



Pilgrim Church



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

January 2026

A New Year Prayer

Gracious and Faithful God,

As we step into this new year, (new day), we give You thanks for Your steadfast love that never fails and Your mercies that are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22–23). You have carried us through the seasons behind us, and we trust You with the days yet to come.

Go before us, O Lord, and make our paths straight (Proverbs 3:5–6). Renew our hearts with hope, our spirits with courage, and our lives with a deeper desire to walk in Your ways. Where there has been weariness, bring strength. Where there has been uncertainty, bring peace. Where there has been fear, plant faith.

Pour out Your Spirit upon Pilgrim Church and upon all who enter the doors and cross paths with congregation members. May we be a people rooted in love, growing in grace, and shining with the light of Christ. Guide our words, our work, and our witness, so that in all things we may glorify You.

With joy and confidence, we step forward, trusting Your promise: “For I know the plans I have for you... plans for hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

We place this new year in Your hands, rejoicing in the hope we have in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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www.pilgrimonline.org
office@pilgrimonline.org

Office Hours:
Mon - Thurs 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Associate Pastor:
Rev. Ken Ewing

Bridge Pastor:
Rev. Merci Hotckin

Moderator:
Jessica Warne-Emard
jawarne77@gmail.com

Maintenance Technician:
Gene Burnell

Office Administrator:
Cat Foster
office@pilgrimonline.org

Pianist: Shirley Donohue

Children's Ministry Director:
Jessica Warne-Emard

Bell Choir Director:
Russ Whittaker

Joyful Noise Learning Center
941-629-4821
www.joyfulnoiselc.org
jndirector@pilgrimonline.org

**No matter who you are, or
where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!**

Prayer List

- Hurricane Recovery & Rebuild
- Pastor Search
- Pilgrim Church & Leaders
- Beverly Weber - hospice
- Savina Krueger - cancer
- John Krueger - health
- Joyce Faber - health
- Hillard Francois - health
- Cooper Trimmer - health
- Christopher Fraser - peace
- Robert Harris - rehab
- Martinez Family - grief
- Carter & family - peace and healing
- Lois Wilson - health
- David Holst - health
- Carlton Noles - health
- Jacque Ross - travel mercies
- James Fraser - health
- Laine Nipper - health
- Danny Wineland - health
- Judy Michaels - hospital
- Pat Wheatcroft - cancer
- Linda Churchill - health
- Layda Grace - health
- Sandy Wheatcroft - health
- Christmas Travel Merices
- Peace on Earth & Good Will to All
- Fred Ripley - health

Celebrating Pilgrims

Birthdays

- 6 Donna Yorkston
- 9 Joe Gillner
- 14 James Fraser
- 17 Sharon Sweeney
- 17 Dave O'Keefe
- 18 Gert Devantier
- 19 Jonathan Warne-Emard
- 22 Tom Jones

Anniversaries

- 28 Don & Susan Anderson
- 30 Russ & Judy Whittaker

Did we miss your special date? Please contact the church office—by phone or email—so we can update our records. We'll be glad to make sure your special day is included!

