

Mission of the Month

Campaign Against Human Trafficking (CAHT)

The Campaign Against Human Trafficking – Southshore (CAHT) has been active in the south shore since 2009. Throughout the years, The United Methodist Church of Sun City Center has been an active supporter and partner in our efforts to end human trafficking.

Here in the south shore of Hillsborough County we have challenges with both labor and sex trafficking. Our County Sheriff's office and the Hillsborough County Human Trafficking Task Force work hard to identify and eliminate the threats to our community.

CAHT continues with our commitment to supporting victims, celebrating survivors, reducing demand, and ending human trafficking.

This year we have several goals:

- Continue to support our victims and survivors with the rescue backpack and mentoring programs
- Recruit volunteers to support our programs
- Expand our Trafficking Free Zone community awareness program
- Begin outreach to men's organizations
- Begin a Survivor Scholarship fund to assist survivors as they complete their program and begin their new life
- Explore the possibility of creating the first safe home/shelter program for human trafficking victims in this area

We invite you to join our organization and support the cause of eliminating human trafficking.

Thanks so much to all of you for supporting our efforts over the years. With God's Blessings, we look forward to a continuing partnership.

Pastor's Corner - Travis Taylor

Faith in the Future

Not long after transferring my membership from Indiana to the Florida Annual Conference, I was given a small book and encouraged to explore something called *Fresh Expressions* (*FX*). Fresh Expressions of church... Fresh Expressions of ministry... Fresh Expressions of discipleship.

When I attended my first FX conference in the Spring of 2023, I learned that Fresh Expressions facilitators refer to themselves as "practitioners" and describe their expressions as: "A movement within the United Methodist Church that seeks to cultivate contextual church plants in an increasingly diverse and post-Christian context."

If that sounds confusing to you, you're not alone. I spent the better part of two days at that conference trying to wrap my brain around what I was hearing and understand how practitioners distinguish their *fresh* expressions from *traditional* or *contemporary* expressions of Church. For instance, they repeatedly differentiated between their gatherings and what they described as "inherited church models". Unlike inherited church models, *their churches* expressed themselves in coffee shops, tattoo parlors, libraries, and dog parks.

While I still struggle to fully comprehend the difference between Fresh Expressions and what I would argue is just strategic community outreach (even after reading the book and attending the conference), it seems like the FX movement is a response to traditional churches who are failing to make disciples and engage the culture on its own ground. And that is something I can't argue with.

Faith in the future may look very different from what most of us are accustomed to. With many churches struggling to make a significant impact in their communities, we must recognize the difficult season we are in. Never before has the world been so technologically connected, yet so ideologically fractured. Many studies today suggest that young and old alike are currently trudging through an age of loneliness and isolation that was unheard of in decades past. Small groups, faithful friendships, and contemplative connections are needed now more than ever!

So, as we faithfully step forward into the future, let us consider how we are engaging the people we meet at the market. How are we praying for people whose paths we cross in the coffee shop and supporting the friends we find on the fringe of our community. In the new year let's do something new and increase our efforts to cultivate new relationships with new people and direct our energies towards those who have yet to experience the life-giving Light that Christ offers.

Faith in the future depends on us!



Stewardship & Budget Update

Stewardship campaign by the numbers:

The results of our November stewardship campaign were incredibly positive. Thank you to all who pledged!

Total pledges to date: 282 households

Amount pledged: \$1,110,000

Anticipated giving from unpledged households = \$662,000

Additional income from other sources = \$241,000

You may still make a pledge at www.lovethelight.org/pledge

Budget update:

The Finance committee presented for approval a balanced budget of \$2,005,000 to the Administrative Council on December 9. The 2026 budget represents a 2% increase from 2025 expenses. You may ask for a copy of the 2026 budget in the church office.

Our 2025 budget year will end with a significant surplus yet we chose to remain conservative in our budgeting for 2026 in an effort to continue to replenish our reserves.

We are grateful for your generosity and support for this important work!

Mike Schoonover, Stewardship chair | Andy Lotze, Finance chair | Cynthia Weems, Senior Pastor





Sun City Center United Methodist Church Sunday, January 4

8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

All donors receive*:

- \$20 eGift Card
- Long-sleeved T-shirt
- Wellness Checkup including blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count, and cholesterol screening.

