I recently saw a blog by Thom Rainer titled, “Eight Things I’m Praying Will Happen in Churches in 2015.” I like the title of the post, and it got me thinking, “What will I be praying for in 2015?” So, here is my list (which is built off Rainer’s list):

1. **For greater emphasis on prayer.** If we believe, as we should, that prayer is foundational to ministry rather than supplemental, then prayer should have the highest of priorities in our church. We will restart our Wednesday evening Prayer Meetings on Wednesday, January 7, at 6:30 p.m. in my study. All are welcome to attend!

2. **For standing firm on biblical truth.** Culture is pushing us away from the truth of Scripture. We must not yield to that pressure. We must stand on the inerrant and infallible Word of God, all of which is given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. **For greater effectiveness in evangelism.** We all need to give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). There will be opportunities throughout the year to learn how to share your faith as well as opportunities throughout the year to share your faith with others.

4. **For greater involvement in Bible study.** Every Christian reads and studies God’s Word.
And most of us need a group to help us know and obey God’s Word better. So, take advantage of Sunday school, Adult CE&F, Men’s Bible Study, Women’s Bible Study, or a Growth Group to study God’s Word.

5. **For greater participation in ministry.** All Christians should also be active in some ministry in the church. Find a ministry in which to exercise the spiritual gift given to you by God and make a difference in another person’s life.

6. **For an unsurprising completion of the West Wing Expansion.** We have been somewhat surprised by the cost overrun and the time delay of the West Wing Expansion. I am praying that it will be completed by Easter Sunday, which is on April 5.

This is what I am praying for in 2015. What will you be praying for in 2015?

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**Thoughts from the Associate Pastor**

*By Rev. James Nichols*

**Do You Love the Sojourner?**

I was reading an article recently and came across this quote by Philip Yancey: “It makes a huge difference whether I treat a nonbeliever as someone who is wrong rather than someone who is on the way but lost.” I want to unpack that quote today and talk about our attitudes as we approach and interact with those around us. As we begin a New Year and think about what God has in store for us this year, I would challenge you to see people as God does and to see the opportunities to share Christ’s love with others that he will provide for you this year. I bet that every person will have at least 6 opportunities to share the gospel. The question is: will you see it and be ready? With that in mind, let’s think about how to approach those who do not yet know the joy that we have within us of the gospel of grace!

Whenever we are talking to those who are not believers, the way that we treat them and interact with them makes a HUGE difference. Nonbelievers, or to use a term that better flows with Yancey’s quote, “sojourners,” will not be argued into the kingdom and do not want to be told they are wrong. When we approach people with an attitude of superiority, treating them as though they are wrong and you have the right answer, they will shut down and will not listen. I really feel that Yancey’s quote captures the essence of the way that we must treat sojourners. When we think of them as on the way but lost, we see them and want to help them. If you are walking around the mall or hiking in the woods and see
someone who looks lost, your natural inclination is to ask if you can help them. You want them to get on the right track and to their destination. In the same way, when we see people who clearly do not know Jesus, we need to have a desire to show them the way to him. If we do the opposite, treating them as though they are wrong, we automatically begin to think of all the ways that they are sinning. We seek to point out why they are wrong, not because we want them to see Jesus, but because we want them to know that they are wrong (and conversely that we are right).

I am not saying that we should abandon our time with fellow believers, just that we need not spend all of our time among believers. We need to be intentional in our time, balancing the time we spend with believers and sojourners. With believers we should be encouraging, fellowshipping, challenging, and discipling. With sojourners, we need to be listening (so that we know where the Spirit is working in their lives), serving (so that we show Christ’s love) and speaking that truth in love (so that they hear the words of the Bible). We must seek to show Christ, to be people who will be asked about our faith even while being persecuted, as 1 Peter 3:15 tells us. Lance Ford asks a question about the general attitudes and actions of most believers. He says, “How is it that the very people Jesus died to establish as models of forgiveness, gentleness, peace, and mercy, have become a people generally perceived as mean, judgmental, and merciless?” May we not be the people that Ford talks about, but instead, may we have an attitude that Yancey describes – one of loving the sojourners and helping them find their way. I pray that this year will be a productive year as you watch for God to show you whom he has brought to you so that you can share the gospel with them. God bless!

