

FRESH Start

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT CHARLOTTE SDA CHURCH



"The Lord's loyal kindness never ceases; his compassions never end. They are fresh every morning..." Lam. 3:22,23 NET

GETTING BACK ON TRACK

Welcome to 2023!

Last year, our church weathered literal and figurative storms. We were thrown off course for months. With God's grace, we are gradually getting back on track – in the restoration of our facilities, in leadership, and in our congregational study and worship.

The most important thing we can ever be on track with is our personal relationship with God. What a perfect time to dedicate ourselves to prayer!

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BACK ON TRACK

BY BEN SHURLIFF, SENIOR PASTOR

On December 20, 2022 residents in the small town of Collegedale, TN saw something they hadn't seen before, at least not in Collegedale. At the railroad crossing directly across from Southern Adventist University, a semi-truck driver was parked at a red light. Unfortunately, the concrete bridge beam that made up the driver's load that day literally straddled the railroad track. In a tragic twist of terrible timing, a train came

barreling through the crossing at the very same time. Footage of the ensuing disaster can be seen on YouTube, search Train Crash Collegedale TN 12-20-2022.

A total of three locomotives and ten rail cars came off the track and made an unprecedented mess. As of the writing of this article, the damage done that day is still being undone, just today trains are able to use that track again.



Our theme for this month is getting back on track. There are so many areas of our lives that were affected by the calamities of the recent past. It wasn't just Hurricane Ian for the Port Charlotte SDA Church community that radically changed the rhythm of what we are accustomed to doing. Before Ian, there were major changes in leadership on our campus. Even before that, there was a pandemic that made the customary pace of our church community radically different. Ministries stopped, communion stopped, in person worship services stopped, and I think if we

really look at it, much of the negative effects of the pandemic still weigh heavily on churches, including ours, today. It is considering the recent tumultuous past our faith family has been through that makes the goal of getting back on track even more meaningful and important.

My goal as your friend and pastor is not to get everything back to the way it was, and hopefully your goal isn't that either. Getting back on track doesn't mean doing all the things we did before life's disruptions. No, getting back on track means

getting back on the right track. The track that leads directly to heaven without any unnecessary detours.

With all the changes that we have undergone, we are primed for restarting our lives and fellowship, focusing on what is most important. The very things that have caused all the disruptions in my life have been a blessing in disguise to help point me in the direction of what is most important. For example, I was on sabbatical when the pandemic hit our nation. I was enjoying time off with my family. However, I cut my sabbatical short approximately one month because I felt my church

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needed all hands-on deck, including mine. I remember early into the pandemic, I had a real sense that this was related to the closing chapters of earth's history. This led to three major developments in my life and ministry. First, my family started in earnest like never before daily worship and spending quality time with the Lord as a family. Not that we didn't try to do this before, but it was a heightened awareness and renewed determination that nothing is more important than preparing my family to meet Jesus. As a result, we learned to praise God in song as a family in our living room, study the Bible as a family, and answer the questions that my kids had regarding what we were learning and what was happening all around us due to the pandemic. Second, I felt convicted that we as a church needed to start a prayer line -- which we did. During the height of the pandemic that prayer line met three times a day. We prayed with each other and for each other at 7:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 7:00



pm. This prayer line is still active to this day several years later. Third, I began to study the Book of Revelation earnestly and preach about what I was learning from my studies. The series ran for almost two years. From my perspective and from what church members shared with me, the Holy Spirit was being poured out to give us a deeper understanding of Revelation. It was life changing for me personally. I am not the same believer I was prior to that series.

I would like to suggest a similar layout for getting back on the right track as the Port Charlotte SDA Church family. I appeal to

you to recognize that there is absolutely nothing more important in our daily lives than drawing close to Jesus. He is coming soon. We may not know the day or hour, but you must know what I am talking about when I say the world has a sense that we are at the end, surely the church must as well. I cannot spend that quality time with Jesus for you. Make ample time for worship in your home and daily lives. Listen to the Bible on your phone, read it, absorb every Word from the Lord you can daily. God's Word is incredibly powerful and will transform your life. No pursuit is more important than getting right and tight with Jesus.

As important as Bible study and personal devotions are, I find that I am a miserable and weak solo Christian. However, when I make it a point to pray for others and be prayed for there is strength I otherwise would not have. I encourage you to be blessed by the nightly prayer line being offered. I guarantee it will help get your life back on the right track. I know from personal experience.

