



# Pilgrim Church



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

## July 2026

### Good Grief

Matthew 5:4, 11:28-30

Most, if not all of us, have experienced significant loss and a profound sense of grief. We may have experienced the death of a parent, loved one, friend, or - God forbid - a child or grandchild. Some of us have lost a job, a treasured possession, our health, or our sense of well-being. No matter the loss, we experience grief in one form or another.

Come to me,  
all you  
who are weary  
and  
are carrying  
heavy burdens,  
and I will give  
you rest.

How we respond to loss often determines whether our grief becomes life-giving or overwhelming. Good grief is a matter of faith. It depends on our attitude toward what we have experienced and on what we believe about God's promises. We can choose to trust in the words of Jesus and the grace of God, or we can remain trapped in despair and self-pity.

An example of difficult grief was shared with us years ago in a Bible study. A young woman refused every effort to console her through Scripture and the support of caring people. She confessed that she would never stop grieving the death of her father, whom she dearly loved.

My own experience has been much different. I have endured several significant losses in my life. I have lost my parents, my sister, and two wives. In each loss, I received letters, prayers, and personal support from several communities of faith that helped me deal with my grief in a positive manner. I was also strengthened by God's grace through Scripture.

I found comfort in the words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). These words, spoken in the Sermon on the Mount, were a gift of God's grace that I gratefully received. Both the support of faith communities and the promises of Jesus helped me understand that grief can be good. God was reminding me that I had loved and been loved. Through remembering, the pain of my loss was eased. It did not erase my grief, but it helped me carry it in a healthier and more hopeful way. My grief became good grief.

As a congregation, we are now experiencing a sense of loss as Pastor Merci concludes her ministry among us as our Bridge Pastor and spiritual leader. Hopefully, our grief will become good grief when we remember the love we shared, the blessings we received, and the gifts she leaves behind.

May we also find comfort in another promise from Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). As we remember, give thanks, and trust in God's continuing care, may our grief become good grief.

Amen.

### Ewing's Doings

24515 Rampart Boulevard  
Port Charlotte, FL 33980  
941-629-2633  
[www.pilgrimonline.org](http://www.pilgrimonline.org)  
[office@pilgrimonline.org](mailto:office@pilgrimonline.org)

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

*Associate Pastor:*  
Rev. Ken Ewing

*Moderator:*  
Jessica Warne-Emard  
[jawarne77@gmail.com](mailto:jawarne77@gmail.com)

*Maintenance Technician:*  
Gene Burnell

*Office Administrator:*  
Cat Foster  
[office@pilgrimonline.org](mailto:office@pilgrimonline.org)

*Children's Ministry Director:*  
Jessica Warne-Emard

*Bell Choir Director:*  
Russ Whittaker

Joyful Noise Learning Center  
941-629-4821  
[www.joyfulnoiselc.org](http://www.joyfulnoiselc.org)  
[jndirector@pilgrimonline.org](mailto:jndirector@pilgrimonline.org)

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

## July Birthdays

3	Denny Vought
9	Jeanne-Marie Story
21	Daphne Dillon
22	Janice Lewis
28	Betty Holmes

## July Anniversaries

8	Fred & Dee Ripley
17	Al & Barbara Bluschke
27	Bruce & Gert Devantier

Did we miss your special date? Kindly reach out to our office at your earliest convenience. You can contact us by phone or email, and we will be happy to update our records accordingly.

## Lectionary Readings

The readings help remind us that both the Old and New Testaments are telling one single, coherent story: God is rescuing humanity from sin and death.

### July 5, 2026

- Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67
- Psalm 45: 11-18
- Romans 7:15-25a
- Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

### July 12, 2026

- Genesis 25:19-34
- Psalm 119:105-112
- Romans 8:1-11
- Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

### July 19, 2026

- Genesis 28:10-19a
- Psalm 139: 1-11, 22-23
- Romans 8:12-25
- Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

### June 26, 2026

- Genesis 29:15-28
- Psalm 105:1-11, 45b or Psalm 128
- Romans 8:26-39
- Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

## Ideas to Love Your Neighbors

- Treat Delivery Workers: leave a basket of snacks and bottled water by your front door with a note saying "Thanks, take one!"
- Go on a prayer walk: walk around your own neighborhood, praying for the homes and families you pass, or even walk through the Pilgrim Sanctuary. Prayer guides available in the Church Office.
- Celebrate "National Ice Cream Month" and plan an ice cream social or host an ice cream sundaes party for your neighbors to enjoy.

