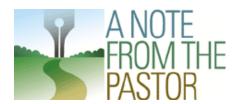
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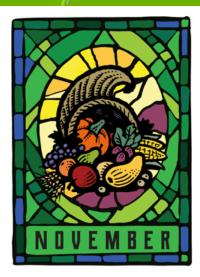


Member of ECO (A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians)



25250 Airport Road Punta Gorda, FL 33950 941-639-1959 first@fpcpunta.org. www.fpcpunta.org Office Hours - Monday - Thursday 9am - 1pm (and by appointment)





"Why Bother With Church Membership?" By Kevin DeYoung

On November 16, we will have an Inquirer's Class at 11:30am in the Choir Room. If you are interested in finding out more information about FPC, or interested in joining the church, please join us for a one class introduction to FPC. (For Seasonal Residents, we have an Affiliate Membership, so you can maintain your Membership back home.) From time to time I am asked about church membership and why it really matters. I found the below article by Kevin DeYoung on Gospel Coalition very helpful, if you are asking the same question.

I've been asked the question before. Sometimes it's said with genuine curiosity- "So explain to me what membership is all about." Other times it's said with a tinge of suspicion- "So tell me again, why do you think I should become a member?"- as if joining the church automatically signed you up to tithe by direct deposit.

For many Christians membership sounds stiff, something you have at your bank or the country club, but too formal for the church. Even if it's agreed that Christianity is not a lone ranger religion, that we need community and fellowship with other Christians, we still bristle at the thought of officially joining a church. Why all the hoops? Why box the Holy Spirit into member/non-member categories? Why bother joining a local church when I'm already a member of the universal Church?

Some Christians-because of church tradition or church baggage—may not be convinced of church membership no matter how many times "member" actually shows up in the New Testament. But many others are open to hearing the justification for something they've not thought much about.

Here are just a few reasons why church membership matters.

First, in joining a church you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people.

Membership is one way to raise the flag of faith. You state before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers. It's easy to talk in glowing terms about the invisible church-the body of all believers near and far, living and dead-but it's in the visible church that God expects you to live out your faith.

Sometimes I think that we wouldn't all be clamoring for community if we had actually experienced it. Real fellowship is hard work, because most people are a lot like us-selfish, petty, and proud. But that's the body God calls us to.

How many of Paul's letters were written to individuals? Only a handful, and these were mostly to pastors. The majority of his letters were written to a local body of believers. We see the same thing in Revelation. Jesus spoke to individual congregations in places like Smyrna, Sardis, and Laodicea. The New Testament knows no Christians floating around in "just me and Jesus" land. Believers belong to churches.

Continued on Page 2

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR - contined from Page 1

Second, making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture.

Many bowling leagues require more of their members than our churches. Where this is true, the church is a sad reflection of its culture. Ours is a consumer culture where everything is tailored to meet our needs and satisfy our preferences. When those needs aren't met, we can always move on to the next product, or job, or spouse.

Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement. It says "I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get."

Even if you will only be in town for a few years, it's still not a bad idea to join a church. It lets your home church (if you are a student) know that you are being cared for, and it lets your present know that you want to be cared for here.

But it's not just about being cared for, it's about making a decision and sticking with it-something my generation, with our oppressive number of choices, finds difficult. We prefer to date the church-have her around for special events, take her out when life feels lonely, and keep her around for a rainy day. Membership is one way to stop dating churches, and marrying one.

Third, we can be overly independent.

In the West, it's one of the best and worst thing about us. We are free spirits and critical thinkers. We get an idea and run with it. But whose running with us? And are any of us running in the same direction? Membership states in a formal way, "I am part of something bigger than myself. I am not just one of three hundred individuals. I am part of a body."

Fourth, church membership keeps us accountable.

When we join a church we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders and submitting to their authority (Heb. 13:7). We are saying, "I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in godliness. Will you help me to do the same?"

Mark Dever, in his book Nine Marks of a Healthy Church, writes,

Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.

Fifth, joining the church will help your pastor and elders be more faithful shepherds.