**Pictures from the 26th Annual Christmas Brunch**
Missionaries Supported by TBPC

Mission to the World
Peter & Lauren Dishman
Esaie & Natacha Etienne
Ken & Tammie Matlack
Carla Stevens

Reformed University Fellowship
Jeff & Jenny Lee

New Harvest Missions International
Nathaniel & Cherita Adawonu

Serving In Missions
Rene & Lili Palacio

Wycliffe Bible Translators
Don & Judy Vander Ploeg
Kevin & Gertrude Nicholas

Ven Con Nosotros Church
Dr. Oscar & Elizabeth Alvarez

PRCC
Chaplain Ted Hamm
Chaplain James Cochell

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1 — Mr. & Mrs. Lenny Chew
13 — Mr. & Mrs. Jeanne Higby
14 — Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Montoney
17 — Mr. & Mrs. Doug Hayman
26 — Mr. & Mrs. Luke Egbert

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1—Rachel Todd
2—Lilly Knox
6—Cheryl Barber
9—Ruth Anne Jeffries
12—Ed Koeiela
20—Ginny Bremer
20—Karen Guest
20—John McNulty, Jr.
22—Michele Atkinson
22—Kerry Roys
23—Suzi Hayman
25—Jenevieve Winkler

27—Bill Campbell
28—Tianhe Zheng
30—Cris Coffey
31—Rich Jackson
31—Melissa McNulty
31—Steve Nies
Thank you

“Thank you” is really inadequate to express my gratitude to all the people who have contributed to making the 26th annual Christmas Brunch a wonderful Advent event. As we celebrated the joy expressed by Simeon at the first sight of Jesus, we too know we have seen His salvation. In love and appreciation for all the brothers and sisters in Christ who made the brunch possible, beautiful, and memorable, I say THANK YOU!!! Special thanks to Marianne Cali who was the coordinator, Brian and Alisa Carrier, our magnificent cooks, Molly Knox for coordinating the hostesses, as well as all the hostesses who lovingly decorated the tables and made each guest feel special and welcomed. A huge thank you to all the men in the church who served as waiters, kitchen helpers, and the set up and clean up crew. We thank all the people who made the program rich and meaningful: Lauren Dishman as guest speaker, Heather Tomasello for her testimony, Bert Barber for his beautiful rendition of “Simeon’s Song,” Debi Hensley and Millie Myers for the group sing, and Nancy Kirkpatrick for the “Right Left” game. Thank you to all the behind the scenes people who did registration, invitations, programs, photography, and ornament favors. The entire program was a blessing to us all as we contemplated the extraordinary gift we receive through Christ. I encourage everyone to give glory to God in the highest as we remember our individual blessings. And, last, but not least, I thank everyone who attended to share in our joyful celebration.

Thank you to everyone who purchased memorial poinsettias to beautify the sanctuary.

January Events

On January 10, 2015 we will have our annual Sister to Sister “Soup’s On.” It will be held at the church from 11:00AM-1:00PM. Mark your calendar and plan to attend for fun, fellowship, a devotional, and of course, a great lunch. We will have three different soups, so there will be a great selection for everyone to enjoy. We ask other people attending to contribute sandwiches, salad, fruit, or dessert to the buffet table. We are looking forward to getting together!

There will be a Connect Discipleship Conference January 23-24 at Covenant Church in Naples, FL. This will be beneficial for all women in leadership as well as those thinking of becoming more involved. The Friday evening session will begin at 6:30PM and the Saturday sessions will run from 8:30 AM until 3:00 PM. You may attend both sessions for $55.00, or the Saturday session only for $45.00. Registrations must be placed by January 12. Scholarships are available. Please see Ginny Bremer or check out the WM bulletin board for more information.

