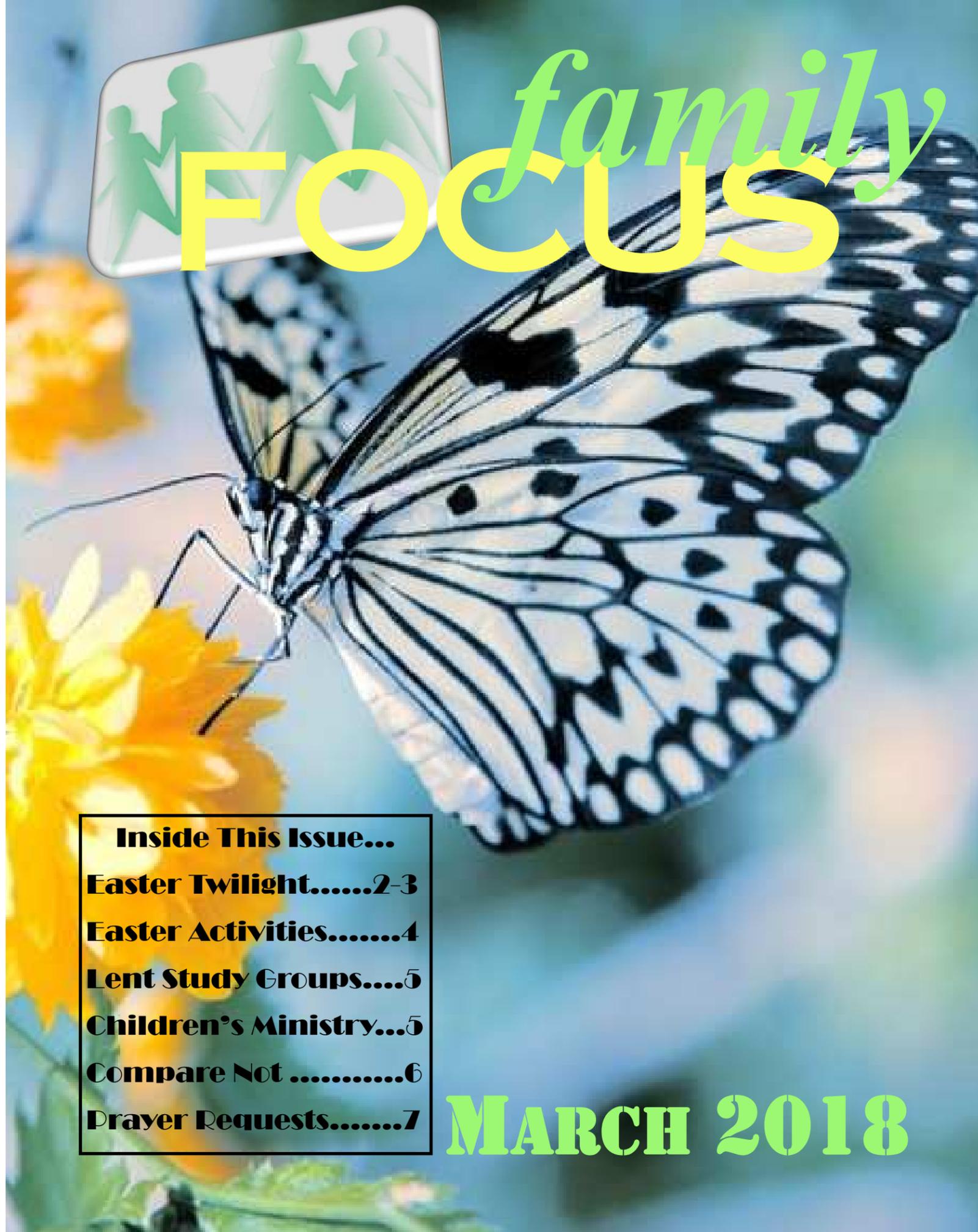




family **FOCUS**



Inside This Issue...	
Easter Twilight.....	2-3
Easter Activities.....	4
Lent Study Groups....	5
Children's Ministry... 	5
Compare Not	6
Prayer Requests.....	7

MARCH 2018

Easter Twilight

By Jon Lovelady

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

(John 20:14-16 NIV)

Easter Sunday is April 1st (this is no joke!). We will have regular Easter morning worship services at 9am and 11am. However, if you have an opportunity, join us also for our special Holy week and Easter services. Holy Week begins March 25 with Palm Sunday. We will celebrate Maundy Thursday, March 29, at Tru-way Church of the Living Christ with Rev. Elwin Jenkins with a joint communion service. On Good Friday, Tru-way will come to St. Johns in order to remember what Christ has done for us through his sacrifice. The Easter Sunrise Service will be at Stockton Park, across from St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Rev. Art McClellan will be preaching and St. Johns will be leading the music. St. Mark's will be leading our joint communion service. All of these services communicate our unity in Christ Jesus. I am very thankful that during this week, because Jesus is our peace, we break down "the dividing walls of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). Join us as we celebrate the peace and unity of Christ by breaking down racial and denominational walls!