Care Group

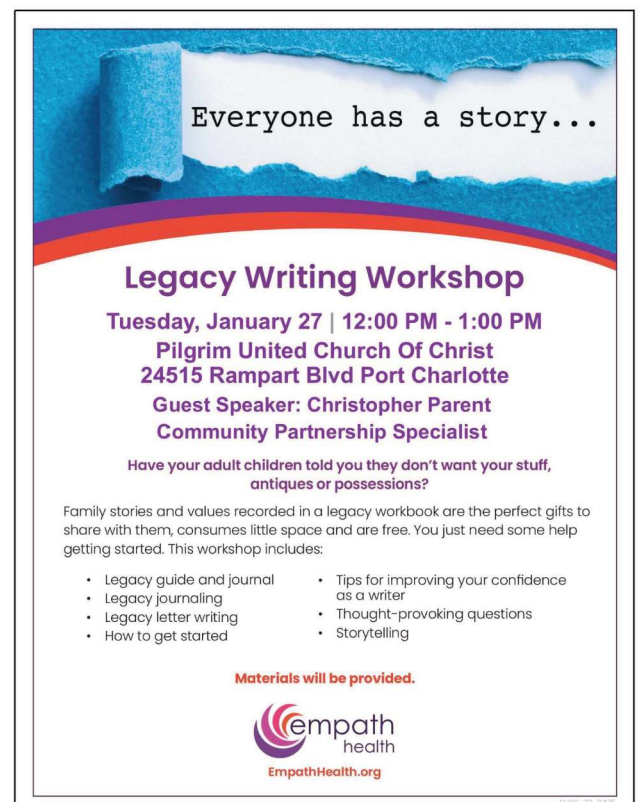
The Care Group plays an important role in supporting the Pilgrim Church family. This ministry offers a caring space where we share our faith journeys, pray together, listen to one another, and respond to the needs that arise among us. No concern is too small or too big—we walk alongside one another through whatever life brings.

You matter. Your story matters. We have a special event set for January 27, with a special guest who will guide us in sharing our stories. Make your plans to be here for the Legacy Writing Workshop. RSVP to the Church Office.

Beyond our weekly gatherings, the Care Group also reaches out to members of the congregation through hospital visits and by offering support to families during times of illness or recovery.

New faces are always welcome! The Care Group meets on Tuesdays from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. in the church Conference Room. Come as you are and join us in a spirit of care, compassion, and community.

Hope Happens Here



Everyone has a story...

Legacy Writing Workshop


Tuesday, January 27 | 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
Pilgrim United Church Of Christ
24515 Rampart Blvd Port Charlotte
Guest Speaker: Christopher Parent
Community Partnership Specialist

Have your adult children told you they don't want your stuff, antiques or possessions?

Family stories and values recorded in a legacy workbook are the perfect gifts to share with them, consumes little space and are free. You just need some help getting started. This workshop includes:

- Legacy guide and journal
- Legacy journaling
- Legacy letter writing
- How to get started
- Tips for improving your confidence as a writer
- Thought-provoking questions
- Storytelling

Materials will be provided.


EmpathHealth.org

0101-23-0476

Missions

Saturday, December 6, 12 members of Pilgrim Church were volunteers for the Salvation Army Kettle Drive at Publix. It was a great success. This is a special way to support our community and share God's love.

2026 Habitat Apostle Build will begin in January! Kelly Dawson will speak at the Missions Moment on January 11.

January 9 is the Slab Blessing and Wall Raising. All are invited to the Slab Blessing, let us know if you want to participate in the wall raising.

Save the Date, if all goes as scheduled (which it normally does) our paint day is set for March 14.

Thank You

I received food from Pilgrim Church and wanted to say Thank You for the kindness. I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. Daniel

Joyful Noise Learning Center

The Department of Education approved our scholarship program for the 2026-2027 school year. Renewing was such an easy process compared to the initial full application from the summer. This is great news for our program! We have new signage to increase advertising for the Step Up program and look forward to filling our kindergarten and first grade program with new scholarship students.

Property and Grounds are working to get our playground racetrack replaced with concrete. The mats that covered the area have warped so much from the sun and daily wear and tear that it is time. Plans have been sent to the county for approval and an anonymous donor gave the down payment for the cement to secure the installation while we are closed for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

We will be closed January 19, in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr Day.

Pilgrim Women's Fellowship

The Fall "Praise Report" includes support for Kiwanis tennis shoe collection, support for ANA Friends, an organization that addresses the needs of abused, neglected, abandoned children with attendance at their annual fundraiser, Goodie Bag deliveries to homebound Pilgrims, Samaritan's Purse Christmas boxes, and the Thanksgiving food drive.

Our monthly meeting for January 15, will have a different schedule. The group will be attending the Human Trafficking Symposium at the Event Center in Punta Gorda at 9:00 a.m. This community-wide event is being sponsored by The Southwest Florida Coalition and the local CARE organization.