We are starting this year with an emphasis on forty days of prayer. We meet at

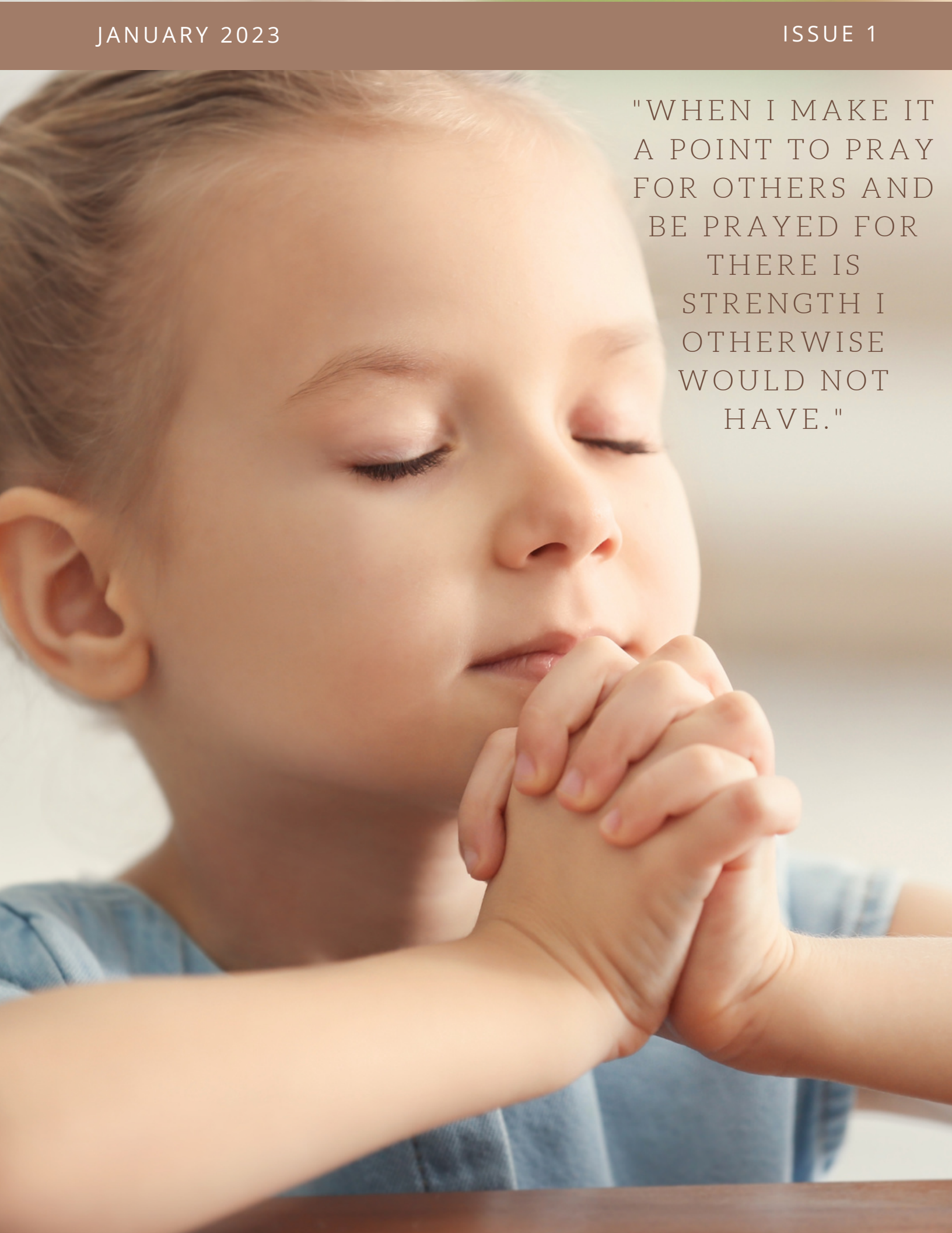
7:00 nightly on the prayer line (Zoom call), and through February 8 we will meet in person on Wednesdays in the church. I have absolutely no doubt this will go a long way in getting us all back on the right track.

Lastly, let's come together in corporate worship eagerly anticipating the blessings God has in store for His people Sabbath after Sabbath. I think of Sabbath like a beautiful gift that Jesus gives His loved ones every week. When we attend with

hearts eager to bless others and be blessed, we open that gift and receive what we need as He continues to sanctify us for the courts above.

Daily personal devotions, daily prayer with brothers and sisters, and weekly worship with the family of God is a powerful combination to get our lives back on the right track. It continues to work for me, and if you are not already experiencing it, I wish you the same happiness I have found and continue to find.



