

THE CONNECTION

Weekly Newsletter—Sunday, August 16, 2026



Back-to-School Spruce-Up Day (p.5–6) | Photo Credit: Jade Cruz (p.3–4)

AUGUST



SUN. 8/16

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Worship Services

Bake Sale—9 a.m. | Bible Study—9:15 a.m.

Kids Connect—10:30 a.m.

MON. 8/17

Women's Group Meeting—6:30 p.m.

TUES. 8/18

Schedule open

WED. 8/19

Discussion Group—11 a.m.*

THURS. 8/20

Church Planning Council Meeting—6 p.m.

FRI. 8/21– SAT. 8/22

Church office closed

SUN. 8/23

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Worship Services

Bible Study—9:15 a.m. | Kids Connect—10:30 a.m.

Birthday Club—12:30 p.m.

MON. 8/24–TUES. 8/25

Schedule open

WED. 8/26

Discussion Group—11 a.m.*

THURS. 8/27

CPC Kick Off Orientation Dinner Meeting

Jim Ward Community Center—6 p.m.

FRI. 8/28– SAT. 8/29

Church office closed

PLEASE NOTE

*Wednesday Discussion Group's starting time
has moved to 11 a.m.*

*(This is to help resolve the parking situation
during school hours.)**

PRAYERS

Prayers for the following OSL church members:

Carol Chaddock, Marianne DeMinck, Roger Detwiler, Howard Fischer, Sue Franjione, Susan George-Kenyon, Karen Goth, Gerry Gruenbaum, Betty Hea, Bob Johnson, Prentis Johnson, Robert Latimer, James Leone, Les Mellott, Carol (Coram) Ross, Beverly Smith, Robert Spencer, Linda Verdi, Nancy Volz, Jodi Waldron, Judy Watson, and Jan and Steve Withers.

Members & Family in the Armed Services:

Dustin Douglas (son-in-law of Les and Juli Mellott) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA; **Scott Tucek** (son of Carol Tucek) at Yokota Air Base in Japan; **Brock Van Sant** at Officer Candidate School in Quantico Bay, VA.

Rehabilitation Home: Ron Holub

*If you have prayer requests, please let us know by filling out a **Connect Card** or **colored prayer card** found in the pews. Our Prayer Team (Debi Bauer, Norma Miller, Robert Spencer, and Jodi Waldron) will gather the cards and pray for those needs. For personal prayers and/or additional spiritual guidance, please contact Pastor Tony at (954) 473-6888.*



THE LIPPMAN YOUTH ATTEND WORSHIP (8.9.2026)

MEET JADE CRUZ (OSL'S MINISTRY LEADERS ADVISOR)

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A message from Jade Cruz to the greater OSL Community regarding a new position within the church office.

"I want to cover three things plainly: who I am, what new role I will be filling, and, most importantly, what I'm here to help you with.

My name is Jade Cruz. I currently serve on the 10:30 worship music team and recently joined the Youth Board. I've been a member of the Lutheran church my whole life, and grew up serving within and supporting church events. I later owned and operated a business for three years doing the same thing within my community, helping bring to life the visions of leaders throughout Miami-Dade, with several events even sponsored by the city. As I began to take my walk with Christ more seriously, I was simultaneously given the opportunity to serve as music teacher and youth choir director at Our Savior Lutheran School last school year. I'm sure there are a few teachers here who know how difficult, but rewarding, that experience was; it truly felt like the first and most important form of ministry I ever participated in. During that time, and currently, I've also served as Vice President and Director of Operations for the nonprofit my husband, Denis Cruz, founded in 2021, planning and strategizing events for youth and the community.

Over this summer, I was presented with the opportunity for a new ministry within our church, and not just new to me, but new to all of us. This position has been titled Ministry Leaders Advisor. This title feels enormously profound to me, and its meaning is just as it says: I'll be serving as an advisor and support to the ministry leaders throughout this church, with a primary focus on guiding and encouraging them on how to develop new disciples. The harvest is plenty, but the workers are few.

As I contemplated what that meant, this is the vision statement I landed on, and those of you in attendance at the voters meeting last week have already heard it, but I did make one slight adjustment: "My personal vision for this role is to encourage and inspire a disciple-making culture at OSL where all people may recognize their value and purpose within the body of Christ and are excited, supported, and equipped to use their God-given strengths, talents, and skills, to share the love of Jesus within our community and beyond."

