The Bible says in Isaiah 43:19, “Be alert, be present. I’m about to do something brand-new. It’s bursting out! Don’t you see it?”

God is doing some exciting things in our midst. Each one of us is essential and has a vital role to play as we learn, grow, worship and serve God together. I want to thank each of you for being Braden River United Methodist Church. Together, we are the church, and I could not be more grateful or honored to serve as your Pastor.

As I write this, we are in the middle of the springtime growing season here in Florida. I have planted a garden at the parsonage and am excited to see so much new growth! We are growing tomatoes, peppers, squash, cantaloupe, blackberries, watermelons, herbs and more. The garden is thriving! We have so many watermelons growing that I am already planning to bring a box of watermelons to church for an after-worship “Watermelon Party!”

All plants begin with a simple seed planted in the darkness of the soil. 1 Corinthians 3: 6-8 clearly teaches us, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow. It’s not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow.” God is the One who makes all things grow—including us! May we always remember this and give God all the Glory!

On Easter Sunday, we had a tremendous turnout and celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ together with a beautiful 8am “Sonrise” Service, a delicious 9am Easter Brunch, and an inspiring 10am Easter Morning Worship. We gave out bookmarks with wildflower seeds, which we planted to remind us of the seeds that God is planting in each of our own lives.

I want to remind each of you of the Good Work that God is doing in your life. God has planted some amazing seeds in the soil of your life! And God promises to bring this growth to completion. Philippians 1:6 teaches us, “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” I am excited about what God is doing in our midst and grateful to serve God together with each one of you!

I believe that our best days as Braden River UMC are still ahead of us! Hebrews 12:1-2 reminds us, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Thanks be to God!

God is so good... all the time!

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Our 2018 goals:
- Add at least 10 new members
- Improve church-wide communication using quarterly newsletters
- Implement at least two new Fresh Expressions in the coming year
Missions

Pack-A-Sack Ministry
This school year, Pack-A-Sack ministry is coming to a close until Aug. We have provided weekend food for 13 children each week throughout the school year.

Thanks to all who donated to this ministry this year. Without you, this mission would not have been possible. Also, special thanks to Marge Moreau and Joye Bock, who filled and delivered the food to Bashaw Elementary each week. You are both a blessing to our church!

Backpacks for Bashaw Ministry
The Backpacks for Bashaw ministry will begin in late July and run into early Aug. This ministry supplies children in need with backpacks and school supplies for the upcoming school year. We will be collecting donations for the Backpacks for Bashaw ministry anytime between now and early Aug.

“Fruits of Our Labor Days” Events
This year we will have another food drive for our local food bank the two Sundays before Labor Day. Any non-perishable items are appreciated. The food is donated to our local food bank and helps many people in need.

Diane McCarthy

Florida Children’s Home
Every 5th Sunday, we have a special focus on our Florida Children’s Home—April 29 was the first of these. The total gifts to the Children’s Home for this year so far is $647.17. Only four months in 2018 have five Sundays: April, July, Sept. and Dec.

Did you know that you can give a gift to the Florida United Methodist Children’s Home (FUMCH) any time that you want? There are three ways to do this:

1. Use your weekly envelope, and specify a certain amount to go to the FUMCH on the other line—be sure to write “FUMCH” next to the amount

2. Put money into the FUMCH envelope on the 5th Sunday (April 29, July 29, Sept. 30 and Dec. 30 in 2018)

3. Get a FUMCH envelope at the table in the back of the church and donate any Sun.

Judy Colson

Opportunity to give
Church property improvements:

• Florescent lights in the church have been converted to LED bulbs that will save on the cost of lighting
• The picnic tables have been placed and secured in the yard west of the building
• The trees in the east area have been trimmed
• The landscaping and trees in the parking lot have been trimmed, and mulch was spread in the areas around the church
• The flowers along the walk and in the beds in the front of the church were donated and planted to make things look great!
• The janitor’s mop closet wall has been repaired and painted to make it a lot neater after the water damage

Kay Don Stevenson and Larry Higginbotham

Students who live in the home, ready to go to prom; pictured at the Bridge of Hope

We are grateful to Debi Lavelle for creating these beautiful wreaths for our church doors.
**Worship Leader**
and Church Council Chair

*Nancy Morris*

This has been an exciting year! Pastor Jeff asked me if I would be the council chairperson as Martin has been having health issues. So I said “yes,” and now I am worship leader and council chair.