I often have wondered why John incorporated this story into his gospel. The writers of the gospel had very limited space on their scroll in which to write, because after a certain length, the scroll would be too cumbersome to transport. Their entire point in writing the gospel was to have impact upon the people of their culture. The "gospel" or "good news" was to communicate that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the world, and the resurrection is God's crowning affirmation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It affirms that the suffering of the cross was not simply a witness to personal self-sacrifice, but it was a sacrifice for all of humanity: The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This sacrifice provides forgiveness for all who will claim Jesus as Lord! So, given such a grand vision, why this story of Mary Magdalene?

I have to admit, this is one of the most poignant moments in all the resurrection encounters, and I can see why John would tell this story just based on its emotion. Mary is devoted and loved Jesus so much. She is standing outside the garden tomb crying. Jesus had already done so much for her; the gospels of Luke and Mark mention that she had been freed from seven demons by Jesus. In her love and thankfulness, she is desperately searching for his body so she could share one final act of devotion: making sure that he is given a proper burial. Yet, the question remains: what does this tell us about the grand vision of Jesus as Lord and our encounter with Jesus?

I don't think I have ever missed an Easter Sunrise service. After more than 30 years of ministry, I have either planned or participated in every Sunrise service. It is something that I enjoy because I am often up before dawn, and I love watching the sunrise Easter morning as we celebrate this crowning affirmation of God's redemption. As the sun starts to rise, the transition between absolute darkness (it is always darkest before the dawn) and the coming light is filled with shifting shadows and adjustments. The twilight, the time in between darkness and light, is the most difficult time to see. Our eyes play tricks on us because they are adjusting from the dark of night to the brilliance of day. Maybe this is why John tells us this story of the resurrection to remind us that we are all like Mary. We live in the transition between darkness and light, birth and death, desperation and hope, and at times we wonder if Jesus truly cares for us. This question to Mary is one which Jesus echoes to us: Who are you seeking?

Easter Twilight

By Jon Lovelady

We all live in Easter Twilight, where clarity is difficult and we find ourselves searching and wondering if eternal life is a reality. Has death been truly overcome? We wonder as we face the tomb, grieve the loss of so many things, as we encounter despair and hopelessness: Where is Jesus in all of this? This gospel is written at the end of the Apostle John's life; He has seen hardship and persecution, as well as death and despair. This may be one of the reasons that John reminds us of this moment with Mary. Even though she does not recognize Jesus, he calls her name and she has a moment of clarity, joy and hope! She recognizes Jesus!

John wants us to realize what it means to exist in the "twilight" of the resurrection. Darkness is being transformed to light but it is not yet complete. We struggle to love the light of Jesus rather than the darkness of our willful and broken ways. Yet Jesus is an abiding presence, who we may not always recognize until he calls our name! Then the blindness is overcome and we experience the clarity of his presence. There is an old gospel song entitled, "I'll be Somewhere Listening." As I have thought about Jesus calling Mary's name, I wondered if these verses inspired this song. I had not heard it for years until I started working on this newsletter. It was sung in the country churches of my youth. I was surprised to find that John Fogerty, who had a number of hits in the late 1960's and early 1970's with the group "Credence Clearwater Revival," had a version of this song. I don't know much about John Fogerty's faith but his version of this song conveys the power of Jesus calling your name:

I wanna be somewhere, Lord, yeah Lord call my name
Wanna be somewhere- yeah Lord call my name
On that day we shall rise, wipe the tears from my eyes
I wanna be somewhere, yeah Lord call my name!

Oh, I wanna be somewhere, Lord when He calls my name
I wanna be somewhere, Lord when He calls, calls my name
Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down, sometimes levelled to the ground
I wanna be somewhere, Somewhere! Somewhere! Somewhere!
Somewhere! Somewhere! Somewhere!
Call my name, my name

As you come to Easter this year, listen closely. You may be wondering: Where is Jesus in all of this? I pray that you will hear his voice call your name, and you will recognize him as Lord of all! Amen.

In Christ,



This past holiday season, St. Johns Presbyterian volunteered 50 hours ringing the kettle bell for The Salvation Army. We ended up raising \$2,326.83 for them, and because of that, The Salvation Army was able to raise over \$282,000! By doing this, we are able to help Northeast Florida with meals, shelter, groceries, and much more!

Join us for our Easter Activities!



Check your Sunday Bulletin to order your Easter Lily "in Honor of" or "in Memory of" a loved one.