Fact: Only 3% of those who are eligible actually donate blood.



Appointments are encouraged, please visit oneblood.org/donate-now and use sponsor code 15721







- PLUS -





ID REQUIRED



Metropolitan Ministry Senior Meals: 2026

Beginning Monday, January 5th, our church will become the 2nd Metropolitan Ministry senior meal site in Sun City Center. This ministry, which will take place in

our LEC, provides hot meals for the hungry in our community, as well as provide a safe and nurturing environment for faith and fellowship to grow.

If someone you know might benefit from a hot meal and good company, please inform them of this opportunity to connect. All are welcome to receive.

When: Every Monday 12:00-1:00 pm Where: Life Enrichment Center (LEC)

Cost: Free

Update from the Volunteer Response Team (VRT)

Happy New Year!

We need volunteers for upcoming events including hedge removal, tree trimming, and power washing on January 16 at 8:30 a.m. at the church. Additionally, mark your calendars for a church campus cleanup on March 20 at 8:30 a.m.

In case you're not aware, we have an aluminum can and scrap metal collection located in the rear parking area by the sheds.

- Please: Only aluminum cans should be placed in the aluminum can collection trailer.
- All other tin cans and scrap metal should go in the metal collection trailer.
- Important: Do not place trash, tires, paint, chemicals, or wood in these trailers.

Our next meeting will take place on January 21, 2026, in Room 19 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Remember, meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month.

We are a dedicated group of caring Christian volunteers that assist with community projects, church maintenance, disaster response, and recycling. The Volunteer Response Team (VRT) of Sun City Center is always on the lookout for individuals with diverse skills to join our team. We welcome not only those with tool skills but also cooks, organizers, administrators, maintenance personnel, and anyone willing to provide a caring Christian presence. If you're interested in becoming an active member of our VRT, please consider attending our monthly meeting or register on our VRT email database at http://eepurl.com/gew3MD.

'Break Away' with Breakaway

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Breakaway!! We spent the month getting ready for Christmas and enjoyed every minute of it! It started with getting our many trees decorated. In the LEC you can see the ornaments that we made this year. You are also able to purchase some from *Breakaway Creations*!

We made some delightful Christmas cookies and recorded ourselves one morning singing a few songs for Sights and Sounds. On a couple of other mornings, we decorated the glass wall in Creason with ourselves, bundled up in hats and scarves. If you stop by, you might even spot a staff member or two hanging up with us! In addition to our decorations, there are also some snazzy collaborative art projects on display.

One beautiful Monday brought us three visitors from UMC Lakeland who are interested in opening their own respite next year! As Pastor Pam is the one who started Breakaway during her time here, I can't think of a better person to lead this new venture! Since it was a beautiful day, we enjoyed Christmas caroling alongside a Snowman, and later that afternoon a dancing Gingerbread Man joined our festivities!

December only held six Breakaway days, and we were blessed to have live entertainment for five of them! Thank you ever so much Greg, Bob, Susan, Dave, Gary and The Orange Blossom Ukes! Because music tends to be one of the last memories retained by a person living with dementia, we end every day with music. If you're a musician please consider playing for us!

Santa was here! How could we have our celebrations without him? Our final day was spent visiting with Santa and receiving a stockings compliments of the Sun City Center Singles Club, who also donated a gift card for all our caregivers! Our friends had the opportunity to go "shopping" for their caregivers. This event is always a hit; our wonderful volunteers donate new, unused gifts for our friends to choose from, which are then wrapped up and sent home.

Exciting news for 2026, Breakaway is self-sustaining! As we will no longer receive a budget from the church, purchases from Breakaway Creations and your generous donations are going to be more important than ever. We humbly ask that you remember us during your times of giving.



Walk to Emmaus

Do you seek spiritual renewal or a new understanding of God's grace and love?

Then the Walk to Emmaus may be your answer to finding these things and help you to meet other believer's looking for the same closeness to God.

The Walk to Emmaus offers a weekend retreat for adults seeking to grow closer to God and strengthen their faith. On an Emmaus weekend, you will sing, reflect, pray, worship, learn to share Holy Communion, participate in small groups, experience God's grace in community and in the world, and understand Christian love in action.