## Pilgrim Prayer List

May we faithfully lift one another before the Lord

- Hurricane Recovery & Rebuild
- Caregivers - peace & strength
- Pastor Search
- Pilgrim Church & Leaders
- Beverly Weber - hospice
- Savina & John Krueger - health
- Marge Trayner - dementia
- Peace & Hope
- Judy Michaels - health
- Jacque Ross - vision
- Laine Nipper - brain injury
- Cherry Gillner - stroke recovery
- Russ Whittaker - health
- Pat Wheatcroft - cancer
- Kat Look - grief
- Elaine Pregowski - health
- James Fraser - health
- Joyce Faber - health
- Christopher Fraser - peace
- Josh Fraser - salvation
- Sandee Ewing (& friends and family) - hospice

## Preaching Schedule July 2026

- 5 - Communion with Pastor Ken
- 12 - Judy Whittaker
- 19 - Jennifer Sacket, YoungLife
- 26 - Reverend Syl Estevez



*You're invited!*



# PILGRIM Church Picnic

*Hosted by the Care Group*

Join us for a fun afternoon of food, fellowship, and celebration!

-  **Fried Chicken**
-  **Coleslaw**
-  **Macaroni Salad**
-  **Watermelon**
-  **Cupcakes!**



Good Food  
Great People  
Stronger Together!

 **SATURDAY, JULY 4**

 **DOORS OPEN AT NOON**

 **PILGRIM COMMUNITY CENTER**

RSVP on registration slip or by contacting the Church Office.



941-629-2633 x 5



office@pilgrimonline.org



24515 Rampart Blvd,  
Port Charlotte

## Care Group

Weekly Meetings Tuesdays | 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM  
Conference Room

Looking for friendship, encouragement, and meaningful conversation? Come join the Care Group as you are able! Together we share support, fellowship, prayer, and caring hearts as we walk through life together.

All are welcome — come as you are and invite a friend!

## Pray for Pilgrim Church

- That we would love those with whom we have nothing in common but the gospel.
- That a hunger for studying God's Word and growing in faith would deepen among our members.
- That transparent, meaningful relationships would form as we love one another.
- That giving would be faithful, joyful, consistent, and sacrificial.
- That God would guide and bless the search for the pastor He is calling to lead Pilgrim Church into the future.
- That God would provide a gifted accompanist to enrich and support our worship ministry.
- That the rebuilding of the sanctuary would be completed smoothly and to the glory of God.

## In the Mail

"I would like to thank the Pilgrim Church Family for the surprise of the gift card, flowers and prayer shawl. I will miss you." - Shirley Donohue



Dear Pilgrim Church Prayer Shawl Family,  
Thank you so much for the beautiful blanket you gave me while I was sick. It brought me so much warmth and comfort. It truly meant a lot to know I was in your thoughts and prayers. Warmly, Lois.

## What is the Nicene Creed?

The Nicene Creed is a foundational statement of Christian faith, summarizing core beliefs about the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was established by early church leaders in the 4th century to define orthodox Christianity and counter opposing teachings.

When spoken communally within a service of worship, it is a proclamation before God of what we hold to be true as a community of faith and as individual disciples. It unites us together by expressing our shared faith.

## Adult Bible Study

Sundays | 10:15 a.m. |  
Conference Room



Adult Bible Study Class will begin Bible Study Summer School on Sunday, July 5. The class meets immediately following morning worship.

Guest teacher for Summer School is Judy Whittaker and the study topic is the Journeys of Paul. Don't miss this special opportunity to build your knowledge of God's instruction book to us.

## Property & Grounds

The property and grounds team is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for our church and school campus staff and visitors.