Hebrews 13:7 says "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority." That's your part as "laypeople". Here's our part as leaders: "They keep watch over you as men who must give an account." As a pastor I take very seriously my responsibility before God to watch care for souls. At almost every elders' meeting the RCA Book of Church Order instructed us "seek to determine whether any members of the congregation are in need of special care regarding their spiritual condition and/or not making faithful use of the means of grace." This is hard enough to do in a church like ours where there is constant turnover, but it's even harder when we don't know who is really a part of this flock.

To give just one example, we try to be diligent in following up with people who haven't been at our church for a while. This is a challenge. But if you never become a member, we can't tell if you are really gone, because we might not be sure if you were ever here! It's nearly impossible for the elders to shepherd the flock when they don't know who really considers them their shepherds.

Sixth, joining the church gives you an opportunity to make promises.

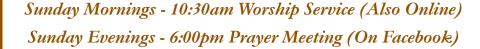
When someone becomes a member at University Reformed Church, he makes promises to pray, give, serve, attend worship, accept the spiritual guidance of the church, obey its teachings, and seek the things that make for unity, purity, and peace. We ought not to make these promises lightly. They are solemn vows. And we must hold each other to them. If you don't join the church, you miss an opportunity to publicly make these promises, inviting the elders and the rest of the body to hold you to these promises-which would be missing out on great spiritual benefit, for you, your leaders, and the whole church.

Membership matters more than most people think. If you really want to be a counter-cultural revolutionary, sign up for the Inquirer's Class, meet with your elders, and join your local church.

If you are interested in attending the class, please see Pastor Barksdale.

WORSHIP MINISTRY







Fellowship Time

Join us for beverages, cookies and treats after Sunday's Worship Service



Pledge Sunday

Sunday, November 23rd



Sermon on the SAND

Every Sunday at 8:00am - 8:30am at Fishermen's Village Pastor Barksdale will deliver the Message on November 16th

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY





Women's Bible Study - November 4th and 18th

"Keep It Shut" by Karen Ehman We meet the first and third Tuesdays each month at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall



Donuts & Doctrine Bible Study When Worlds Collide

Ever wondered how people from different cultures/religions see life, truth, and meaning? "When Worlds Collide - Exploring Worldviews", will take you across continents and centuries to uncover ideas that have shaped civilizations and individuals alike.



Join us for Donuts and Doctrine, Wednesday mornings from 10-11am in Fellowship Hall



Inquirer's Class

Interested in the history and beliefs of FPC, or what it means to be a member?

Join us on November 16th after church for this informational meeting.

Lunch provided! Sign up in the church foyer.

DISCIPLESHIP WISDOM

Must Every Disciple Be A Disciple Maker? (Discipleship.org)

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus instructed the disciples he had made to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV).

Jesus' parting commission (command) was clear: his disciples (the apostles) were to make disciples, and the disciples they made were to obey all of his teachings. And one of those teachings was this mandate: to make more disciples!

The cycle is necessary: fully obedient disciples—who learn to make other disciples—are necessary to continue the movement that Jesus had begun. Obedience to the great commission, to make other disciples, is necessary in every generation because the commission will last "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). In short, obedient disciples grow the Kingdom of God by replicating more disciples of Jesus—those following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to the mission of Jesus.

One of these first disciples of Jesus would later write,

"We know that we have come to know [Jesus] if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." (1 John 2:3-6, NIV)

Here, the apostle John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave two proofs that a believer truly knows Jesus: that they keep his commands and that they imitate him. Therefore, we conclude that mature believers should both obey and imitate Jesus...and that includes making *more* disciples of Him.

We believe that obedience, by itself, is a good motivation, but it is not the fullest or most holistic motivation. Love is the fullest and most holistic motivation. It is love for God and love for others that compels us to make disciples of Jesus.

The Great Commandment

Whenever we discuss keeping the commands of Jesus, we must prioritize what Jesus stated were the two greatest commands given in Scripture: to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:36-40, Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18). However, notice what John said about love in the passage above: "if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them." We do not define for ourselves what it means to "love God and love others"; we must look to the totality of Jesus' words and teachings to properly love God and others.

