



# North Fort Myers Church of the Nazarene Messenger

August, 2019, Volume 10, Issue 4

## Front Line Warriors for the Innocent

We are only a few days away from the start of another school year and all the rituals that follow – collecting school pal paks to distribute to our church’s children, and to send to the mission field, praying for our students, families and schools, watching out for school buses and slowing down in school zones, and keeping a general awareness that a new school year means a lot of different things to a lot of different people.

I cannot see a new school year begin without a host of feelings invading my heart and mind. Before moving to Florida, it meant there would be a change of weather – from Summer to Fall. However, even though we do not experience the drastic change of seasons in our state, a new school year still draws my mind to all the changes that are about to take place across our country. Millions of children from small to not-so-small will step into brand new territory – new grades, new teachers, new classrooms, new classmates, new schools for some, and oftentimes, changes they cannot possibly anticipate. I wonder sometimes if, after that phase of our own lives and our children’s’ lives is over, if we still consider all that a new school year means for so many people all over our country.

Although I was a homeschooler, our family was also involved in youth ministry for nearly the entire time I homeschooled my own children, so it would have been impossible for me to escape or forget about the demands a new school year makes upon families everywhere. Having tutored, counseled, advised and assisted children of many ages for many years – along with my own children – I believe it is never wise or advisable for any of us who claim Jesus as our Savior, no matter where we are on our own journey, to push aside this world’s school-aged children and the world they face on a daily basis.

There is no one who trusts that GOD has a design and plan for this world, who would believe for one moment that they are not also in need of prayer and consideration from their fellow believers in every aspect of life. So, if we understand well our own need for consideration, how could we cast aside the enormous need shared by the most

innocent citizens of our world?

The case I am attempting to make is for believers to purposefully and deliberately consider the part we play in caring for the school children of this world – especially as a new school year begins. Our church has been gathering school supplies for several weeks in anticipation of our VBS program, and supplying the children who attend VBS with School Pal Paks. But what else could we do to help create a successful school year for our children, as well as children everywhere?

Last year, we began the school year praying over the teachers and students in our own congregation, and offering a prayer on behalf of our schools, students, administrators, staff and district leaders. You will find a prayer in this newsletter once again, in hopes you will allow it to serve as a guide as you make prayer for schools and the people who will inhabit them a priority.

However, I pray you will accept a “stronger” word of encouragement as you consider your participation in this emphasis. Because I am not suggesting that a prayer once in a while, even once a day, is sufficient for the need this new school year represents. I am suggesting that we who are involved in seeing the Kingdom of GOD come to this earth “as it is in heaven,” should have no choice but to purposefully engage on a completely higher level, with a holy, genuine concern for the souls that will be caught up in all that a new school year means.

No matter how long it may have been since you have been inside an elementary or secondary school – or even a college – unless you are living with your head in the sand, you know what the students, faculty and administrators face in this world of academia. Our country’s schools have become battlegrounds, where battles are being fought for the very souls of the youngest and most innocent. We cannot believe for a second that just because we are not on the front lines of those battle lines that we still do not hold some level of responsibility for engaging in the battle on behalf of those in the fray. The question for us is to what level will we participate in this war? Pray about it. Becky

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 – Bettie Coolie  
 17 – Doug & Karen Haiflich  
 20 – Susie Lorenson  
 21 – Ronnie Kiser  
 24 – Janet Heath  
 27 – Pat Abrahms  
 30 – Jerry & Martha Pickett



## Calendar

12 – First Day Back for  
 Lee County Schools  
 14 – Food Distribution  
 15 – Church Board  
 Meeting 6:30 PM  
 18 & 25 – New Members'  
 Class  
 23-24 – District Mission  
 Encounter

### Prayer Needs:

Phoebe Barr  
 Susie & Jamie Lorenson  
 Ryan Woodby  
 Sheryl Colie & Family  
 Ardyth Eldridge  
 Mark & Kim Barr  
 Kenny & Gail Goodman  
 Children & Teen Depts.  
 Phillip Lindsey  
 Our missionaries  
 House of James Ministries