A close-up photograph of a young girl with light brown hair, her eyes closed in a state of prayer. Her hands are clasped together in front of her mouth. She is wearing a blue denim shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

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40 days of Prayer

On January 1, we began a 40-day journey of virtually coming before God together. You can participate every weeknight at 7:00 by joining via Zoom online or using the Zoom phone app. This is audio only, so you don't even have to think about how you look! To connect online go to <https://zoom.us/j/91380160609>, or click [here](#).

You can also use your phone and call 1-305-224-1968 or 1-309-205-3325.

Another option is to download the Zoom app on your phone.

For all of the options, use the **Meeting ID: 913 8016 0609#**

*The Zoom prayer group began in December, and will continue indefinitely.

During the 40 Days of Prayer, on Wednesday nights at 7:00 from January 11-February 8, we will meet at the church. The service will include praise, prayer and music.



Kids' J.A.M.

We are getting back on track with Kids' J.A.M. (Jesus And Me). The next special event, coordinated by Donna Judy, will be on Sabbath, January 28th at the PCAS field from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

Learn of "Jesus' Wonderful Winter" with songs, winter-themed Bible lesson, crafts, games and snacks.

Bring blankets or lawn chairs to sit on. The whole family is invited for fun and fellowship!





Business Meeting

10 a.m. on Sunday, January 29

The annual church business meeting is where we discuss church finances, plans for the year ahead, and more.

This is a chance to ask questions, make comments and vote on issues that may be brought before the church. All are encouraged to attend.





RESTORATION:

Getting our Campus Back on Track

by DIANE SEDGWICK

Photo credits: Laura Dancsek

“Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. He will see to it that all the work related to the Temple of the Lord is finished correctly.”

I Chronicles 28:20 (NLT)

To all things, and people, in our world since the closure of the Garden of Eden, aging happens. Some things, and people, age beautifully. Think of a giant bay laurel tree or a blooming rose.... or Beryl Jackson. Other things age not so beautifully. And our church’s roof was no exception to the things that had not aged well! It had been patched, covered and prayed for, but its usefulness was coming to an end. So, in the late summer of 2021, and after a particularly strong wind storm at the end of August, the church board agreed that the time had finally come to repair the roof in its

entirety. We had been blessed with invested monies which had matured and, together with the amount already raised for such an occasion, we felt we could begin looking for roofing contractors.

What we soon realized, with the input of Florida Conference (which owns our campus buildings), is that the wind storm had caused damage to the roofs of all three buildings -- the church, the community center and the school. We then filed an insurance claim that was submitted to Adventist Risk Management, and worked with the Conference's owner-representative and a total of three adjusters to get the numbers in line with our insurance coverage and our own budget.

After looking at several local companies, we went with a roofer from Orlando, Collis Roofing, licensed in all FL counties, and experienced in large, complex re-roofing situations like ours. An interesting blessing came by the way of supplies. Because of the timing of the wind event, our flat and shingled roofing supplies were already ordered and in the queue, before the surprise of September 2022 came.

Hurricane Ian hit on the 28th. In our already-vulnerable roofing state, we saw with dismay, water

streaming through the sanctuary plank seams, ceilings collapsing, AC units being blown apart, gutters and fascia torn off, and trees downed. Even one of our beloved stained-glass windows was blown inward, showing potential for collapse. Another thing we learned after meeting outside and in the gym for a few weeks, was that our beautiful Johansen organ would light up, but could produce no sound.

During the morning after the hurricane, two reps from ServPro walked around the broken parking lot light poles and through the bushels of shingles and roof pieces, came into our lobby, and asked if we might need their help. With the hurried approval of the Conference and our board, we signed on with them for mitigation and restoration. This was an answer to prayers that had not even been formulated into



words! For the next few weeks a ServPro army of 50-60 workers came every day from Orlando wearing hard hats and yellow vests, cleaning our church inside and outside, setting up generators, assessing damages, coordinating debris removal, and providing reassuring support.

Also during that time, our church and conference galvanized into action as well, offering support to one another with calls, generators, food and water, help with trees and understanding of our own deep emotional brokenness. Pastor Ben Shurtliff had been called to begin his ministry with us on October 22, but he and many other loving volunteers from the Brandon SDA Church began much earlier with teams of tree-cutters, debris movers, sweepers, deliverers, and most wonderful of all – mighty pray-ers.