Worship has been great! We had two services for Easter: early service outside, breakfast and then the later service. Both were well attended and enjoyed by all.

We welcomed the president of the Manatee County Audubon Society for our Wonder of Bald Eagles night on April 11, which was a success by any measure!

Event recap

- Complete with plenty of binoculars and s'mores for everyone!
- God was smiling on us, and we had beautiful weather
- Nearly 100 people were in attendance, including new faces!

Also in April, we met at the AMC Bradenton 20 theater (formerly the Carmike Royal Palm 20) to see the movie “I Can Only Imagine.” Everyone enjoyed the movie, and our choir plans to sing that song next month during worship.

We had a positive council meeting and discussed trustees activities and the Thrift Shop (making incredible contributions to the church), and Diane McCarthy also plans to hold another food drive series called “Fruits of Our Labor” [mentioned on page two!].

I would like everyone to know that if they have any ideas or suggestions for the church, please feel free to talk with me. God is great!

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The shop has been open twenty years as of this May. We opened in May of 1998. We have expanded quite a bit in the last year due to being blessed with so many donations. Our sales have gone up over what they were a year ago.

Any donations we receive that we can't sell in the store are sent on to help the needy and homeless. This is a blessing for us and them.

We are blessed with so many willing volunteers but due to so many people going on vacation and our snowbirds going home during the summer months, we could use more help. If you can spare a couple of hours on Tues. mornings, Fridays or Saturdays, call me at 941-751-0698 or the office at 941-745-1663 for more information.

Lucy Morales, who has been a faithful volunteer for many years and speaks Spanish, is moving away; therefore anyone who speaks Spanish would be a great help to the store. Lucy, we love you and we are going to miss you. Thank you for all your support and hard work.

Please come in and see what we have to offer. You'll be surprised.

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God's blessings,
*Phyllis Hough*
Staff and volunteer updates

Staff/Parish Relations

Marge Moreau

An excellent SPR secretary
Judy Davis is serving as SPR secretary and is doing an excellent job.

New cleaning team
We are pleased to announce that we have hired Cleaning Solutions, owned by Veronica Cabera, as our full-time cleaning service. Veronica and her staff are doing a wonderful job.

New office volunteers
Martha Roe, our church secretary, requested to reduce the hours that she works. Many thanks go to Carol Humphrey, Linda Alley, Judy Colson and Dodi Fritz for volunteering to fill the vacancy that this change created in order to assure that someone would be present in the office to answer the telephone and be present for deliveries, visitors etc. We are deeply appreciative of their willingness to serve.

Bible Study update
Gary Davis has offered to lead Bible Study on Wed. nights. Thank you, Gary.

Communications
We are also grateful that Derek Allman has been added to our church team to offer his expertise in graphic design, communication and media skills in order to help our church grow through his knowledge of outreach techniques.

Thanks be to God!

Suggestion box
We want to hear from you!

We have a new suggestion box in the sanctuary, and we would appreciate hearing ideas from each of you. The idea box has two categories: song/music ideas and other ideas.

You can submit song ideas for hymns you would like to sing, or contemporary Christian music that would help us connect with God in worship. We would also like to hear any other ideas that you have to help our church grow closer to one another and closer to God.

Thanks in advance for sharing your ideas with us.

You are a valuable part of Braden River UMC!

We’ll miss you, Joe and Lucy!

On Sun., May 20, we presented Joe and Lucy Morales with this Certificate of Appreciation and cross made from wood from the Holy Land. They have faithfully served God at Braden River UMC for the past 15 years. Joe and Lucy will be moving to Gainesville at the end of June in order to be closer to their daughter Lillian and her family. We thank God for this wonderful couple!

Contact us!

New to Braden River UMC, have a question or a prayer request? We’d love to hear from you!

Email: BradenRiverUMC@gmail.com
Pastor Jeff’s email: jeff.peck@flumc.org
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