The group will share lunch and then meet in the Library of the church at 1:00 p.m. to continue our study of the Survey of the Bible by Bruce Wilkinson.

Book Club will meet on Thursday night, January 8, at 6:00 p.m. at the home of Betsy Field. The book to be reviewed is *Before the Swallows Come Back* by Fiona Curnow.

All women are encouraged to join this Small Group.

Adult Bible Study

Sunday Morning discussion group begins the new year on Sunday, January 11, at 10:15 immediately following the worship service. We will continue in the Gospel of Luke reviewing Chapter by Chapter and Verse by Verse.

This structure invites newcomers to join at any time. All are welcome!

Music Ministry

The Christmas cantata, *Joseph's Song*, was a blessing to the packed house. Thanks are extended to those who contributed to make it a memorable event and challenge us all to make this season a Spirit-filled one. Special Thanks is extended to pianist, Shirley Donohue who had the toughest job of all!

Property & Grounds

The property and grounds is a team dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for our church and school campus staff and visitors. We provide maintenance and repairs to the church and school property's as needed.

The following is a summary of our accomplishments for the past month:

- Repaired toilet in the Church Office that wasn't flushing correctly and was also leaking
- Cut and installed a new light cover for the church copy room
- Mounted a fire extinguisher on the wall outside Goodell room
- Removed rubber mats that were in the playground area
- Repaired a door to the Goodell Room
- Moved Sanctuary lights out of storage for cleaning so they could be installed
- Power washed tires in playground behind the Goodell Room and removed dead weeds
- Replaced door stop on kitchen outside door
- Hard wired light installation on the road sign and flag pole at the entrance to church property
- Removed tree limbs that were rubbing the roof on the Community Center
- Strengthened the ramps to the Chancel Area in the Sanctuary
- Begain work on installing the water fountain in the Narthex

Council Report

Pilgrim Church was chartered 59 years ago on January 22. The hope, the missions, the love, the message of Jesus has been shared!

We'd love to hear how Pilgrim Church has impacted your life. Tell the stories! Share the work of the church! What was your favorite Easter, a special worship, a mission project that warmed your heart? Tell the stories to your friends and neighbors and then invite them to experience Pilgrim first hand! Share your stories with the church office and we'll print them in future newsletters! Hope happens here.

The Pilgrim Church Council will hold the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25. We will celebrate who Pilgrim Church is with a brunch instead of the usual 4th Sunday Fellowship Breakfast. And we'll have the annual report to share with you. So mark your calendars for worship followed by brunch and then the Annual Meeting. Fresh directories will be shared, be sure your information is current with the office.

December was filled with *Joseph's Story* Cantata and Hymn Sing, along with a fellowship and special services as we reflected on the message in the birth of Jesus while loving our neighbors. We were so glad to see so many of our Winter Pilgrims along with new friends present at these activities.

The Sanctuary is moving forward! Lights, ceilings... there is progress! Continue to pray for the rebuild and all that the project entails. Hope happens here.

Prayer for Rebuild of Pilgrim Church

That a church may meet here

- where children shall learn to love God and grow in grace and goodness,
 - where youth shall be inspired to pray and serve,
- where the weary and heavy laden shall find inner peace that the world can neither give nor take away
 - where God is worshiped in prayer and praise,
 - where the Word of God shall be so read and preached
 - where multitudes shall be refreshed in spirit, relieved from pain,
- where the grace of God may make our human lives into a Christ-like love and our homes places of living witness for that realm where Christ is Lord
- from which, by the power of The Holy Spirit, God's people are sent forth into this community and all the world as champions of justice and peace to all peoples.

Contact
Information
Form
and
Annual
Report
Submissions
due to
Church Office
January 14.

