

# The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

**A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.**  
The Messenger is published weekly by the South Florida Ave. Church of Christ meeting at 1807 South Florida Ave - Lakeland, FL 33803 Vol. 69 No.42 10-18-16

## ELDERS

David Anderson  
Kenny French  
Bobby Sheumaker

## DEACONS

Jeff Bingle  
Jimmy Sweeney  
Chuck Wyatt

## MINISTER

Hiram Kemp  
(386) 405-5372

## ASSOCIATE MINISTERS

Brian Kenyon  
(863) 944-8565

Robert McAnally  
(863) 606-5664

## SECRETARY

Michelle Paulin

## OFFICE PHONE

(863) 682-4702

## SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.  
Worship.....10:30 a.m.  
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.  
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

## HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

## MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia  
Don Iverson.....India  
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa  
Graham McDonald..Scotland  
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.  
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands  
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

## EMAIL

[SFA.church@gmail.com](mailto:SFA.church@gmail.com)

## WEB PAGE

[www.southfloridaavenuechurchofchrist.com](http://www.southfloridaavenuechurchofchrist.com)



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

## Keeping the Momentum Going

Brian R. Kenyon

What a wonderful Gospel Meeting we just had! Thank you, Stephen Rogers, for bringing us such encouraging, challenging, and motivational lessons, all of which were geared toward our better understanding God's will so that we can better communicate that to others in personal evangelism. Let's keep the momentum going!

## Keep Loving the Lord

Essential to anything in spiritual life, including keeping the momentum going after a Gospel Meeting, is loving God. Jesus answered the question about what was the greatest commandment by saying, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Mt. 22:37-38). God showed His love for us by giving "His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). He did this in spite of our sinfulness, "in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The only reasonable response we have to God's love is to love Him back, as the apostle John wrote, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). Having established the fact of God's love and our obligation to love Him, the question arises: How do we love God? The answer is simple to know: Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). Let's keep on loving the Lord!

## Keep Studying the Bible

Since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), the only way our faith can continue to grow is by continuing to study the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Studying involves effort (2 Tim. 2:15). Merely hearing the sound of God's word may not be deliberate, but studying God's word always is! We cannot expect to grow in the faith if the only Bible study we do is the few hours a week the church meets. We must also study on our own if we are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Let's keep on studying the Bible!

## Keep Reaching Out to Others

The lessons delivered at our Gospel meeting were basically a step-by-step instruction manual on personal evangelism. The South Florida Avenue church of Christ has experienced growth in the past few months. Now that more of us have been equipped to teach the Gospel as Jesus expects (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:16), let us not sit back and let "the preacher" do all the evangelizing. Every Christian has a responsibility. Let us take advantage of the opportunities God has given to reach out to others with the Gospel, "for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

# THE TREE OF LIFE

There are many symbols that come from the Bible with which we associate great events, such as a brass serpent (Num. 21:4-9), Noah's ark (Gen. 6-9), and a shepherd's staff (Ps. 23). It is probably not too often that we think of the "tree of life" as a great Biblical symbol. Let us consider the "tree of life" and its significance through spiritual history.

## GIVEN AS A BLESSING

When God created man from the "dust of the ground" and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7), the "LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed" (Gen. 2:8, NKJ). Adam was placed in the perfect setting. God garnished the garden with vegetation that was not only pleasant to look upon, but was also good for food. God placed two trees as the centerpiece of the garden: "The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was off limits (Gen. 2:17), but the "tree of life" was intended especially for the first man and his wife to eat of its fruit and live forever (Gen. 3:22b). This tree stood in the paradise of God as the symbol of blissful eternal fellowship in the presence of God. There is no indication that Adam and Eve actually partook of the fruit of the tree of life, but it was available as a kind of food for immortality. God had fellowship with Adam and Eve, until sin came along and ruined it (Gen. 3:8-9). God ideally intended for us to live forever in fellowship with Him!