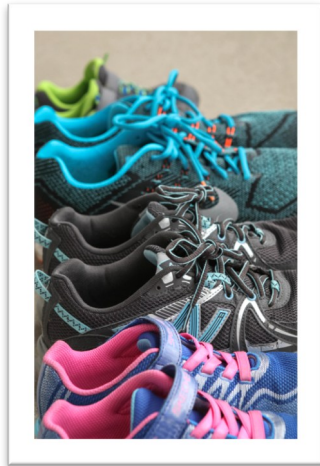
This is a summary of our accomplishments for the past month:

### Church

- Patched pot holes in front of the church
- Installed the back splash in the church kitchen
- Finished putting privacy dividers in the church bathrooms
- Installed the door for the utility room
- Installed door stops on west entrance doors
- Began installing power towel holders, toilet paper holders in bathrooms

## Sneakers for Kids

The Kiwanis Shoes for Kids Project's purpose is to provide new tennis shoes to any student in the Charlotte County Public School System which needs them to begin the new school year or throughout the academic year. In 2026 we collected 29 pairs!



**Only new sneakers (tennis shoes) so that these same shoes can be worn for gym class.**

The sizes we have been asked to collect include:  
boy's size 6 toddler - 15 men's  
girl's size 6 toddler - 11 women's

## Little Free Food Pantry

For those in need, and for those who wish to give. **Take what you need. Give what you can.** Together, we care for one another.

With children home from school over the summer, many households go through more food than normal. Our pantry is already being used actively. We expect this to increase as we get further into the summer break.

If you are donating, please remember:

- Canned or dry/non-perishable items only
- Choose items that won't be affected by rising temperatures

Let's continue to be a blessing to our neighbors through simple acts of love and generosity.

Suggested items are:

Macaroni & Cheese	Canned Pastas
Soup	Canned Fruit
Dry Rice	Dry Beans
Canned Veggies	Tuna/Canned Meat
Instant Potatoes	Toiletries

## Altar Flowers

Sponsor Altar Flowers for an Upcoming Service! Sponsoring altar flowers is a beautiful way to:

- Remember someone special
- Celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or milestone
- Give thanks or mark a meaningful moment

To reserve your date, simply leave a note on the registration slip or contact the office. Secure your special date today. Each arrangement is \$35.

## Recycle Ink Cartridges

Pilgrim Church can recycle up to 20 used ink or toner cartridges each month through Staples and receive \$2 in recycling rewards per cartridge. These rewards help offset our office supply costs.

Do you have used cartridges at home or work? Bring them in! We collect them and make a monthly delivery to Staples.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to save money and care for the environment!

## Narcotics Anonymous

**Thursdays | 7:00 p.m. | Library**

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is a fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to support one another in staying clean. All are welcome. You are not alone.

## TOPS

**Fridays | 9:00 a.m. | Conference Room**

It's not a diet, It's a lifestyle . For a lifetime. With TOPS Club, you're throwing yourself a lifeline. Join us for the support, accountability and connections that you need on your journey to better health. All are welcome. You are not alone.

## Council Highlights

Moderator, Jessica Warne-Emard

Assistant Moderator, Ken Rhoe

Members-at-Large

Gerry Ahlgrim

Joe Gillner

Connie Rice

Kim Vought

Tony Caniglia

Sandy Jones

Jeanne-Marie Story

Nettie Wineland

Your Church Council continues to work prayerfully and faithfully on several important projects and ministries that support both the present and future of Pilgrim Church.

One meaningful project currently underway is the addition of a new stone in the Memorial Garden for name plates. This addition will provide additional space to honor and remember loved ones who remain a cherished part of the Pilgrim family.

Council is also moving forward with plans for new hurricane-rated doors for the Sanctuary. As we continue rebuilding and strengthening this improvement will help provide additional safety, security, and protection in the years ahead.

Another important discussion involves the future replacement of the Joyful Noise Learning Center bus. Reliable transportation is an important part of the ministry and outreach of the Learning Center, and Council is exploring options and planning carefully for this future need.

In addition to building and equipment projects, Council remains focused on the spiritual future of Pilgrim Church. Members continue to pray faithfully for God's guidance as we seek the path ahead for our congregation. We are actively following leads for supply pastors and accompanists during this season of transition.

We ask the congregation to continue praying alongside the Council: for wisdom, discernment, faithful leadership, and confidence in God's continued presence and direction for Pilgrim Church. Together, we trust that God is leading us forward with hope.

## Joyful Noise Learning Center

Summer is here and we are having a ball! Our school-age camp is in full summer mode this month: field trips, games, crafts, puzzles, and water days every week. New friends and old friends looking forward to their daily summer-time fun. Our kids have been respectful and polite on all of our outside field trips: cleaning up after themselves and being polite to all the spaces and surroundings, and persons around them. We are so proud of our Joyful Noise students this summer, great job!