Thus, our primary motivation to make disciples should fundamentally be the Great Commandment. Think of it this way: if I have been saved by the gospel of Jesus, I have received the greatest gift a person could possibly receive. At the same time, if I truly love people, how could I not want to disciple them into receiving the same gift I have received?

Then, what about after they receive God's grace and they are saved? God's second highest desire for me, and anyone in this life, is that, after we are saved, we would all become more and more like Christ. If that is what God wants for others—and if I love them—then surely I want to help disciple them, if I can, into Christlikeness.

If we love God, we will love whom he loves. God loves lost people. His desire is to see "all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, NIV). Again, notice that it is not simply God's desire that all people be saved, but that they "come to a knowledge of the truth." God wills that all those that are saved be discipled in "the truth that is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21).

Rather than seeing evangelism and discipleship as two separate processes, we should see them both as components of disciple making. It is a technical point, but the exact words of Scripture are important.

We do not actually find the (first) paradigm in God's Word: Instead, we find the (second) paradigm. Disciple making focuses on leading people to salvation, and disciple making also focuses on leading the saved to full obedience (i.e., Christlikeness):

Continued on Page 5



The biblical model is that we disciple lost people to salvation by loving them and leading them into the truth that is in Jesus. Then, we continue to disciple the saved into the image of Jesus by loving them and leading them to be transformed as they learn to keep all that Jesus taught and commanded. As Paul wrote:

"...you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:21-24, NIV)

Our fundamental motivation, as disciples, is to make other disciples because we love God and love people.

If we love people, then we want what is best for them. When we make true disciples, they become better people. They become better singles or spouses. They become better family members. They become better workers and community members. They become better citizens of communities, cities, states, and countries. To help people know Christ and learn to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ is the best thing in the world. It is the most loving thing we can do.

Imagine for a moment that a significant portion of the population began to treat every other person the way that Jesus would treat them. What does that look like? *That* is the beautiful mission that God has entrusted to his disciples and his church.

Disciple Making as the Core Mission of the Church

Given that the end goal of the church and church leadership is that we would disciple as many as possible to salvation and then that every saved person in our church is conformed into the image of Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-16; 4:21-24; Colossians 1:26-28), then it follows that the core mission of the church should be disciple making (see the short book that Scott Sager and I wrote on this topic: *Disciple Making: The Core Mission of the Church*).

In both Ephesians 4:11-16 and Romans 12:3-8, Paul wrote that each believer is a member of the greater body of Christ, the church. He wrote that each believer has different gifts and a unique purpose within the church to fulfill. However, whatever those gifts and purposes are, they should lend themselves to the core mission of holistic, love-driven disciple making.

In Romans 12, Paul lists gifts such as prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list, but it gives a good idea of how any believer can contribute to the disciple making efforts of their church, even if they are not adept at personally making disciples. Any faithful disciple can contribute their time, talent, and treasure to helping their church and others make disciples of Jesus.

What about Disciples Who Do Not Personally Make Disciples?

In every church and ministry there will be disciples who do not personally make disciples. Some have good reasons. Here are six examples where it might be especially difficult:

- a new Christian (infant in the faith) who does not yet know how to make disciples
- a health condition (e.g., stuck in bed) which prevents a person from physically meeting with others
- a work situation (living in a Muslim country) which makes it dangerous to personally make disciples
- a marriage situation (e.g., hostile spouse) which makes it difficult to disciple people in the family
- a family situation (e.g., caring every day for an elderly parent) which makes it difficult to personally make disciples
- a mental health situation which prevents a person from being able to personally make disciples. (cont. Page 6)

DISCIPLESHIP WISDOM - continued from page 5

These exceptions can be important. If the issue is simply spiritual immaturity, then time and spiritual growth within a church that champions Jesus-style disciple making should help any believer to become a disciple maker. They will need teaching, coaching, and equipping to get there. Many will need the leadership of the church to give them an easy-to-follow model and a lot of encouragement, but in that environment, a surprising number of people will personally join the mission. I (Bobby) know this to be true from experience.