God's desire for our fellowship has not changed. He sent His Son that we might have access to God through His blood (Heb. 10:19-22). He left us His word so that we might know His will (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In fact, John wrote of the reality of Jesus so "that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn. 1:3). There is only one thing that keeps us from fellowship with God—sin (Isa. 59:1-2)!

## TAKEN AWAY AS A BLESSING

When God placed Adam in the Garden, He "commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Gen. 2:16-17). Satan successfully deceived Eve by first getting her to doubt the goodness of God (Gen. 3:1), and then by convincing her that disobeying God was actually to her advantage (Gen. 3:5). As a result, "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6). True to God's word, Adam and Eve died spiritually that very moment in that they were separated from God (Gen. 3:7-13). After announcing judgment upon those involved (Gen. 3:14-21), "the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 2:24).

Expulsion from the Garden was a punishment meant for humanity's own good. While exposing mankind to temporal death outside the Garden, God intended to preserve mankind from eternal death. The afflictions of this world can motivate our search for a better way (cf. Jas. 1:2-4). After Adam and Eve sinned, the fruit that produced immortality could only do them harm. Immortality is a state of sin is not life eternal, but endless misery! The tree of life, although never seen again, remained a symbol of blissful eternal life in the presence of God.

## GIVEN AGAIN AS A BLESSING

The first book in the Bible records how access to the tree of life was lost. The last book in the Bible records promises of the tree of life restored. To the church at Ephesus, John wrote, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). To eat from the tree of life is to partake of life everlasting, which Adam and Eve forfeited in the Garden. Experiencing the fruit of eternal life is based on "overcoming," which means that we must be victorious over the forces that would keep us from being faithful to God. This can only be accomplished through the blood of Christ (Rev. 12:11). As John concluded the Revelation, he described one aspect of the New Jerusalem as follows: "In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2). The perpetual nature of this blessing is described by the twelve seasons of fruit bearing every month.

The tree of life becomes a reality only to the obedient: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). ♥ Brian

# SFA FAMILY MATTERS

## Prayer List

**Our Members:** Jim Turner is home from the hospital. Elizabeth Tubbs is undergoing medical testing. Melody Baxter and William Grimm were home sick. Also keep Carol Eason, Ginny Hamby, Jacquelin Dopwell, Kenny French, Faith West, Debbie Horsley, and Margaret Coone in prayer.

**Relatives:** Dayne Romine, (Paul Romine's brother), Tonya Mathis, Dee Moore, Margie Bolding, Preston Craft & Harold Rister.

**Shut In Members:** Virginia Plumlee, Ann Howard, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Janet Crosby, Jim Edmondson and Duane Nelson.

**Others:** Tom Holland, Jackie Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner and Alyssa Buckner. Keep all of these in your prayers.

## Upcoming Events

**October 28-30th:** 8th Annual Fall Gospel Meeting at the Osprey Ave. Church of Christ in Sarasota.

**October 29th:** Fall Festival at the Central Church of Christ in Haines City. from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

**October 29th:** N. Jackson Ave. in Bartow 89th Homecoming. The theme is "Living Faithful in a Troubled World."

**October 29th:** Fall Get Together-at Tyler and Jessica Anderson's house from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share and enjoy some outdoor activities. Their address is: 4120 Lake Hancock Rd. Lakeland, FL. 33812.

**November 4th-5th:** Men's Retreat at the Eagle Lake Church of Christ. If you are interested please register. The registration brochures are out on the table in the foyer.

**November 5th:** Ladies Day at the Kissimmee Church of Christ at 9:00 a.m.

## Member In Need of:

Jacquelin Dopwell is in need of a couch or love seat. If you have one or know of someone who does, please contact the church office.

## Visitors

Ron Brooks, Floyd & Shirley Loudermilk, Katrina Greene, Keith Greene and Rachel, Roy Ray and Floyd Arnold.

## SCHEDULED TO SERVE

### October

Frank Hamby ..... **Table** ..... Jimmy Sweeney  
Stacey Paulin ..... **Assist** ..... Josh Estridge

### Sunday, October 23, 2016

9:30 A.M.

