



# North Fort Myers Church of the Nazarene Messenger

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## Friends

It occurred to me recently that last year I had several conversations with ladies who expressed the most missing element in their lives was a friend. Each of these ladies shared with me, some with tear-filled eyes, how much they would like to have a good friend. There is just something so warm and comforting about knowing you have someone who loves you so much and understands you so well that you can pick up the phone, no matter how much time has passed, and feel like you are both on the same page.

These gals who shared this desire with me all have this in common – they often feel the need to simply be able to talk to someone or have someone with whom they can share their trials or joys. And at least three of those ladies expressed how much they would like to be able to have a friend who is as serious about their walk with Christ as they are.

There is, I believe, a need within all of us for a companion with whom we can be ourselves, with no pretenses. Someone with whom we do not feel the need to be guarded or wary. Someone who knows us well, but with whom we know there will be no condemnation. Someone with whom we can laugh, sing, cry, rant, pray, and openly express our inner feelings with no concern that the friend will share what we share or look down upon us for our frailties. Someone with whom we can just be silent and yet feel as though the conversation is just as sweet. Above all, we want to be able to say of our friend that they are as Proverbs 17:17 says, someone “*who loves at all times.*”

So, if so many people want a friend, doesn't that mean there are a lot of people in the world who could fill that void in one another's lives? What is happening to keep us apart? My answer to the dilemma is we have become a people of anti-social practices. Our homes have become 24-hour a day bases of entertainment, with our TV's, Wii's, Play Stations, computers, etc. Our computers offer games and opportunities for connecting via the internet, so we feel like we are connecting, when we are really just offering information about our lives with no one who really

cares enough to get involved on a personal level. We have created “safe” environments in which no one judges or condemns us for our choices or lifestyles, and it makes us feel a level of comfort and security we would not have if we ventured outside our safe zones.

Unfortunately, it also means any personal connection we might desire to have with other people suffers and when the time comes where we need an ear to hear us or a hand to hold or a heart to beat next to ours, they are all tucked up safely beating in their own homes. I often wonder if the real problem isn't that we have simply become people afraid of pain, and living without friends is more trouble free and pain free in the long run. The saddest truth of this is it makes for a cold and lonely existence for a lot of people.

Of course, I would not bring this up if I did not also believe there is a solution to the problem. So, for 2014, I'm wondering if we might not be a part of making the world a friendlier and less lonely place. Why not:

1. Purposefully spend more time around people.
2. Join a club or organization that shares your interests.
3. Volunteer.
4. Make eye contact with people you pass by and speak to them.
5. Start a conversation in a waiting room or in line at the check-out counter.
6. Introduce yourself to a stranger.
7. Host a party. Your house doesn't have to be perfect and the food doesn't have to be catered. Just open your home for a few guests who might be just as lonely as you.
8. Practice silence. In other words, be a good listener and a good confidence keeper.
9. Reach out to people consistently. Make a point to phone a potential friend or old friend and keep the connection going.
10. Be honest with someone you would like for a friend. They might just be looking for a friend too.
11. Pray, and ask God to help you find a friend and be a better one.
12. Be grateful if you already have a friend and tell them how thankful you are to have them in your life.

## January Church Calendar

- 6 – LAMB's meeting  
Men's meeting at Applebees
- 8 – Board Meeting  
LAMB's Council Meeting
- 12 – Ice Cream Social
- 17–18 – LAMB's Yard Sale
- 18 – Bowling at Pin Street Lanes
- 26 – Birthday/Anniversary Afterglow at parsonage

## January Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 1 – Devon Kiser
- 7 – Betty Predko
- 16 – Chet Prendota
- 20 – Laurel & Dorothy Chapman
- 23 – Dan & Diane Bowker
- 26 – Dave Peck

## Prayer Needs:

<i>Bob Retter</i>	<i>Deanna Hager</i>	<i>Dorothy Chapman</i>	<i>Denise Torvea</i>
<i>Rev. Oxenford</i>	<i>Amy Logsdon</i>	<i>Amber Beck</i>	<i>Eloise Garner</i>
<i>Judi Predko's parents</i>	<i>Robin Sotomyer</i>	<i>Artena New</i>	<i>Carole Brophy</i>
<i>Dottie Nichter</i>	<i>Karen Nacias</i>	<i>Sue Ann Skinner</i>	<i>Darlene Roach</i>
<i>Phyllis Obney</i>	<i>Rita Ruescher</i>	<i>Gertrude Campbell</i>	<i>Logan Vess</i>
<i>Jerry &amp; Mary Kisner</i>	<i>Kitty Baxter</i>	<i>Marla Valasquez</i>	<i>Steve Woodby</i>
<i>Kristin Sanders</i>	<i>Robert Cissney</i>	<i>Mary Austin (ALS)</i>	<i>Russell Abrams</i>
<i>Mark &amp; Debbie Woodby</i>	<i>Helen Beatty</i>	<i>The Ford Family (Larissa)</i>	<i>David Sanders</i>
<i>Jerry Werling</i>	<i>Dorrie Conrad</i>	<i>Janet Hamilton</i>	<i>Janet Andre</i>
<i>Sherry Billings</i>	<i>Betty Hillyard</i>	<i>Phyllis Correll</i>	<i>Mary Clifford</i>
<i>John &amp; Marie Haddad</i>	<i>Irene Genesky</i>	<i>Julie Kaufmann</i>	<i>Joseph Groves</i>
<i>Paul Chaplow, Sr.</i>	<i>Ida Chaplow</i>	<i>Pastor Mills</i>	<i>Betty Stewart</i>
	<i>Our military, our leaders &amp; our nation</i>		

## **LAMB's Meeting**

January 6, 2014 - 6:30 P.M.

*“Out With the Old  
In With the New”*

Bring a treasured item for the yard sale or for Ebay to benefit LAMB's Ministries  
Sign up in the foyer



Monday, January 6, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.  
Meet at Applebees for  
Dinner and the Car Show

*Singles Ministry  
Sunday, January 19  
Going out to lunch  
after the morning  
worship service*



Lake Placid Camp & Conference Center

## 2014 Ladies Retreat

Ladies, make plans now to join us for our first annual Ladies Retreat at beautiful Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center, Feb. 21 thru Feb. 23. The cost per person is \$75, which includes two nights' lodging and 6 meals. Our speaker will be Hydie Miller. Plan now to come along and plan on having a wonderful weekend of fun, games and drawing closer to God and one another.

### General Secretary Releases 2013 Stats

General Secretary David P. Wilson and Nazarene Research Services released the annual church statistical reports for 2013 in December. These detailed reports documenting the missional activities of the Church of the Nazarene on a global scale show growth for the denomination over the statistical year, as well as continued growth over the past decade.

Global reports show total current membership for the Church of the Nazarene at 2,263,249, a net increase of 14,761 (5.22 percent) from 2012.

The denomination welcomed in 156,441 new Nazarenes this year.

The fastest growing regions in membership were Eurasia (27.12 percent) and Africa (5.59 percent). The USA/Canada Region lost 106 members last year to drop its total to 652,755, a 0.02 percent decrease.

There are currently 29,007 churches in the denomination, an increase of 877 from last year's report. Of the churches listed, 20,816 are considered officially organized, a gain of 775 in that category.

The average weekly worship attendance increased by 2.79 percent in 2013 to 1,479,477.

The Church of the Nazarene has 16,846 ordained elders, 779 ordained deacons, and 9,444 licensed ministers.

Information is based on reporting received from districts for assemblies held October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2013. For the full statistical report, see <http://www.ncnnews.com/nphweb/>

### Daniel Fast-2014

We are encouraging our congregation to join us in *Daniel Fast-2014*, January 1 through 21. The focus is giving God the first 21 days of the year by physically and prayerfully seeking His best and submitting ourselves wholly to His will and His plan for us, for our church, for our homes and for our country. (Daniel 10:13) If you have access to the internet, the following is a list of sites where you can learn all you need to know to participate. We will also have printed info available in the foyer for those interested.

An Overview of the Daniel Fast:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDII06ODw0w#t=37>

<http://fontenblog.blogspot.com/2013/01/the-daniel-fast-food-for-thought.html>

<http://www.vega-licious.com/things-you-need-to-know-about-the-daniel-fast/>

Shades of Grace Ministry:

<http://www.shadesofgrace.org/events/pursuit-21/the-daniel-fast/>

Caring Carrot (Daniel Fast Vegan):

<http://www.caringcarrot.com/>

Susan Gregory:

<http://susangregory.com/>

Food List for the Daniel Fast:

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/435185-food-list-for-the-21-day-daniel-fast/>

Information about the Daniel Fast:

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/347609-information-on-the-21-day-daniel-fast/>

## **"Marathon Jesus" Spotted Running in the New York City Marathon"**

Now that I have your attention...

According to organizers, since the New York City Marathon follows on the heels of Halloween, it is not unusual for some runners to show up in costume. However, the costume noted in the title was not the garden variety costume. This man who has been deemed "Marathon Jesus," ran bare-foot through Boston with an almost full-sized cardboard cross strapped to his back. This explained the reason for the runner being given the "Marathon Jesus" moniker. The real name of the runner is Makoto Takeuchi, from Chiba, Japan. He claims even though many thought his costume was a gag, it was not intended to be. The sign on his back was intended to explain his motive. It read that he was running on behalf of the Boston Marathon bombing victims.

You and I can draw our own conclusion regarding the appropriateness of Takeuchi's actions. But after I finished the article, my mind headed in a different direction. Obviously, the look of this man (having the cross, etc.) caused him to be easily identified with what most know about the person of Jesus – which he obviously intended. But there is a lesson in this story for all Christians; namely, when people see us, what associations do they make?

Now, I am not suggesting we strap a cross on our back, or anything of the sort. What I am talking about is, of course, our character. There are many things that serve to identify followers of Christ. But Jesus taught the hallmark of His disciples is supposed to be love. John recorded these words of Christ:

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:34, 35).*

By the time most of you read this we will be well into 2014. That is very hard to believe. As you start off this New Year, I encourage you to be willing to open yourself up to the people God puts in your pathway. As I have stated, you do not have to carry a cross around on your back for the people you come in contact with from day to day to see Jesus in your life and your actions, in the tone of your voice, in your attitudes, and in your eyes.

It is not simply "looking" like Jesus on the outside, but being like Him on the inside that tells the world who we are. So, we must honestly ask ourselves, "Do I really look like Jesus?" Let's go purposefully into 2014 making it our goal.

Have a blessed New Year! Pastor Van



*I have one deep, supreme desire,  
that I may be like Jesus.  
To this I fervently aspire,  
that I may be like Jesus.  
I want my heart His throne to be,  
so that a watching world may see  
His likeness shining forth in me.  
I want to be like Jesus.*

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