The Walk to Emmaus has two scheduled weekends in the month of March you are able to participate in, and registration is open now until January 29th, 2026.

If you are seeking to participate in the women's weekend retreat, the dates are March 12-15, 2026 and if you are a gentleman, the dates are March 19-22, 2026. The weekend costs \$175 dollars per person and includes meals and lodging.

If you are interested in learning more about the Walk to Emmaus Weekend retreats, please contact Terry Cary, via email: tlcmnistries1944@gmail.com for more information or visit to learn more or register to attend one of the weekends listed above. Individuals who wish to attend must have a sponsor. Additionally, please contact Terry if you are seeking to attend the retreat or be a sponsor for a pilgrim on the retreat weekends.



THURSDAY, JANUARY 15TH AT 8:00AM

Please plan on joining us for our first Men's Breakfast of the New Year. It'll be a good time with good guys, so don't be afraid to bring a buddy with you. This is a great opportunity to make new friends and meet some new brothers.

Men's Breakfast is the 3rd Thursday each month. Cost is \$10.00. Sign up by Jan. 11th.

Center 4Life Learning Trips and Tours



HOP on the BUS! Come be Entertained!!

Tour of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral and explore Tarpon Springs



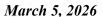
January 14, 2026



The Cemetery Club, Dramatic Comedy, Manatee Performing Arts Center

February 25, 2026

Bright Star, Musical Production, Manatee Performing Arts Center







Columbia Restaurant and Ybor City Bus Tour

March 10, 2026

Fiddler on the Roof Musical, Asolo Repertory Theatre

May 13, 2026





Becky's New Car, Early Bird Dinner Theater May 28, 2026

Reservations Fill Up Fast – Register Today!

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

email at <u>center4life@sccumc.com</u>, or visit our website at <u>lovethelight.org/4lifelearning</u>



CENTER 4LIFE LEARNING

Step out, get inspired, have fun, be entertained! There is a wide variety of classes and day trips that will liven up your life.

2026 Winter Semester Registration is Open

Register Online or Visit the Office

Monday - Friday 8:30AM - 12:30PM 813-634-8607 www.lovethelight/4lifelearning



ART

- Beginning Paper Quilling
- Advanced Paper Quilling
- Make Your Mark –
 Doodling
- Modern Dot Art

HISTORY

- Film History of Science Fiction Movies
- High Altitude Reconnaissance
 During the Cold War
- The Adams Family: A Multigenerational Legacy of Public Service

DISCUSSION

- Chautauqua XII
 - Mid-Century
 Counterculture
 - Demographics: You're More Than a Number

LIVE THEATER

Fun with Improve



LANGUAGE

- Sign Language
- Beginners Conversational Spanish Level I
- Conversational Spanish Level II
- Conversational Spanish Level III

FINANCE

- Investment, Estate, and Tax Planning
- What Would Happen If You Got Hit By a Bus?

HEALTH

- End of Life Planning for you and Your Family
- Enriching Relationships Through Self Discovery
- Plant-Powered Living: A Holistic Approach to Vibrant Health
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Mission Corner - Food Pantry

"There are always going to be poor and needy people among you... Always be generous, open purse and hands." Deuteronomy 15:11 (MSG)

Our mission is simple and heartfelt: to provide food and spiritual resources (prayer, counseling, continued relationships) to individuals and families who have acute needs, and support other entities to resolve food insecurity regardless of age, ethnicity, or marital status in our community. Through the generosity of our congregation providing financial donations and food items, in addition to grants, we are able to provide food with dignity, love, and compassion to all our neighbors in need.

Over the years, our pantry provided emergency food bags, and with the rising grocery prices and uncertainty around federal and state benefits such as SNAP and WIC, our pantry felt called to do more. Since September, the pantry has been open twice a week, allowing individuals and families to visit and shop for the food they need. Over these past six weeks, we have averaged 27 visitors per pantry day, serving about 122 family members daily, in addition to serving 287 in our senior community. While most may think we only serve neighbors from Sun City Center and Kings Point, we also serve our neighbors in Wimauma, Ruskin, and Apollo Beach, bringing a wide range of food needs.

In the New Year, our vision will allow us to reach beyond food alone. Our newly established vision statement focuses on being available for our community, not only providing food, but also spiritual nourishment through intentional interaction. In doing so, we, and those we serve may experience the love of Jesus and be empowered to change their

As part of our spiritual nourishment, we will offer prayer and spiritual support to those who desire it—welcoming neighbors not only for physical nourishment, but inspiration, encouragement, and the reminder of how Jesus feeds us with love and grace. Starting in January, we are providing Upper Room devotion booklets in Spanish to help us reach our Hispanic brothers and sisters in need. We are currently seeking volunteers who speak Spanish so they can connect and support our Hispanic brothers and sisters through prayer.

As always, we need your support in keeping our pantry flourishing with what our community needs to meet their basic day-to-day needs. Below is a list of items that are needed on a weekly basis in order for us to meet the needs of our clients:

Maseca (corn) flour -2-lb bags preferred • White rice -1-3 lb bags

Vegetable oil

• Dried black beans – 1–2 lb bags

Boxed cereal

• Canned fruit (including low sugar/sugar-free)

Pancake mix and Pancake syrup

Pasta (any kind including gluten-free)

Pasta sauce (including low-sodium and no added salt)

Stay tuned for new ways to serve, because WE believe in feeding families and feeding souls, and you are invited to help us with this wonderful and necessary mission. For more information regarding how you can help the food pantry, contact Sylvia Pomrenke, our Local, State, National Mission Coordinator via email: sylviapomrenke@hotmail.com.

"Let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love." 1John 3:18 (MSG)

Ladies' Brunch

Happy New Year Ladies! We hope you had a great Christmas and are ready to return to our Ladies' Brunch in 2026. This year we have a group of dedicated volunteers working diligently to plan our brunches, and boy, do they have some great ideas.

Ladies' Brunch will meet starting January 28th from 10-11:30am in the Life Enrichment Center (LEC). Come join us for Game Day where the ladies are hosting a fun game of Bingo. Brunch will consist of Chicken Salad Wraps, Potato Chips, Pasta Salad, with Lemonade, Iced Tea, Water, Coffee (regular and decaffeinated) along with some hot water for our Hot Tea drinkers. So come to have some great food and fellowship, we can't wait to see you!

Future Brunch Dates are:

February 25th | March 25th | April 22nd | May 27th | September 23rd | October 28th

Make sure to mark your calendars, and tune in to future newsletter articles for themes and menus.

Vivacious Ministries with Victoria Sorensen

"January is the month to set the tone for the year—planting seeds now and trusting they will bloom in unexpected ways."

A new year brings another opportunity to make a difference in our community. Over the past month, I have found myself planting and watering new seeds as we continue serving our neighbors—children, youth, young adults, and seniors. Last year, together we made a wonderful impact through our food pantry, clothing and hygiene support for local schools, school supplies, medical screenings, fellowship opportunities, and so much more. Each of you played a role, whether through food drives, the Joy of Giving, or supporting our sister churches in Cuba and India, along with our many other ministries. Lives were changed because of what we accomplished together.

While we were busy serving, I was also building new relationships and rekindling existing ones, looking for ways we could continue growing alongside our community. As I met with social workers in local schools, I kept hearing a growing concern: beyond food and clothing, many children need help mastering basic skills such as reading, reading comprehension, writing, and critical thinking. Without support, too many students are falling behind.

As I listened, I felt strongly that God was calling us to respond—but how and where to begin were not immediately clear. I prayed and researched, waiting for direction. Then one Thursday afternoon in December, a wonderful person came to speak with me. As we talked, it became clear that God had brought us together to answer each other's prayers. Together, we saw a path forward to help children in our elementary schools build the strong foundation they need for lifelong learning. It is amazing how God's plan unfolds right before our eyes.

You know that my newsletter often highlights what we've accomplished and ends with an invitation to volunteer based on your gifts. This time, I'm asking something a little different. I invite each of you to search your heart and consider helping with a new outreach ministry that will have a lasting impact on the lives of children in our community.