**Song at Bible Class** ..... Ken Walker  
**Prayer** ..... C.J. Grimes

10:30 A.M.

**Announcements** ..... Bobby Sheumaker  
**Song Leader** ..... Jason Hendrix  
**Opening Prayer** ..... Ken Walker  
**Sermon** ..... Hiram Kemp  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

**Song Leader** ..... Kyle Williams  
**Opening Prayer** ..... Kenny French  
**Sermon** ..... Hiram Kemp  
**Greeters** ..... The Longfellows  
**Att. Cards** ..... Paul & Ian  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Jimmy Sweeney  
**Open & Close Building** ..... Jimmy Sweeney

### Wed. October 26, 2016

**Song Leader** ..... Bill Long  
**Opening Prayer** ..... Jeff Bingle  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Tucker Sweeney

*Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - 859-5231 or 602-9005*

### Sunday, October 30, 2016

9:30 A.M.

**Song at Bible Class** ..... David Williams  
**Prayer** ..... Josh Estridge

10:30 A.M.

**Announcements** ..... Bobby Sheumaker  
**Song Leader** ..... Jason Hendrix  
**Opening Prayer** ..... C.J. Grimes  
**Sermon** ..... Hiram Kemp  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Kyle Williams

6:00 P.M.

**Song Leader** ..... Kyle Williams  
**Opening Prayer** ..... John McShane  
**Sermon** ..... Hiram Kemp  
**Greeters** ..... The Grimes  
**Att. Cards** ..... Antonio & Quadarius  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Chuck Wyatt  
**Open & Close Building** ..... Jimmy Sweeney

### Wed. November 2, 2016

**Song Leader** ..... Jason Hendrix  
**Opening Prayer** ..... Kenny French  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Bobby Sheumaker

## ~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Sept. 25.....	\$4,594.67
Oct. 02 .....	\$6,838.53
Oct. 09.....	\$4,375.00
Oct. 16.....	\$4,825.05
<b>Contribution Average</b> .....	<b>\$4,942.00</b>
<b>2016 Weekly Budget</b> .....	<b>\$4,422.60</b>

# Our Words Can Haunt Us!



A few Halloweens ago, I sat in my driveway waiting to give candy to the “trick or treaters.” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw what appeared to be a toy bat fly out of my neighbors’ front door. I did not think much about it. Around ten minutes later, I learned that it was my neighbors’ very expensive macaw bird that had escaped. My neighbors frantically searched for their bird. Unfortunately, for the decent folks in the neighborhood, these neighbors taught their bird how to “cuss.” In back of our houses at the time, there was a large citrus grove. In order to find their bird, these neighbors walked along the edge of the grove calling out the curse words they taught that bird, hoping it would “cuss” back at them. The lesson is this: We must seriously consider the words we use and teach others, even a bird! These neighbors never thought the words they taught their bird would come back to haunt them, but what else could they have done? Give up on a very expensive bird? They were trapped. The wise man said, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul” (Proverbs 18:7). Again, “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up” (Ecclesiastes 10:12). Jesus said that “for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37). Are there situations, maybe even “birds,” in our lives that will cause our words to come back and haunt us? May our words always be “fitly spoken” (Proverbs 25:11). ❤️ *Brian*



*South Florida Avenue*  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
1807 South Florida Avenue  
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

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The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

**Exhibit A** This living little cutie proves there had to be living parents. This beautiful baby could not have come from non-living sources such as rocks, dirt, or primordial ooze! Just so, humans could not have come from non-living sources. The only logical explanation is the “living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (Acts 14:15). Amen!



Some of those in attendance at our latest youth devotional. Jimmy presented a great lesson, there was good food, and fun was had by all, even those who were suffering “aggravation” (girls won 2 out of 3) and engaged in “Taboo” ... Bible version, that is (team 2 won). BTW, Tucker (allegedly) beat Hiram in basketball :)

**Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them.” (Ecclesiastes 12:1)**