So, as my role is already active, I want to be clear about what I'm here to help you with, so you can begin using my support and give me the opportunity to serve and be a disciple myself.

Maybe you're the chairperson of a church board looking for a way to meaningfully involve your members. I'm here to help, and can support you on how to delegate various tasks effectively. **(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)**



JADE CRUZ (CONT.) Maybe you're planning an event that requires a lot of hands. I'm here to help, and can show you strategies to gather those people. Maybe you're trying to engage children and families in our school. I'm here to help process your ideas and connect you with the right people and support. And in the months leading up to your pre-planned event or project, I may even check in with you, asking what ideas you have, what concerns you're sitting with, and probably invite you to stop by my office for some tea or coffee to talk about it all.

So again, whatever you're leading this year, I'm here to help. Maybe you've never led something before, but feel inspired and want some guidance. Please reach out any time, or stop by my office during the hours listed on my door located in the church office. I may be here to help us make disciples, but the truth is, your asking gives me the opportunity to be one too, and I thank you for that.

I am grateful beyond words to be part of this community. Thank you all for your time. I can't wait to see what God has in store."



BACK-TO-SCHOOL SPRUCE-UP DAY (SAT. 8.8.2026)





PROPERTIES WORK DAY (BACK-TO-SCHOOL SPRUCE-UP) We give thanks to the Lord for the incredible spirit of Christian stewardship shown by our church and school volunteers, staff, and families during our Back-to-School Spruce-Up Day! Acting as the hands and feet of Christ, our hard-working team pressure-cleaned entryways, trimmed gardens and hedges, unclogged gutters, and gave our classrooms a thorough deep-clean—dusting, sanitizing, and erasing away every stray mark. Special thanks to Tom Mahale and the Property Board for their organizing efforts, and Juli Mellott and Brad Heine for the refreshments and BBQ after a long, hot day of hard work. Your joyful service has blessed our campus with a refreshed, welcoming space where our children can learn, grow, and thrive in a Christ-centered environment this coming year. To God alone be the glory for your faithful hearts and hard work!



ROOTED IN CHRIST *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. —Colossians 2:6-7*

On Sunday, August 9, Pastor preached on the school's theme "Rooted in Christ" inspired by the above passage. In his sermon, he targeted the angst and disconnect people feel in the modern world due to things such as a lack of belonging in meaningful communities. The world teaches us to be rooted in the worldly things like money, health bodies, and relationships with other humans. Though not all inherently bad, God reminds us and teaches us to be rooted in Him. He is the one true God.

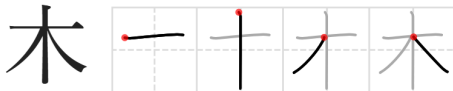


As an illustration, Pastor showed an orchid, flowerless but full of a network of strong roots almost overtaking the pot it grew in. Orchids are epiphytes, plants that naturally grow not in the ground but with the support of another tree. What's the connection? If we are the orchids in need of a tree, God sent us that tree, the one Christ died on for all of us because he loves us. He is that tree; He is the Tree of Life, the supplier of everlasting life and a peace that passes all understanding.

What can you do this week to stay rooted in Christ outside of church? Read scripture; listen to your favorite hymns, Christian songs, or devotional podcasts; pray and give thanks to Him. Remember that we the church are the body of Christ, and we are also rooted with you in His love. Lean on each other in God's strength.

KANJI 漢字 CORNER *"Kanji" is the Japanese word for the alphabet borrowed from Chinese characters. Japan uses three alphabet systems: hiragana ひらがな, katakana カタカナ (for loan words that have no Japanese origin, foreign names, or portmanteaus), and kanji 漢字. This is one of the few reasons why learning Japanese can get confusing—even for its native speakers. Officially "native level" readers, need to comprehend roughly 2,000 kanji characters (while hurdling complicated honorifics and grammar rules).*

At the 8 a.m. service, Pastor and his wife taught us how to write two very simple kanji for "tree" (木) and "book" (本). Knowing these two alone will get you will get you surprisingly far. Both are considered "radical kanji", so they are not made up of other kanji. More complicated characters, however, can have layers of multiple radicals. This makes this alphabet system very poetic and visually easy to make educated guesses for some words. The English equivalent for this would be knowing your Greek and Latin roots. Some examples are 果物 (fruit) and 十字架 (the cross of Christ), where each set has one tree (木). Can you see how the meanings of both kanji reflect of Christ's purpose and our life source? Try to practice writing them yourself!



Meaning: tree (*ki*), wood (*moku*)



Meaning: book (*hon*), present, main, origin (*moto*), true, real

Ages 4+

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2026



KICKOFF



☆ Bounce House ☆
☆ Water Slides ☆ Snow Cones ☆

(Bring your bathing suits & towels!)

Sun. 8/23

10:30~11:45 a.m.

For more info,
contact **Ellen** at
(954) 226-2823.



☆ OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH ☆

☆ 8001 NW 5th Street, Plantation, FL 33324 ☆

KIDS CONNECT (8.9.2026) *This summer at Kids Connect, children have been exploring the theme 'God is Our Creator' through Imagination Station Science! Packed with exciting, hands-on experiments that kids can't get enough of, these fun activities do more than entertain—they provide powerful, memorable ways for kids to discover timeless Bible truths.*



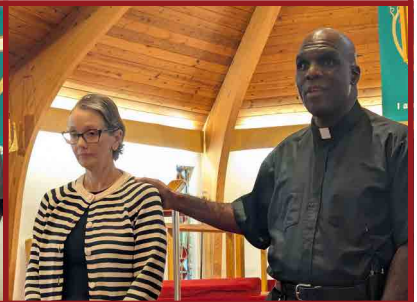


WOMEN'S GROUP MEETING

Monday, August 17th at 6:30 p.m. | Lakeview Room

How does God provide comfort? How about... dogs?

Join us as we meet Chris Muller and Boulton and learn about God's precious creation.



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (SUN. 8.2.2026) At the meeting headed by our new president Chris Presson, we recognized Our Savior's fruitful year of Christ-like ministry highlighted by various forms of fellowship, discipleship, and faithfulness which involved both new members and members of the community. Special thank yous to the enthusiastic and exceptional leadership from new members our new Ministry Leaders Advisor Jade Cruz (center) and OSL mom Erica Betz (right) in our youth and outreach ministries. If you were unable to attend but wish to learn more, please feel free to request a digital copy or take the annual meeting report booklet from the church narthex—we have plenty, left over so no need to worry about returning it.

GOD BLESS OSLS 2026-27 TEACHERS & STAFF!

On Sunday, August 9, Pastor prayed for the new and returning staff.
They successfully began the new school year on Wednesday.
May God bless their ministry and keep everyone safe!



ADMINISTRATION/SCHOOL OFFICE

Linda Root—Principal/Preschool Director
Danielle Durham—Asst. Principal
Paulette Marshall—Office Administrator
Nicole Moulton—Extended Care/Summer Camp Director
Debra Keim—Morning Office Asst./Receptionist
Angela Candage—Afternoon Receptionist

PRESCHOOL

Elizabeth Sandigo—18 Months Lead
Brandy Merizier—18 Months Asst./Floater
Esther Cadet—18 Months Asst./Floater/Lunch
Kristin Espeut—Twos Lead
Anette Olsson-Zenchak—Twos Asst./ Extended Care
Eliza Manuel—Threes Lead
Kerime Gaynair—Threes Asst./ Extended Care
Brittany Grant—Threes Lead
Gabrielle Liebertz—VPK Lead/Preschool Facilitator
Eunice Benjamin—VPK Asst./Extended Care
Nadege Gerestan—VPK Lead
Loricia Finch—VPK Asst./Extended Care

ELEMENTARY

Trisha DePasquale—Kindergarten
Jocelyn Richardson—K Asst./Lunch/Extended Care
Mia Montealegre—1st Grade
Ann Marie Smith—1st Grade Asst./Lunch/ Extended Care
Jenay Cavalancia—2nd Grade

ELEMENTARY (CONT.)