However, we must acknowledge that there will always be some who find it very difficult to personally make disciples. Even for these believers, they can help make disciples in a disciple making church when they support the church financially, when they serve in a ministry of the church (e.g., from child-care to greeting), and when they participate in groups within the church. There are clearly things that every person in a church can do to help the church's mission of disciple making.

And there is one more crucial thing that *everyone* should be called to do: pray. Notice what Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians regarding how they could support his disciple making mission of reaching lost people and establishing churches:

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." (Colossians 4:2-4)

At a minimum, any believer can pray for their church's disciple making efforts, those leading the church making disciples, and those being made into disciples of Jesus.

We encourage everyone to do everything they can do to make disciples personally and to help the church make disciples corporately in our churches—and literally everyone can join in to the important ministry of intercessory prayer. We believe that God wants everyone to be a disciple and help make disciples, to the best of their ability.

As churches, let's encourage and empower *everyone* to do his or her part. For King Jesus, Bobby Harrington and Curtis Erskine Discipleship.org

MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * Lt. Col. David Sifferd, Jr., Army Reserve, son of David Sifferd, stationed in Ft. Knox, KY
- * Pvt. Michael Robert Wagner, U.S. Marine Corp., great-grandson of Robert and Jean Humphreys, stationed in Hawaii
- * Second Lieutenant, JTAC, Alexander Kingsbury, Air Force, great-grandson of Tim Ronan, stationed in New York

Do you have a family member serving in the military? If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list. Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.

MISSIONS MINISTRY



First Presbyterian Church proudly supports Missions from our church budget. If you would personally like to make additional donations, please make checks payable to FPC and indicate the mission on the memo line.



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (Punta Gorda, Florida)
Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (Port Charlotte, Florida)

Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com



GROUND UP MINISTRIES (Cape Coral, Florida)
groundupministries.org



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

Misionpeniel.com



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Guatemala)

Eric and Debbie Stone - theantiochpartners.org



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Lima, Peru)
Lisa and Clever Alfonsi - theantiochpartners.org



MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL (Nicaragua)
Chasen and Katie Brokaw - mvi.org / breakingborders.org

STAND IN THE GAP FUND The purpose of this fund is to assist supported missionaries and ministries of our church when they face unexpected financial burdens To donate to this fund, please mark your gift as SITG

FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH







Thursday mornings from 10am - 12pm - All are Welcome

LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

1st and 3rd Friday of each month - Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, November 7th at 11:30am - Nino's, Punta Gorda Friday, November 21st at 11:30am - Beef 'O' Brady's, Punta Gorda





In His Name, Susie Lorenz







MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

Join us on Friday, November 21st
for the <u>afternoon session</u>
We will meet at the church at Noon
We need 6 people to sign up in the church foyer

GRIEFSHARE — A GriefShare Surviving the Holidays Seminar Monday, November 17th at FPC from 10:00am – 12:00pm

offers practical, actionable strategies for making it through the holiday season. At this two-hour seminar, you'll view a video featuring advice from people in grief who've faced the holidays after their loss. You'll hear insights from respected Christian counselors, pastors, and psychologists. You'll receive a Holiday Survival Guide with practical strategies, encouraging words, helpful exercises, Q/As, and journaling ideas for daily survival through the holiday season. Your holiday season won't be easy; your emotions may ambush you and suck you under at times. But you can choose to walk through this season in a way that honors your loved one and puts you on the path of health and healing.

Sign up in the church foyer.



THANKSGIVING SPECIAL GIFTING

St. Vincent de Paul - "Thanksgiving Meals Project"

Use the Special Gifting envelopes

Thank you for your generosity!

Collections through November 23rd



FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



ANGEL / CARDINAL TREE

Sisters and Brothers,

It's that time of year again that we have the opportunity to share what God has given us with those less fortunate. We all can do that by stopping by the Angel/Cardinal Tree and take a tag and bag. Bring the tag back by November 23rd with your UNWRAPPED gift of \$25.00 - \$30.00 in the bag and place under the tree. All your help will be greatly appreciated!