Joyful Noise Learning Center will be starting our annual "Back-to-School Supply Drive" this month. Many teachers from our surrounding schools have reached out to us about specific items students need for the upcoming school year, K-12. We will be displaying these specific items on a table at the back of the church with a donation box if you would like to donate any of the items. School starts August 10!

Joyful Noise will be closed in observance of Independence Day, July 3rd.

*Jesus Loves You!*

"For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." — Galatians 5:13

As Americans, we celebrate the freedoms secured through our nation's independence. Every July, we remember the courage, sacrifice, and determination of those who sought liberty and established a government founded on the conviction that all people are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

The First Amendment of the US Constitution:  
*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Among the freedoms protected by our Constitution, the First Amendment stands as one of the most precious. It guarantees the free exercise of religion, allowing people of faith to worship, pray, teach, and live according to their convictions without government interference. Throughout much of history, such freedom has been rare. Even today, many Christians around the world face persecution\* for openly professing their faith.

As Americans, we can be thankful for the blessing of religious liberty. Yet our greatest freedom does not come from any earthly government. Through Jesus Christ, we have been set free from the power of sin and death. The freedoms we enjoy as citizens are important, but they point us toward an even greater freedom found in the Gospel.

The First Amendment gives us the opportunity to gather for worship, proclaim God's Word, share our faith, and serve our communities openly. These freedoms are not merely privileges to enjoy; **they are opportunities** to fulfill God's mission. As members of the body of Christ, we are reminded of our vision of "a just world for all." Religious liberty gives us the opportunity to work for justice, seek

peace, care for our neighbors, and advocate for the dignity and worth of every person created in God's image. We honor the gift of liberty when we use it to love others, build stronger communities, and bear witness to Christ's saving grace.

As we celebrate Independence Day, let us thank God for our nation and for those who have preserved these freedoms. Let us also pray that we would use our liberty wisely—not for ourselves alone, but for the glory of God, the good of our neighbors, and the building of a more just and peaceful world.

### Prayer

Gracious Lord, we thank You for the blessings of freedom and for the opportunities we have to worship You openly. Help us never take these gifts for granted. Grant wisdom to our leaders, courage to Your Church, and faithfulness to Your people. May we use our freedom to serve others, proclaim the Gospel, and shine the light of Christ in our communities. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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\*While we celebrate our freedom, how do we love our neighbors in hostile areas? The Voice of the Martyrs serves persecuted Christians in the world's most difficult and dangerous places to follow Christ.

They offer a guide with 10 ways to pray:

1. Pray that persecuted Christians will sense God's presence (Heb. 13:5)
2. Know we are praying for them (2 Tim. 1:3)
3. Experience God's comfort (2 Thess. 2:16–17)
4. See God provide opportunities for evangelism (Col. 4:3)
5. Boldly share the gospel (Acts 4:29)
6. Mature in their faith (Col. 1:28–29)
7. Be granted wisdom in covert ministry work (Acts 9:23–25)
8. Remain joyful amid suffering (Acts 5:41)
9. Forgive and love their persecutors (Matt. 5:44)
10. Be rooted in God's word (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

For more information on this mission check out <https://www.persecution.com/>

## July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Every Sunday</b> 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 9:00am Children's Worship 10:15am Adult Bible Study			<b>1</b> office closed	<b>2</b> office closed 7:00pm NA	<b>3</b> 9:00am TOPS 5:00pm Deep Creek Civic Association Bingo Night	<b>4</b> Independence Day 12:00pm Pilgrim Picnic
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 12:00pm Care Group	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	<b>10</b> 9:00am TOPS	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 12:00pm Care Group	<b>15</b> Newsletter Article Deadline	<b>16</b> 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	<b>17</b> 9:00am TOPS	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Ministry Reports due for Council Meeting	<b>21</b> 12:00pm Care Group 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 9:15am PBJ Sandwich Makers 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	<b>24</b> 9:00am TOPS	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 12:00pm Care Group 6:30pm Council Meeting	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 12:00pm Bulletin Team 7:00pm NA	<b>31</b> 9:00am TOPS	