A second set of claims went to Adventist Risk Management through the Florida Conference. And thus, we find ourselves in a parallel process of working through two catastrophic events with different companies and different financial implications, but having the same goal: **restoration**. A company out of Lakeland, CANCO, will be providing the general contracting work for us and they have lined up well-qualified and willing subcontractors for flooring, drywall, painting, tile and glass work, etc. We are blessed that God has brought them into our church life. As of this writing, we are putting the final pieces into place for getting the contract signed with them, based upon their scope of work proposal and our ARM/adjuster insurance conversations. A small group of members has been asked by the board to help with decisions that need to be



made regarding tile and carpet colors, paint, Sabbath School room shelving and a myriad of other things. Pastor Ben will be heading up this group for us.

The repair of both the organ and the window will be covered by insurance. We are anticipating that a reputable organ company will be able to provide a simple fix of board parts, while the stained-glass window needs can be met by a nearby glazier with the help of the CANCO team. CANCO Construction will begin repairs and rebuilding as soon as the flat roofs are finished in the church and the school in two to three weeks. CANCO hopes to be finished in six to eight weeks. Blessings indeed!

In the process of removing the aging roof materials, the Collis team of workers found exposed wiring and disintegrated conduit. Their work has been halted temporarily while our electrician does the necessary and timely repairs to the wires and puts in new PVC conduit which provide lighting for four of our classrooms.

The text I used in the beginning of this article speaks to God's presence and strength in the correct restoration of the Temple. What a far greater wonder it is, to contemplate the restoration of our world. John recorded, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and earth had disappeared." Rev 21:1. But even greater than the temporal changes in our church and the glory of the new earth, is the **restoration** of our bodies and our relationship with our Father. "God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ... and it gave Him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:5



Welcome to the Family

What a blessing it is to witness baptisms! Here are baptismal moments we celebrated since this summer:

Hector and Sonsiree Vargas were baptized by Pastor Art, and **Carlie and Jennifer Pina-Gregory**, by Pastor Jaime on June 25. **Dylan Bishop** was baptized by Pastor Brent on July 9. **Eliany Hernandez** and **Nehemiah Stany** were baptized on August 20 by Pastor Jaime. Pastor Ben baptized **Nia Walker** on November 26, and **Lionel Grant** on December 24.



Photo credit: Wave Williams



Photo credit: Wave Williams



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Photo credit: Wave Williams



Photo credit: Wave Williams



Photo credit: Resty Antonio



Photo credit: Resty Antonio



Photo credit: Barb Goffin



Photo credit: Barb Goffin

Welcome to the Family

On July 9, Anastasiya and Artem Toslov joined our church by profession of faith. We are so happy to have another young family in our congregation.



Photo credit: Barb Goffin

Pastor Ben, Tria, Gage and Hope Shurtliff officially became part of our church when their membership transferred on December 22. We are thrilled to have you back!



Photo credit: Laura Dancek



**Kindergarten Sabbath School
July 2**

Photo credit: Wave Williams

A BIG thanks to this team of volunteers, led by Wave Williams, plant manager. They worked in the wind and rain to install hurricane shutters on the church just before Hurricane Ian hit.



Photo credit: Wave Williams

PCAS Christmas Program

December 10

Photo credits: Wave Williams







Christmas in the Park

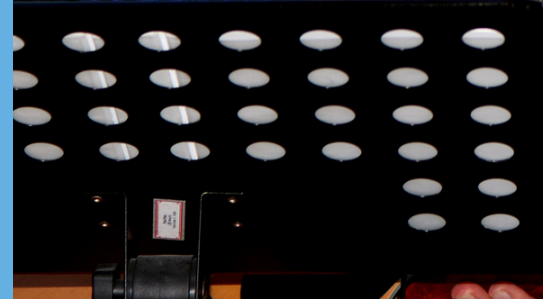
Following the Christmas program at the church, we went to Gilchrist Park to fill the air with Christmas music provided by our school music groups and church praise team. This outreach event is coordinated by Pine Price. It was a beautiful December day!

Photo credits: Wave Williams













Sabbath School Program

On December 31, members of the children's and youth Sabbath School classes performed readings, music and a skit.

Photo credits: Barb Goffin





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Sermon Schedule

January 7
 Pastor Ben

January 14
 Pine Price

January 21
 Pastor Ben

January 28
 Pastor Ben



This team of dedicated church members worked together to remove debris on the campus and they were successful in getting access to the water meter. So many people work behind the scenes to make things run smoothly. Please make sure you thank them for giving up their time on Sunday, December 11.

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