Your sister in Christ, Kathy Belville



CHRISTMAS OFFERING

1 - Veterans Village - Gift Cards

2 - Missionaries

Eric and Debbie Stone (Guatemala) Lisa and Clever Alfonsi (Peru) Chasen and Katie Brokaw (Nicaragua)

Use your Christmas or Special Gifting envelopes
Thank you for your generosity!
Donations through December 24th



Welcome Back Potluck Wednesday, November 12th at 5:00pm Sign up in the church foyer



HANGING OF THE GREENS

Saturday, November 29th at 9:00am

Come and help decorate our Church for Christmas!

Sign up in the church foyer



CHRISTMAS DINNER AND MOVIE

Wednesday, December 10th at 5:00pm

MEMBER CARE





Prayer Requests
Hospital and Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org



First Pres is on Facebook facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda



To watch the current service:

- 1) Follow the link: https://www.youtube.com/@FPCPG (This link is also on our website in the top right corner simply press the YouTube button)
- 2) On the FPC YouTube page you will see a small screen with the word LIVE, click it and it will fill up your screen. The Service begins at 10:30am (Pre-Service at 10:15am)



Happy Thanksgiving



WAYS TO GIVE









Worship Service

10:30 AM



Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

We want to remind everyone that if a storm is in the area, please don't travel if you are not comfortable, but you may still join us online.

Also, we have a text messaging system to notify folks if Services/Events are cancelled.

If you do not want to receive a text message, please notify the church office.

Please note: You cannot reply to these text messages.

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....

The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely, and all those who have requested our prayerful support.

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...





1	Barbara Floyd	11	Margo Lazzerini	21	Marguerite O'Brien
2	Frances Frost	12	Al & Susie Lorenz	22	David Osweiler
3	Neta Gensemer	13	Connie Luther	23	Bruce Peters
4	Matthew & Maria Greene	14	Carolyn Ann Maupin	24	Rachel Pfaender
5	Marjorie Haun	15	Mark McCurdy	25	Barksdale & Bo Pullen
6	Joan Hoffman	16	Gene & Barbara McPherson	26	Bill & Pauli Purcell
7	Bob & Jean Humphreys	17	Larry & Sue Mesler	27	Barbara Reynolds
8	Pat Ihrie	18	Steve & Joanie Mock	28	Tim Ronan
9	Lois Jornlin	19	Steve & Valerie Neeley	29	Pete & Debbie Rostad
10	Art Koon	20	Jim & Patti Nuznoff	30	Barbara Ryan





Congratulations to Billie and Ron Sixt on the birth of their first great grandchild Adeline Rae Rohde Adeline was born on October 2nd to Ryan and Alle

2—Larry Mesler

4—Ray Byron

7—Peter DeBree

7—Alan Engstrom

13—Barbara McPherson

14—Ron Sixt

17—Barksdale Pullen

27—Maria Greene

30—John Evans



2—Ray & Joan Byron—40 yrs.

29—Bill & Pauli Purcell—16 yrs.



NOVEMBER 2025



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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New York Control of the Control of t	7 11:30am Ladies Lunch Bunch at Nino's in Punta Gorda	4	2 S:00am Mission Trip to Immokalee 11:30am Ladies Lunch at Beef 'O' Brady's, PG	28	Church Office Hours Monday - Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm and by appointment
	6 10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowsihp	10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowsihp	20 10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowsihp	27 THANKSGWING	
FALL DINNER Wednesday, November 16	5 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry 5:00pm Welcome PotLuck	10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	26 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	
	4 10:00am Women's Bible Study 1:00pm Fellowship Team	TERRAIS DAY I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	10:00am Women's Bible Study	25	
	3 1:00pm Worship Team	0	10:00am GriefShare 1:00pm Session	24	A DVENT
Sunday, November 23	Communion Sunday 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB	9 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB	8:00am Sermon on the Sand 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Inquirer's Class	PLEDGE Sunday 10:15am Hymn Sing 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB	30 10:15am Hymn Festival 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB