City Center, or Wimauma).

Bishop Berlin started by challenging both the clergy and laity to be "bright, brave, and rooted". We are to be bright by sharing our faith joyfully, brave by being persistent in compassion and justice; and rooted by deepening our Wesleyan discipleship.

Rev. Matt shared what it looks like to be a Both/And Church. He talked about the opportunity we have in this divided world to show how we don't have to be "either/or" but can embrace our differences to become a both/and church. Could that look like a church that uses both our evangelical and progressive parts to grow together for the good of the world? How can we move forward with that?

Persha Barker joined Gayle and me in a workshop that included demographic information on our county. The course was conducted by faculty at Florida Southern and Rev. Juan Garay of Grace UMC Lithia. The community he serves is a one that has families with significant means and families who are struggling. The pastor is Latino and has served in other multicultural communities. His challenge was how can the church be a church for the entire community. He is working to meet the people where they are and to serve all the people God has given that church. This looks like a both/and church to me. Celebrate all that is brought to the table!



And Bishop Easterling did not mince words when she challenged everyone to live counter culturally in service to others. We are to serve others, not our own self-centeredness, and she was just warming up when she looked at those being commissioned and to each of us, when she lit into anyone who would use Christianity as a weapon to enrich themselves, seize power or use their positions to oppress those unable to defend these attacks. I encourage you to check out the videos from annual conference but if you watch anything, watch Bishop Easterling's address. The auditorium was with her every step of the way. Cheering, praying, shouting, and riding the wave of a Holy Spirit led message. She said there are "unholy ghosts" afoot and we are to be aware of them.

Church, what are our next steps? What are you being called to do? Back in February, I (Gayle) felt called to join our Bishop and other United Methodists from around the country in D.C. to speak for Immigrant Justice. In a report on this event, our Bishop has asked that we pay attention to a bipartisan bill called "The Dignity Act". It is stalled and probably won't pass in its current form, it isn't perfect, but it is a start, and is really the only thing out there, trying to bring groups together on immigrant issues. We were asked to stay in contact with our representatives and stay engaged. I'm looking for the people God is giving us to talk with in our church and community about social justice issues. Let me know if you'd like to talk.

With 3 and 1/2 days of nonstop work it is hard to share all of what happened at Annual Conference. What we want you to know is that our Church is alive, creative, and well. It is exciting to work together as we ALL carry out our calls. There is energy, love and the palpable feeling of God's hand working through all of this. We'd love for you to experience some of what we witnessed. If you would like to see and experience any of these things, go to <https://www.flumc.org/ac-2026-livestream> when you have time. We promise you will come away inspired and feeling hopeful. Faith is Rising!

Finally, after the commissioning of new clergy, Bishop Berlin closed with an altar call that was an opportunity to acknowledge the call that might be on your life; a call perhaps to call a friend, to reach out and do something. The Bishop warned us that there is no peace for those who refuse the call; I will add....you might be in the belly of the fish.