Shera Resch—2nd Grade Asst.
Maya Filio—3rd Grade
Carisa Meier—4th Grade
Kristin Iannarone—5th Grade

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kristin Becker—7th/ MS Language Arts
Debra Kraft—8th/MS Science
Regina Hawkins—6th/ MS Math

SPECIALS

Dawn Banford—Network Administrator/MS PE
Michael McDermott—Music
Denis Cruz—Art
Coach Jonathan Jimenez—Elementary PE
Virginia Pozzo—K-8th Spanish/Lunch/ Elementary Asst.

OTHER DUTIES

Erica Betz—Lunch
Brad Heine—Facility Manager
Rainford Rodney—Security
Carmen Suarez—Custodian
Petagaye Benjamin—Title 1

CHURCH OFFICE

Rev. Tony Durante—Pastor
Jade Cruz—Ministry Leaders Advisor
Mika Durante—Administrative Asst.

GROWING AS A LEADER: DANIELLE DURHAM COMPLETES SLED

Our Savior Lutheran School's assistant principal, Danielle Durham, graduated from the LCMS SLED program on June 10, 2026 in St. Louis, Missouri. She was also selected to present her final project "Our Savior: Expanding our Vibrant Christian Community" to the staff and graduates of the SLED program.

Since 1996, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has conducted School Leadership Recruitment and Training processes through the School Leadership Development Project (SLED). Its purpose is “To identify and recruit thirty leadership participants serving in Lutheran schools and train them through two national SLED events conducted by LCMS School Ministry.” As a result, over 450 potential administrative candidates have been prepared for leadership in Lutheran schools.

District Education Executives identify and nominate outstanding educators currently serving in Lutheran schools for participation in SLED. District

Education Executives identify and nominate outstanding educators currently serving in Lutheran schools for participation in SLED. Candidates are then selected by the SLED Project Management Team and trained over the course of a year at two national SLED events with an online component throughout the year. At these events, candidates receive leadership training designed specifically for school leaders serving in Lutheran schools, are mentored by well-respected, experienced administrators, and complete a major project that will benefit the schools where they currently serve. At the conclusion of the year, participants receive the School Leadership Endorsement from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, enhancing their eligibility for placement as Lutheran school administrators. Additionally, participants can select the option to complete SLED for three hours of graduate credit from Concordia University.



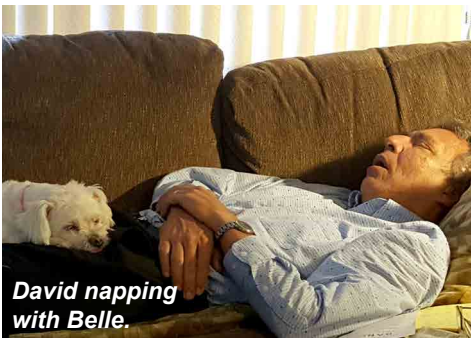
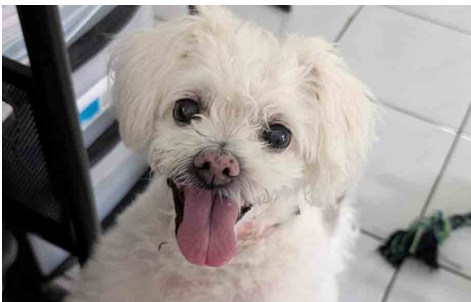
LAST WEEK'S PET SPOTLIGHT: BELLE (WHO OWNS NANCY & DAVID VOLZ)

"Good Morning, Belle!" These words echo through our home every morning as I greet our dog and then launch into the song "Belle" from Beauty and the Beast.

It was 2015. I was battling breast cancer, and my mother had just died. Carol Reynolds-Srot posted about a friend who needed to rehome her dog. I thought, what a great idea for my stepdad, Bob, who was going to continue to live with us.

I was not a dog lover, per se, and my parents' dog who came to visit for several months a year was just enough dog for me. Then along came Belle, a four-year-old, 15-pound bundle of white fur with a big heart.

There's a reason that "God" and "dog" contain the same letters in English; both offer unconditional love. She has crawled into my heart, and I can't imagine life without her. David says that her job is to be our professional best friend, and she has earned that title. She'll soon be 15. Thank you, God, for the blessings of pets!





SPORTS CAMP 2026: SIX WEEKS OF FUN, FITNESS, & FAITH

As another six wonderful weeks of OSL Summer Sports Camp come to a close, our coaching staff finds ourselves looking back with grateful hearts. Every summer over the past 18 years has been special in its own way, but if we're being truthful, this year felt just a little different.