Carl Baxter  
 Janice O'Lynn  
 Ernie Rybold  
 Matthew Morgan  
 Dave Peck  
 Louis Perez  
 Phyllis Obney  
 Eileen Jennings  
 Marlene Ryan  
 The Nation of Israel

Steve Cox  
 Dave Fregeau  
 Paul Jones  
 Orion Predko  
 Eileen Massett  
 Cody Church  
 Regina Williams  
 Kitty Baxter  
 A Youth Pastor  
 Our Church Leaders

Ben Bergman  
 Tom Blakeman  
 Betty Predko  
 Paul & Grace Boling  
 Joseph Groves  
 Betty Retter  
 Allice Daugherty  
 Dorothy & Laurel Chapaman  
 Unsaved Loved Ones

We need volunteers to help with the distribution of food on Wednesday, August 14, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, to help with a variety of tasks. Please spread the word to anyone you think could benefit from this special outreach and join us as we partner to help those in need. And once again, thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus in North Fort Myers.



**NEW MEMBERS CLASS**  
 Sunday, August 18 and 25  
 9:30 A.M., in Pastor Van's office  
 If you are interested in joining this local congregation, you need to plan to attend these two classes. See Pastor Van for details.





**Harry Chapin Food Bank**  
 OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA  
*Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope*



### MISSION ENCOUNTER

2019

August 23-24

Immokalee Church of the Nazarene  
 1207 Carson Rd, Immokalee, FL  
 Cost \$75 for students  
 includes a t-shirt and all meals



This will be a great opportunity for our teens to assist one of our local churches as they reach out into their community. Projects include landscaping, painting and a community block party. To register, go to [sfnazarene.org](http://sfnazarene.org)

The 2019-2020 school term begins for teachers on August 5 and for students, on August 12. Just as we did last year, we want to encourage all our people to take an active role in praying for the schools, students, teachers, administrators and staff members of each and every one of our schools in Lee County. We believe our prayers made a big difference last year, and we want to continue this important intervention this year. Please make a priority of praying for our schools each day.

**Love:**

“Father, may the students and staff members of our entire school district experience Your love through the Christians they know in profound and authentic ways. And may each of our schools be saturated with the love of Christ in and through every believer in Jesus.” (John 13:35).

**Truth:**

“Father, please release Your truth in and throughout our school district. Help students to rightly discern truth and not believe or fall victim to false teachings.” (Proverbs 23:23).

**School board:** “May the blessings of wisdom and holy discernment rest upon each Lee County school board member. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done in this district by the decisions they will make. May this be true for:

- Gregory K. Adkins, Superintendent
- Gwynetta S. Gittens, District 5 (Chair)
- Chris N. Patricca, District 3 (Vice Chair)
- Mary Fischer, District 1
- Melisa W. Giovannelli, District 2
- Debbie Jordan, District 4
- Betsy Vaughn, District 6
- Cathleen O'Daniel Morgan, District 7

Father, may Your will be done at each and every school board meeting” (Romans 13:1).

**Principals:**

“May the principals of every Lee County school recognize the God-given responsibility he/she has for the best interests of the children who attend the school. May they walk ethically in all wisdom, integrity, grace, truth, and the will of GOD” (Proverbs 2:1-11).

**Struggling students:**

“Lord, please encourage those children who struggle with their studies this year. Strengthen their minds. Help their teachers and parents know how to help them learn. Protect them from feelings of worthlessness and shame, and encourage them through the truth of who they are in Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

**Violence:**

“Lord, stay the hand of violence against the children and staff of this school district. Dismantle any plan to bring harm to them. Expose any weapon brought into the school premises and render it harmless.” (Psalm 34:7; 54:1).