JOIN US FOR OUR EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE:

APRIL 1, 2018 6:30AM @ STOCKTON PARK



REGULAR SERVICES WILL FOLLOW AT ST. JOHNS AT 9AM & 11AM

March 25th. Palm Sunday

March 29th - 7PM Maundy-Thursday Service
(At Tru-Way Church, Combined Communion Service)

March 30th - 7PM Good Friday Service
(At St. Johns, Tru-Way Church will join us)

April 1 - 9am & 11am Easter Services



**COMMUNITY EASTER EGG
HUNT**

MARCH 31 @10AM

SJPC CAMPUS



Lent Study Group Opportunities:

SUNDAY:

Trip & Allison Stanly:
@ 10AM ~ Fellowship Hall

Jim Nolan:
@ 12:30PM ~ Nolan Home

Kevin & Wendi Hunger:
@ 5-6:30PM ~ Hunger Home
4041 Timuquana Rd
Jacksonville, FL 32210

MONDAY:

Diane McFadden:
@ 7-8PM ~ McFadden Home
5152 Pirates Cove Road
Jacksonville, FL 32210

TUESDAY:

Tony Nasrallah:
@ 5PM - Tijuana Flats for Dinner
(Optional)
6PM - SJPC Session Room

Jon Lovelady:
@ 6-7PM ~ Session Room

WEDNESDAY:

Linda Edwards
(Women's Group):
@ 6PM ~ SJPC Library

THURSDAY:

Stephanie Taylor:
@ 6-7:30PM ~ Fellowship Hall
Childcare is provided

COMING UP IN OUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Boys Night
March 23rd
Event TBA



Picnic & Paint
(K-2nd Grade)
March 25th
9 - 10AM in the
Fellowship Hall

Girls Bible Study

(3rd-6th grade)

The girls will enjoy lunch while studying
Thou Art Exalted: Riding Tandem for Girls.
Sundays at 12:30PM in the Fellowship Hall



Compare Not



By Lisa Reinhard

As I've watched the Winter Olympics, it hit me once again the importance that the world places on winning, on being the best. As one competitor wins the gold, dozens more see their dream crumbling into pieces. The commentators were constantly comparing—one's style more impressive than the rest, another's technique outstanding among his/her peers, still another faster by a hundredth of a second.

Too often, we too get caught up in comparison. Advertisers encourage us to compare our skin, our eyes, our make-up techniques, our size to "super models." Ads on TV cause us to compare our stock portfolios, our investments, our readiness for retirement. Facebook causes many to feel that their lives just aren't as exciting as others'. All this comparison can make us feel badly about ourselves, bringing us down and using up valuable energy. As one of my good friends says: Comparison is the enemy of joy.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." When you think about being carefully crafted by God for a very special purpose—one that God prepared us for—you realize there is room for millions of unique people with their individual gifts, and that there doesn't need to be a competition for who wins the gold medal in Christian living. Ephesians 4:7 says, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." My side-note tells me that Paul spoke of grace in two ways: one as being saved by grace and the other as special gifts or abilities given to individuals for ministry.

Philippians 4:13 reminds us that we are to "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus." This is a prize, though, that is available to any person who accepts Jesus into his/her heart as Lord and Savior. It is not a competition between Christians for the one gold medal for the event.

Comparison—especially when used too frequently and harshly—seems to me to be a tool of Satan to keep our eyes on ourselves and others rather than on Jesus where they belong. God created each of us as a masterpiece, and he calls us by name. ("I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars, and I will give you the treasures of the darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places, in order that you many know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name." Isaiah 45:2-3) He has given us our unique set of gifts so that we can use them to glorify Him and lead others to Him, not so that we could compete and compare, tearing one another down in order that some can be "better." He tells us "behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands." Isaiah 49:16 Remember that the next time you compare yourself to someone else. God whispers, "You are amazing" to you, and He means it.

GIVING REPORT

February's Giving

\$40,064

Thank you for your
Financial Support!

APRIL

FAMILY FOCUS

Information Due:

Friday, March 23rd

Please email Robyn at:
sjpc@sjpcjax.org

**St. Johns Presbyterian
Church**

Office Hours:

Monday—Thursday

9 AM—4 PM

Support the SJPC Living
Waters Team:

The Loop of Avondale is back! Every third Thursday of the month, 10% of your lunch and/or dinner proceeds will benefit SJPC's Living Waters For the World mission trip. Make sure to get your receipt stamped by The Loop, then bring your receipt to church the following Sunday and place it in the offering plate.

Please visit The Loop on March 15th to support our Living Waters Team.



Prayer Requests

Polly Ann Anderson

Lisa Reinhard

Marylea Russell

Judy Dailey

Gayle Colbert

Mary Pharr Love

Bill Dunn

Polly Walker

Liz McKean

Wayne Hollarway

Ginny Whitner

Mary Samford

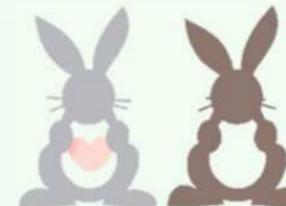
Mal May

Doris Cass

Michael Yarbrough

Louie Nasemann

Airen Walker



Sarah Johanknecht

Virginia Staats



St. Johns Presbyterian Church
PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

Jon Lovelady

Senior Pastor

Kevin Crainshaw

Associate for Worship & Arts

CONTACT US AT:

Address: 4275 Herschel Street,
Jacksonville, FL 32210

Phone: (904)384-4501

Fax: (904)384-4500

Website: www.sjpcjax.org

Email: sjpc@sjpcjax.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sjpcconnect

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday—Thursday

9am—4pm

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

1st Service—9AM

Sunday School—10AM

2nd Service—11AM*

*Separate Children's Service