Sports camp has always been about far more than learning how to score a goal, throw a perfect pass, or win a game. Of course, we love watching our campers grow as athletes, but our greatest joy has always been watching them grow as young people.

This summer, God reminded us once again that He has a purpose for every child who walks through our gates.

While we continued to focus on sports skills, teamwork, confidence, leadership, and personal development, many of the children who came to camp this year needed something even greater. Some needed encouragement. Some needed patience. Some needed guidance with their emotions, self-control, resilience, and believing in themselves. They came for sports, but the Lord had a bigger plan waiting for them.

One of the remarkable things about sports is that it has a way of revealing what's hidden in the heart. Victory brings excitement. Defeat brings disappointment. Competition tests patience. Pressure exposes emotions. In just a matter of days—and repeated over and over throughout camp—children experience situations that might otherwise take months to unfold. Sports ask them to persevere, to work together, to fail, to try again, to celebrate others, and to learn that mistakes are not the end of the story.

It isn't always easy, but witnessing that growth is a truly beautiful thing.

Over these six weeks, we were blessed to watch life-changing moments unfold. More than at any other camp in our eighteen-year history, we saw children grow in ways that had little to do with the scoreboard.

Sometimes families bring their children to sports camp hoping they'll become better athletes. This year, many families came seeking something much deeper. Whether they realized it or not, they were searching for a place where their child could be loved, challenged, encouraged, and given the opportunity to grow in areas where they had struggled in other environments.

What an incredible blessing this summer has been, not only for those families, but for our coaching staff as well. There is no greater reward than watching a child begin to believe in themselves again, seeing relationships restored, and witnessing smiles replace frustration. Those moments reminded every one of us why God called us to serve through sport.

Children who struggled at the beginning of camp were encouraged by their teammates. Campers learned to forgive one another after disagreements, to celebrate each other's successes instead of comparing themselves, and to lift each other up after mistakes. They learned that everyone has difficult days, everyone deserves another chance, and everyone grows at a different pace.

We truly believe the Lord placed each child exactly where they needed to be. Our coaches had the privilege of speaking truth into young lives, setting high expectations while showing grace, and creating an environment where children felt safe enough to struggle, learn, and ultimately succeed. We watched friendships form, confidence bloom, fears overcome, and hearts soften.

These are the moments that remind us why OSL Summer Sports Camp exists.

Yes, we teach sports.

But more importantly, we teach perseverance, respect, humility, courage, self-control, compassion, forgiveness, community, and faith. Those are victories that cannot be measured with medals or trophies.





As Scripture reminds us in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." This summer, we were blessed to witness a glimpse of that harvest.

To every family who entrusted us with your children—thank you. It has been an incredible privilege to share this journey with you.

To our amazing coaching staff, thank you for pouring your hearts into every child, every game, every conversation, every challenge, and every difficult moment. Your patience, consistency, and Christ-like love have made an eternal difference.

As we close another unforgettable summer, our hearts are full. We are reminded that sometimes God uses a football, a basketball, a relay race, or simply a conversation on the sidelines to change the direction of a child's life. This summer reminded us that His greatest work often happens not in the big, dramatic moments, but quietly—in a word of encouragement, an act of forgiveness, a child choosing self-control, a teammate showing kindness, or a family finding renewed hope.

This year, we were also incredibly blessed to welcome campers from 22 different schools across our community. What an amazing testimony to the campers and coaches of OSL Summer Sports Camp, whose kindness, character, sportsmanship, and Christ-centered example helped create an environment where every child felt welcomed, encouraged, and valued. It has been a privilege to share Christ's love with children and families from so many different schools and backgrounds, and we are grateful that God continues to use our camp as a place where lives are strengthened both on and off the field.

For that, we give God all the glory.

Until next summer, may God bless each of our OSL families, along with our extended sports camp family from those twenty-two schools. May He continue to guide these wonderful young athletes as they grow in wisdom, character, faith, and love.