**Christian programs:**

“Father, I pray for abundant blessings on programs that bring Christ into this school district. Help the groups who sponsor such programs function according to your Word and in harmony with each other. Bless the leaders and bring forth new and growing believers among the students, administrators, teachers and staff of each and every school in Lee County” (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

**Christian students:**

“Father, please grant the Christian students who attend every school in Lee County wisdom and boldness for living out their faith. Help them share the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively with their classmates.” (1 Timothy 4:12).

**A chosen generation:**

“Father, may your kingdom come in the lives of each of the students in Lee County, and may You raise up a generation of people who worship you in spirit and in truth right here.” (John 4:23,24; 1 Peter 2:9).

**An open door:**

“Lord, create open doors in each and every school in Lee County for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be shared with students and staff. Allow full advantage to be taken of every opportunity to name the name of Jesus in each and every school. And may You be honored, lifted up and glorified throughout the 2018-2019 school year” (Matthew 7:7; 1 Corinthians 16:9).

## Putting your foot down

Dwight Stephenson was wavering on his commitment to signing with the University of Alabama, until his mama laid down the law. Stephenson's mother and father had worked tirelessly to provide a good life for their seven children. His dad worked in the Virginia shipyards; his mom worked in the school cafeteria. "She worked hard," Stephenson said of his mother. "When my mother finally retired from her job, she had 200 - 300 sick days that she had never used."

Dwight's senior year, the college recruiters came knocking on Stevenson's door. He and two of his teammates made a pact that they would all sign with Alabama together. "Of all the schools that recruited me, Alabama was no question the biggest program," Dwight said. But still, "it seemed like an awful long way from home for me, that's for sure."

Thus, when Alabama coaches Ken Donahue and John Mitchell showed up to sign the trio, Dwight said he wasn't ready to sign yet. The dismayed coaches then learned that the other two players had changed their minds and signed with North Carolina State.

"As soon as I got home," Dwight said, "I went to the kitchen to see my mama... I told her, 'Mama I'm going to NC State.'" At that point my mama said, "You aren't gonna follow anybody anywhere. You're going to the University of Alabama."

That ended the discussion. Stevenson returned to the coaches and signed on the dotted line with the Crimson Tide. He became the starting center as a sophomore in 1977. He played on two national championship teams, and was All-SEC and All-American in 1979. He won the Jacobs trophy as the SEC's best blocker and went on to a Hall of Fame career in the NFL.

Thanks to mama putting her foot down.

We live in an era where "putting your foot down" is looked at as rude, bullying or even sometimes, abusive. However, if we look at Jesus' teachings, we will see that living a Holy Spirit filled life, at times, takes putting our foot down against the world and the ungodly things we are exposed to today,

Jesus said, in John 15:9-11:

*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

The Father loves us and longs for us to abide in Him and He in us. All that is asked of us is to obey His teachings and love Him with all our heart mind and soul. Luke 10:26-28, tells us:

*And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."*

Which brings us to putting our foot down. We do it with love. Remember, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

We had a speaker at teen camp one year when I was 14 or 15 that would talk to teens at the altar with a Bible in his hand and would get so excited that he would start pounding the teen on the back with the Bible as he was praying. It scared the rest of us, and it definitely made the poor teen at the altar uncomfortable. In our zeal to spread The Good News we need to make sure we are loving and kind and that the world does not walk away from us with more hurt done to them than good.

Has someone ever given you the truth of the Word of God and it maybe stung a bit? The Truth of the Gospel will never change, and it may sting from time to time, however the love of God is also the same and He wants what is best for you and your loved ones. Let's make sure we put our foot down with love.

Blessings, Pastor Van



**North Fort Myers Church of the Nazarene**  
6781 Bayshore Road  
North Fort Myers, Florida 33917  
239-567-0150  
Website: [nfmnazarene.com](http://nfmnazarene.com)  
Facebook: N Ft Myers Naz  
Senior Pastor: Van Garner