Our next WM 15 will be held after worship on January 11. Plan to attend to share ideas and plan future events.

Looking Ahead

Back by popular demand, we are going to have another game afternoon in February. Melissa Nichols will again supply a plethora of games from which to choose. Be on the lookout for more information as it becomes available.
In this world there are some people who are commanders while others are complainers; some are movers while others are moaners; some are leaders while others are loafers. The former attributes in each instance can be aptly applied to Nehemiah, the writer of the Old Testament book following Ezra (although some Biblical scholars think that Ezra may have written the book with Nehemiah serving as editor). Faced with a crisis, Nehemiah did not waiver in his determination to meet the challenge head on, choosing not to delegate responsibility but assuming full ownership of an emergency confronting his people.

Although the Jews had completed the Temple in 516 B.C., the city walls remained in shambles for the next 70 years. When a group of men visited Nehemiah, who was serving as the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes of the Medo-Persian Empire, he inquired how things were going in Jerusalem. “Well,” they replied, “things are not good; the wall of Jerusalem is still torn down, and the gates are burned” (1:3). These walls represented power, protection, and beauty to the city. They also desperately needed to protect the Temple from attack and to ensure the continuity of worship. God put the desire to rebuild the walls in Nehemiah’s heart, giving him a vision for the work and using a foreign king to achieve his divine purpose. This was a repeat of God working through a former king, allowing Ezra to record the return of Jewish exiles to rebuild the Temple under the direction of Zerubbabel.

Let us at TBPC be thankful for the captaincy and leadership of those to whom we have entrusted with our spiritual and administrative guidance. Much like qualities exhibited by Ezra and Nehemiah, they serve not boastfully or for self-aggrandizement, but rather to bring honor to the Lord who gave them the desire and ability to serve. From the pastors to the custodians, from the elders and deacons, to the teachers and their assistants, we support them with our prayers and finances, not begrudging them the space and equipment needed to carry on the kingdom’s work of bringing souls to Christ in a real and significant way.

In the 5th installment in this series, we will be entering into some deep prophetic waters. Nehemiah contains the beginning of an eschatological event that you will find enigmatically fascinating and in turn inspiring. It will be addressed using several resources and the commentaries of outstanding Bible teachers and scholars. It is an interpretation that you may accept or reject without rancor from this writer. It is to be used by each individual as the Spirit of God may move in one’s study of scripture. Until next time, read, recite, and keep looking up.
What’s a Wonderful Life?

“You’ve been given a great gift, George: A chance to see what the world would be like without you.” Angel Second-Class Clarence Oddbody in It's a Wonderful Life

Shortly after the close of World War II, a movie came out that chronicled the life of an ordinary man in an ordinary town who longs to leave the ordinary behind. That dream evaporates as he sees over time that his life will never be extraordinary. But, as it turns out, his life was more than extraordinary…in a very ordinary way.

Chances are pretty good that you’ve seen this ancient film. If so, it might have caused you to drop a tear or two—even if you’ve seen it scores of times—especially at the very end.

The action opens in small town America, Bedford Falls. Young George Bailey, his friends and his brother Harry are having a bit of winter fun near a frozen pond. When Harry strays a bit too far from safety and plunges into the icy waters, George puts his own life at risk by jumping in to the frozen drink to pull Harry to shore.

When his father dies unexpectedly, George takes over the family Building and Loan business just as he was about to set out on his life-long dreams: seeing the world, going to college, and building skyscrapers, airfields and bridges. Harry went to college instead. Later in life, Harry would graduate and earn the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II.

As an enormous financial crisis threatens the savings of everyone in town and the family business just as George is departing with his wife on their honeymoon, he uses their honeymoon funds to ensure the Building and Loan remains solvent. No dream honeymoon; no savings for other dreams.