After months of listening and prayer, God has opened not just a window, but a door. We now have an opportunity to begin an in-school tutoring program to support children who entered school unprepared and continue to struggle. Many of these children did not have someone reading to them or engaging them in meaningful conversations during their early years. What they need most is a warm, caring adult who can walk alongside them, helping build academic skills, confidence, and the ability to express themselves.

I am grateful to be working with Jan Caruthers, a former educator with a heart for helping children succeed. Together, we are preparing to launch the first phase of this program from February through May 2026 in three local elementary schools—Reddick, Ruskin, and Wimauma—serving second-grade students. Jan is developing video lessons, tutoring guides, and resources to ensure volunteers are well prepared. Now, we need you and the gifts God has given you to help bring this ministry to life.

So here is my ask:

- If you want to make a difference in the life of a child who is struggling...
- If you have a passion for helping children become the best they can be and can give 30–60 minutes on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday...
- If you find joy in seeing a child smile when they succeed...
- If you remember a teacher or volunteer who made a difference in your life and want to pass that gift along...

I invite you to consider this volunteer opportunity.

No teaching or tutoring experience is required. We will provide all training and materials—you simply need a willing heart. If you are interested in learning more, please contact me at wictoria@sccumc.com or stop by to talk with me. This is a meaningful way to invest in our next generation and help children grow into confident, successful adults.

Blessings to each of you in this New Year. May it be filled with love, kindness, and peace. As always, I am so grateful to work alongside each of you in ministry and mission work. Together, we continue to make an impact on the lives of those in our community by giving of ourselves, sharing the love of Jesus, and letting the Light change Everything!

Victoria

- Jeff Jordan

Have you ever heard any of these aphorisms?

"Fear of the unknown is the greatest fear of all." (Yvon Chouinard)

"Slowness to change usually means fear of the new." (Philip Crosby)

"We do not have a fear of the unknown. What we fear is giving up the known." (Anthony de Mello)

"Better the devil you know than the devil you don't." (A common proverb)

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" (Another common proverb with poor language!)

I'm sure you have, and they all have to do with our reticence to embrace the new, to replace the old, in short, they all express our seemingly collective fear of CHANGE. Perhaps I've been fooling myself, but I've always said that I LOVE change; I love new ideas, new places, new people, new experiences, new (fill in the blank here). I'm probably not really as open to change as I profess to be, but I do know that change is inevitable and that 'new', even though it may not always be better than 'old', is inevitable.

I think it goes without saying that it's important to vet new things as we encounter them. So, how do we discern if the 'new' is better than the 'old'? I believe, and you probably do too, that we need to turn to God AND to one another. We turn to Him through scripture, prayer, meditation - through our regular spiritual disciplines, and we turn to one another most intimately through worship, collective study, and even through and during social events with other believers. With that in mind, I encourage you to be more vigorous in your spiritual disciplines, especially in those that bring you closer to God and seem to give you a sense of where and how He's guiding you. And I also encourage you to participate in one or more of the spiritual growth opportunities offered at our church, from prayer and Wesley groups to book and Bible studies. Finally, try to find the time to volunteer for one or more of our many ministries. Now you know I'm not pushing one in particular [MUSIC?!?]. I guess that was somewhat more than a 'subliminal' message, but please know that we are always looking for new singers, ringers, instrumentalists and actors. Please consider sharing your talents with your church family and our community by joining our Music Ministry in the coming year!

I, for one, am looking forward excitedly to the NEW year ahead of us. Blessings, my dear friends!

Soli Deo Gloria

Handbell Ministry

Played in a band or sung in a choir back in high school?

Then you are officially qualified to play handbells!!

The Handbell Ministry under the direction of Jeff and Nancy is looking for a 'few good men' to handle the bigger bells. It's fun – it really is. For more information or to give it a try, please contact Jeff @ (813) 260-0153 or Nancy @ (813) 787-0190. You won't regret it!

Separate item...

Our church is hosting this year's Florida Handbell Festival with clinicians Kathryn Jurado and Michael Lamb on Friday and Saturday, March 13 & 14th. Please contact Jeff at (813) 260-0153 or Nancy at (813) 787-0190 for more information or to register for this special event.