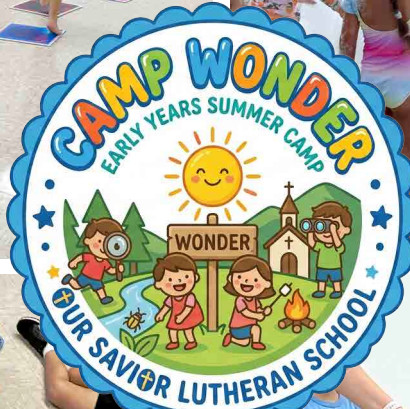
Thank you for another unforgettable summer. We cannot wait to welcome everyone back next year.





iMAGiFEST (7. 28. 2026) Last month, OSL welcomed our wider community for a summer fellowship festival, drawing people from as far as St. Petersburg and Miami. The event featured food trucks, bounce houses, djs, praise music, fire shows, drumming circles, and more, creating a fun and welcoming evening for everyone who attended.

A special thank you to Bill Presson for his generous contribution to our OSL community and for providing free snacks for everyone during the event. We are grateful for his continued care, generosity, and support of our community!





BACKPACKS & BLESSINGS 2026

BIRTHDAYS

AUG 1

Marie Shaw

AUG 3

Orlando Camacho

Janis Seusarran

AUG 4

Scott Burkhardt

Harrison Haeseker

AUG 6

John Gonzalez

AUG 7

Phillip Edwards

AUG 9

Karen Goth

Mary Jane Neils

Aaron Seusarran

AUG 11

Desiree Gaffley

Yerusalem Tzeggai

AUG 16

Fran Fletcher

AUG 25

Ian Burke

Judy Detwiler

AUG 30

Joan Sears

AUG 31

Nicole Linley

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

AUG 4

Philip & Nanda Ramcharitar (37) Les & Juli Mellott (42)

AUG 5

Roger & Edie Clavelli (48) Neil & Cheryl Topalian (39)

AUG 11

Alfred & Helen Balkie (59)

AUG 18

Bill & Christine Presson (43)

AUG 19

Andy & Ellen Clark (27)

HELP US UPDATE OUR DATABASE

If you are a member and have not seen your birthday or anniversary listed in our newsletter, kindly contact **Mika** at, (954) 473-6888.

Not sure if you're a member? Contact us. We'd love to help you find out!



ALTAR FLOWERS UPDATES



Kindly fill out the Chancel Flower Sign-Up slip and include it with your payment. These are found on the back of the newsletter or in the pews (green slip). Please include it with your payment. Please notify us if you are paying via VANCO.

The flowers adorning the chancel this Sunday were graciously provided by the Flower Fund.

Thanks be to God!

PLEASE NOTE: All altar flowers will be gathered and held in the church office immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service. This will ensure that flowers paid for by members are received by the intended recipients. Thank you!



Our Savior Lutheran Church & School

8001 NW 5th Street, Plantation, Florida 33324

CHURCH

Office Hours: Mon.—Thurs. 8:30 a.m.—4 p.m.

(954) 473-6888 | www.oslplantation.church

Tony Durante, Pastor (ext. 101)

tdurante@oursaviorplantation.org

Jade Cruz, Ministry Leaders Advisor (ext. 102)

Office Hours: Tue., Thu.—Sat., 12–4 p.m.

jcruz@oursaviorplantation.org

Mika Durante, Administrative Assistant

mdurante@oursaviorplantation.org

SCHOOL

18 months to 8th Grade

Office Hours: Mon.—Fri. 7 a.m.—6 p.m.

(954) 370-216 | www.oslplantation.school

Linda Root, Principal

lroot@oursaviorplantation.org

Danielle Durham, Assistant Principal

ddurham@oursaviorplantation.org

Paulette Marshall, School Office Administrator

school@oursaviorplantation.org



CHANCEL FLOWERS SIGN-UP



If you would like to have flowers on the altar on a given Sunday in honor of someone, in memory of a loved one, or to commemorate a birthday, etc., all you need to do is fill out this form and put it in the offering plate. The cost is \$25.00 per order; two pieces would cost \$50.00. Call the church office if you have any questions, (954) 473-6888.

Name: _____

Date you would like flowers: _____

In Honor, Memory, Celebration, or Thanksgiving of _____



Check this box if you would like to collect your flowers after the 10:30 a.m. service.

We will hold them in the church office.

Any unclaimed flowers will be donated to a local nursing home. Thank you.

FOR OFFICE:

of bouquets _____

\$ _____

☐ Paid ____/____/____