And so it went, year after year. George put the needs of others before his own. The movie approaches its climax when George finds himself in need of help, lots of help. So daunting is his misfortune that nobody in Bedford Falls is equipped to give him the financial aid he desperately needs. Nobody except “Old-Man Potter,” a very wealthy, cranky, bitter old tyrant who sees George despairing for his future and his family’s, George takes the measure of his life and the dismal nature of what lies ahead and concludes he’s “worth more dead than alive.” He almost acts on that conclusion and ends his grief as he stands over a rushing river and briefly prays. But he doesn’t jump.

Why not? Well he likely would have if not for a kind-hearted Angel 2nd Class named Clarence. Clarence is the guardian angel sent to help George in answer to dozens of prayers on George’s behalf. Initially, Clarence seemed quite inept, but he comes up with a brilliant plan after he hears George lament that he wished he had never been born. The plan? Give him a vision of things that would happen and not happen without George Bailey.

That sojourn into what might have been leads George to realize his life isn’t a landfill of shattered dreams but a wonderful journey that touched lives and events far beyond his ability to imagine. As Clarence put it: “You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don’t you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?” Minutes later, George realizes how tragic it would be to throw the gift of life away. As the movie ends, so does George’s emotional and financial crises via the help of Clarence and of the many people his life touched.

It’s a great story, but not so great as to draw moviegoers when it debuted. By all accounts, it was a flop. Now, though, it’s one of the most beloved movies of all time.
As far as Christmas movies go, it holds the top position on the lists of many internet movie sites. Why? Why does generation after generation continue to watch this story year after year? It’s not really that different from a number of movies in regard to acting and production.

Opinions abound. Here’s one for your consideration. *It’s a Wonderful Life* combines timeless themes that animate the American imagination and tug at the American heart:

**The centrality of prayer and the spiritual life:** The movie starts with the voices of George’s friends and relatives praying for him. At that time, we don’t know why they’re praying, but we can tell that George is in serious trouble. We learn later that his wife, Mary, asked for those prayers as George stormed out of the house as if he were out of his mind. As he contemplates jumping from the bridge, George prays to God and asks him to “show me the way.” Finally, after seeing what his world would be like had he never been born, George again pleads with God: “I want to live again. I want to live again. Please, God, let me live again.”

**The inherent value of each human life:** This theme comes out principally among the angels talking between themselves and, in the case of Clarence, with George. The first evidence comes early when Franklin, the angel who gives Clarence his mission, explains that George will soon be thinking seriously of “throwing away God’s greatest gift.” Clarence knows exactly what he means and reacts with urgency in his voice: “his life!” A few moments later, the story line begins with George demonstrating his regard for human life by saving his brother by putting himself in great danger. Further into the movie, Clarence gently asks George “Don’t you see what a mistake it would be to throw [your life] away?”

**A me-last versus me-first approach to life:** This is one of the most compelling reasons people in Bedford Falls think so highly of George. You especially notice it in their prayers at the film’s start. “I owe everything to George Bailey. Help him, dear Father.” “He never thinks about himself, God; that’s why he’s in trouble.”

**The acknowledgment of God’s existence:** Throughout the movie and especially as it end, it’s clear that the reality of God is commonly accepted.

**Commitment to the traditional one-man, one-woman family:** There’s no reference to couples living together outside marriage or having sexual relations with anyone besides their husband or wife. The only reference to a broken family is made in jest when Annie, a spinster, drops a stack of money into a collection to help remedy George’s financial crisis. “I’ve been saving this money for a divorce, if ever I get a husband.”

**The conviction that life has a purpose:** This is the basis of the entire film. George feels like he’s wasted his life and amounted to nothing. His journey through his town’s Georgeless existence put’s that conviction to rest. Clarence sums it up: “Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives, and when he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?”

These values are not simply American values, they’re values that originated first in the Bible. In 1946, they were far more prevalent than they are today. Perhaps they didn’t stand out much when the movie debuted leading to its poor start. Ever since, they’ve stood out more and more. Perchance the persistent interest in *It’s a Wonderful Life* is that it reminds us of these timeless values and our deep admiration for those who live by them. Maybe our longing for a world that is much closer to God’s design is what perpetually draws us back to Bedford Falls.