Chili Cook-Off



The SCCUMC Men's Ministry will be hosting our first annual Super Bowl Chili Cook-Off on Sunday, February 8th from 1:30 - 4pm. Welcome/Opening Ceremony will be at 1:45pm and an Award Ceremony will be held

between 3-3:15pm. Contestants will be selected by lottery, up to 16 entries. Each contestant will pay a \$20 entry fee, provide 2 gallons of chili (and optional sides) at their own expense, and provide a physical list of their ingredients for their serving station. All contestants will receive a free T-shirt and be eligible to win 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place medals. 250 tickets will be sold for \$10 each and 1 bowl of "Church Chili" will be provided for each ticket. Guest tickets will be checked at the door and will be sold from the office beginning January 18th but may be sold at the door up to 250.

Hopeful contestants may register on the patio between services on Sunday, January 4th and January 11th.

Spice up your life and bring your appetite for a day of delicious fun, where only ONE will take home the title of SCC's Chili Champion for 2026!

Thank God It's Variety! - Larry Hirchak

Another year has quickly gone by and I would like to thank everyone who attended and supported the 2025 concert series. As we begin the 2026 year, we have a great January line up of concerts!



Beginning on Friday, January 9th, Sinatra and Streisand's "The Concert That Never Was" returns by popular demand. Barbra Streisand and Frank Sinatra are two of the most iconic performers of our time. Sharon Owens and Robbie Howard take the stage as Barbra Streisand and Frank Sinatra in this tribute to the vocal powerhouses who gave us the iconic hits such as "People", "My Way", "The Way Were Were", "New York New York", and so many more. These two legends never shared the same stage until now.

Today, Sharon Owens and Robbie Howard captivate audiences world-wide with their originally self-produced Las Vegas show that brings laughter, tears and joy to every person watching. Robbie's crooning sounds of Sinatra bring "memories" to an audience who remember the late great "ol' blue eyes" himself. While the uncanny looks of Sharon bring out the Funny Girl herself, Streisand does it the only way she knows how... Her Way.



The following week, on Friday, January 16th, Keith Allynn will be returning once again to present his very popular Neil Diamond Tribute. Experience the feel of Neil as Allynn unveils the story of Diamond's life through songs from the '60s to today.

Allynn began his career in stand-up comedy at the age of 14 opening for such greats as Chris Rock, Tim Allen and Robin Williams. At 21, he discovered his musical talents while performing "All Shook Up" at a karaoke night. For several years he continued to perform as an Elvis tribute artist and was voted a top 10 Elvis, by Graceland, in 2004. While trying to impress a girl who was a huge Neil Diamond fan, he called her on the phone and in his best Neil voice sang "Hello Again" from the Jazz Singer. It became their song, she became his

wife, and he became The Diamond Image.



Then on Friday, January 23rd, a returning group, Sunday Drive will be presenting a concert titled "Yesterday Once More". Sunday Drive is a multiple Dove Award nominated group from Knoxville, TN, composed of Jeff Treece and his wife, Misty, and brother, Dusty. The group is known for their smooth harmonies and Misty's rich, Karen Carpenter-style vocals. They will be presenting a tribute to The Carpenters as well as other Golden Oldies and Classics and a few of their hit Gospel tunes. As always, there is a good bit of comedy included in every performance! Having garnered multiple Vocal Group and Entertainer of the Year honors, they have performed with artists such as the Gaithers, Ernie Haase & Signature Sound and the Oak Ridge Boys. Sunday Drive provides a veteran entertainment with a fresh and unique style.

The Boys of Oak Ridge will close out the month with their tribute to the Oak Ridge Boys. The Boys of Oak Ridge are not just a tribute band; they are a celebration of the sound and spirit that made the Oak Ridge Boys famous. With their tight harmonies and dynamic stage presence, they recreate the timeless classics that have touched the hearts of country music fans for generations. Audiences will be taken on a journey through beloved hits, blending humor, storytelling, and infectious energy that captures the essence of the original legends.

Another option that we are providing this winter season is a Season Ticket that can be purchased for \$210.00 and includes 14 concerts for the period of January thru March. This is at a 20 percent discount to the regular advance ticket prices. If you enjoy a great variety of entertainment, please take advantage of this great offer.

And again, I would like to thank you for your great support of this very special and successful outreach ministry!! Remember "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!!" Ps.150:6