Learn & Grow

The practice of making New Year's resolutions goes back over 3,000 years to the ancient Babylonians.

side note: The relationship between Babylon and the Jews is reflected in the Babylonian Exile (c. 586–538 BCE) where Judah was conquered, Jerusalem was destroyed along with the Temple, and many Jews were deported to Mesopotamia, profoundly shaping Jewish identity, law, and culture, and establishing a lasting dispersed community. This is when Jeremiah wrote the popular verse 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you... plans for hope and a future."

There is something about the start of a new year that gives us the feeling of a fresh start and a new beginning. In reality, there is no difference between December 31 and January 1 or June 3. The Bible does not speak for or against the concept of New Year's resolutions. However, if a Christian determines to make a New Year's resolution, what kind of resolution should he or she make?

By far, the most common New Year's resolution is to lose weight, in conjunction with exercising more and eating more healthily. These are all good goals to set. However, 1 Timothy 4:8 instructs us to keep exercise in perspective: "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." The vast majority of New Year's resolutions, even among Christians, are in relation to physical things. This should not be. Why does one want to lose weight? Is it to honor God with their body, or is it for vanity, to honor self?

2 Corinthians 4:18: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal".

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will".

1 John 2:15-17: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever".

Many Christians make New Year's resolutions to pray more, to read the Bible every day, and to attend church more regularly. These are fantastic goals. However, these New Year's resolutions fail just as often as the non-spiritual resolutions, because there is no power in a New Year's resolution. Resolving to start or stop doing a certain activity has no value unless you have the proper motivation for stopping or starting that activity. For example, why do you want to read the Bible every day? Is it to honor God and grow spiritually, or is it because you have just heard that it is a good thing to do?

Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

If God is the center of your New Year's resolution, it has chance for success, depending on your commitment to it. If it is God's will for something to be fulfilled, He will enable you to fulfill it. If a resolution is not God-honoring and/or is not in agreement with God's Word, we will not receive God's help in fulfilling the resolution.

So, what sort of New Year's resolution should a Christian make? Here's a way to discern that answer:

- pray to the Lord for wisdom (James 1:5) regarding what resolutions, if any, He would have you make; ask Him where you can grow
- pray for wisdom as to how to fulfill the goals God has for you
- rely on God's strength to help you
- find an accountability partner who will help you and encourage you
- don't become discouraged with occasional failures; instead, allow them to motivate you further
- don't become proud or vain, but give God the glory. Remember Who made a success possible. Psalm 37:5-6 says, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun."

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day Office Closed 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	2 9:00am TOPS	3 9:00am Worship Set Up
4 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 9:00am Children's Worship	5	6 Epiphany 10:00am Al-Anon 12:00pm Care Group 2:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry	7	8 12:00pm Bulletin Team 6:00pm Pilgrim Womne's Book Club 7:00pm NA	9 8:30am Apostle Build Slab Blessing 9:00am TOPS	10 9:00am Worship Set Up
11 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Worship 9:00am Worship 10:15am Adult Bible Study	12 Ministry Reports due for Council Meeting 6:30pm Missions Meeting	13 10:00am Al-Anon 12:00pm Care Group	14 Contact Information Form/ Annual Report Submissions / February Newsletter Article Due	15 9:00am Pilgrim Women 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	16 9:00am TOPS	17 9:00am Worship Set Up
18 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 9:00am Children's Worship 10:15am Adult Bible Study	19	20 10:00am Al-Anon 12:00pm Care Group 2:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30pm Finance / Council Meeting	21	22 Pilgrim Church Anniversary, Charter signed 1967 9:15am PBJ Sandwich Makers 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	23 9:00am TOPS	24 9:00am Worship Set Up
25 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Worship 9:00am Worship 10:00am Annual Meeting & Brunch	26	27 10:00am Al-Anon 12:00pm Care Group Legacy Writing Workshop	28	29 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	30 9:00am TOPS	31 9:00am Worship Set Up

Psalm 118:24: "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it"



- Breakfast with Santa
- Joseph's Story Play
- Sanctuary updates
- Women at Der Dutchman