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1 All Quotes: [http://tinyurl.com/nrlqy5v](http://tinyurl.com/nrlqy5v)
1 Photo: [http://tinyurl.com/kjao92z](http://tinyurl.com/kjao92z)
1 Photo: [http://tinyurl.com/m2uc2dl](http://tinyurl.com/m2uc2dl)
First of all, we want to thank you, the congregation, for your generosity and care for our missionaries. As of last year, we received enough support to be able to take the missions budget out of the general fund, since it was fully funded by your generous pledges. In this season of giving and building, please remember our missionaries and the support that we give them. I realize that it feels like there are a lot of requests for money at this time of year, but I want to remind us of our pledges to the missions’ budget and to our missionaries.

Next, I want to update you on the activities of the missions committee. We are actively preparing and planning for our 2015 Missions Weekend. Our speaker will be Rev. Scott Hill, the MTW missionary to Cherokee, NC. Our church has sent teams to Cherokee for 3 of the past 4 years. The conference will look at multigenerational missions – the idea that missions can be and is something that people at every age can participate in and benefit from. One of the greatest things about Cherokee is that we have had many different ages go with us to Cherokee, from 4 years old to retired and everywhere in between. Every person can contribute, bless, and be blessed through missions.

We are also busy preparing for next year’s trips. The medical missions trip to Mexico already has its dates set for next year and the Cherokee trip is finalizing its dates. We have already had one day of fundraising at Burger 21 (thanks to all who went on that date), which raised over $500 for our trips next year! We will have more opportunities in the future, so watch the calendar and announcements.

Finally, we have been working on sharpening our vision and how we want to help you continue to grow and mature in your views of missions. Our vision is: “Connecting Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church to the mission field both locally and globally through prayer, sending, and support.” We want to encourage and equip you the members to: pray for our missionaries and missions locally and around the world; participate in both short and long term missions trips locally and around the world; and to support missions locally and around the world. We want to help people understand that missions exist not just globally and far off, but also here locally. We want the congregation to live with a missions mindset – where each day, we are all looking for opportunities to minister and love those around us with the love of Christ, wherever we live, work and play.

We are excited about the opportunities that lie before us as a congregation and the chances that we will have to bless the community and the world with the gospel of grace! Please keep an eye out for future opportunities to either support the team or to be on mission yourself. God bless!

"So what do you do again?" It’s a fair question, and one that I hear all the time! It’s a question that I get asked by my family members, students on campus, faculty members, my non-Christian friends, and even members of the local church. Many have a hard time finding a category for a full time campus minister. So I find myself using three analogies to help others make sense of this role to which God has called us. Being a campus minister is similar to being a missionary who is sent overseas. When a missionary is sent into a foreign country, they have the responsibility of learning the languages and customs of the people to whom they serve. They establish friendships and relationships with the express purpose of sharing the gospel and teaching others what it means to follow Christ. As a campus minister, the "foreign mission field" to which I have been called is the campus at USF. To be sure, the college campus has its own set of beliefs, customs, and languages. Since I am not a student, I often wrestle with the challenge of being an outsider who is a guest on the college campus. So in many ways, being a campus minister is very similar to being an overseas missionary.
However, at the same time, I often sympathize with my friends who are called to be church planters. As a church planter moves into a city, he finds himself under the pressure to establish relationships quickly and build friendships with the hope of starting a small group Bible study that grows into a more recognizable congregation. Church planters often find themselves needing to establish relationships quickly and invite others to be on board with the mission to which God has called them. In the same way, there is a sense of urgency each August as the calendar rolls around to the beginning of a new academic year. Come August, there will be a new class of students numbering in the thousands who will be moving on to campus at USF. So like a church planter, there is an entrepreneurial spirit ingrained in us to begin anew each academic year and foster new friendship and relationships with students on campus.

Finally, a campus minister has many similarities to a military chaplain. I find myself ministering to students at a very unique and pressing time in their life. Nearly everyone in my ministry is between the ages of 18 and 22. I rarely have the privilege of meeting a student’s family. Most often I meet parents for the first time at weddings and graduation – when a student is transitioning out of college! Also, like a chaplain, we have students in our ministry from all walks of life and various denominational backgrounds. Many have observed that college is a very critical time in a person’s life. Students are choosing majors and career paths, relationships with spouses are being forged, and many are leaving home for the first time. Like a chaplain, I know that the students, in whom I am investing, will soon be graduating and there will be a completely new group of students in a few short years.

While all of those analogies help, I find myself most often saying that I am a pastor. I have the privilege of pastoring students during their college years. As a minister of the church, my calling is to make disciples: to teach, preach, rebuke, train, evangelize, pray for, and listen to students. It is a tremendous privilege to serve with RUF at USF. Thank you for your partnering with us. We are encouraged and sustained in the task of ministry by your prayers for us. Thank you also for your faithful support in sending us to the college campus. Like most missionaries, RUF campus ministers are completely dependent on the support they receive from churches and individuals. Thank you!

My wife, Jenny, and I have been in Tampa since the summer of 2009. This is now our sixth year on campus with RUF. Over these past six years our family has grown – we now have three boys, Jake (2009), Caleb (2011), and Andrew (2014). We are so thankful for your encouragement to us over these years. Many of you have watched our family grow and you have been an encouragement to us over these years. Thank you for loving our family well.

So how can you help and how can you pray? First of all, please pray for our family. Please pray for God to continue to protect our marriage and for wisdom as we raise our children in the Gospel. Please also pray for the power of the Gospel to go forward on the campus at USF – for God to draw students to himself, even those who are living in darkness. Pray also that God will raise up leaders within the ministry of RUF who will be trained and equipped to reach their friends with the Gospel, and also trained and equipped to be future officers and leaders in the church. How can you help? My wife and I have students in our home all the time for meals. If you would like to provide a meal (or a Publix gift card), please feel free to let me know. Also, each fall semester we have a list of needs that is often communicated through the local churches. You can help us reach students by helping provide some of those needs. Whether it’s Bibles for students or welcome bags for incoming freshmen, there are a number of ways that you can help. If you would like to see a list, feel free to email me at jeff.lee@ruf.org and I will be happy to share some of those things with you.

I cannot overstate how thankful we are for you and your partnership in the Gospel. If there is anything that we can do for you, please let me know! We are thankful for you and we look forward to seeing you soon.
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<td>18 8:45 Adult</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 11a Staff</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>9a Morning</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 12-</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>17 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE&amp;F, Youth &amp; Children's</td>
<td>Meeting; 6:30p Evening</td>
<td>NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>Women's Bible Study</td>
<td>NTCA Staff Meetings</td>
<td>Session and Diaconate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday School; 10:30a Worship</td>
<td>Women's Bible Study</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 11a Staff</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>9a Morning</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 12-</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>17 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting; 6:30p Evening</td>
<td>Meeting; 6:30p Evening</td>
<td>NTCA Board Meeting &amp; ESL</td>
<td>Women's Bible Study</td>
<td>NTCA Staff Meetings</td>
<td>Session and Diaconate</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 8:45 Adult</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 11a Staff</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>9a Morning</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 12-</td>
<td>9a NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>17 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Meeting; 6:30p Evening</td>
<td>NTCA-Sanctuary; 7p</td>
<td>Women's Bible Study</td>
<td>NTCA Staff Meetings</td>
<td>Session and Diaconate</td>
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<td>Sunday School; 10:30a Worship</td>
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<td>Congregation Meeting; 5p PHOS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Meeting</td>
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### The Sunday Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>Classroom Wing</td>
<td>Sunday School for Children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Education &amp; Fellowship for Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Fax: (813) 973-4673  
Email: office@tampabaypresbyterian.org