

First Presbyterian brings 'Being Mortal' message to Brandon

By Times staff

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Courtesy of Jerry Noland

Pat Ogden, of the First Presbyterian Church's health ministry team, and Jerry Noland, the church's senior adult ministry coordinator, are organizing the event about the end of life.

Hurricane preparations always occur with some degree of advanced notice. Forecasters typically sound the alarm early.

Life doesn't always come with early warnings. Preparations need to occur well in advance of the storms brought on by health and financial problems, but not everyone gets ready for the inevitable reality of death.

That's why "Being Mortal" seminars continue to pop up around the county. The effort to get more people focused on end-of-life issues comes to Brandon on Sept. 16 at First Presbyterian Church. The church has invited the community as well as members of its sister churches in Bloomingdale and Seffner to participate.

The seminar will feature the screening of *Being Mortal*, a 60-minute *Frontline* documentary starring award-winning author Dr. Atul Gawande. It shows a variety of real life situations of death to show the one common theme in all of them: We are all mortal.

Jerry Noland, the church's senior adult coordinator, says her conversations reflect a real need to raise awareness.

"I have spoken to several friends who are facing end-of-life situations in their families and was shocked at how few had a will, a doable power of attorney, a DNR, etc," Noland wrote in an email. "I am so

passionate about these issues, and Dr. Gawande's international bestseller *Being Mortal* and the PBS/Frontline video presentation are very powerful and helpful in preparing people to face these issues with their families and loved ones."

A group of experts will lead a panel discussion after the screening. The panel will include a Life-Path Hospice official, an elder law attorney, a chaplain and representatives from Brandon Regional Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital.

Noland emphasized that the session isn't just for senior citizens because anyone at any given time can face difficult situations and decisions.

"Give the gift of love and peace to your family," Noland wrote. "Have 'The Talk,' get your life in order and get on with living."

The "Being Mortal" event begins with light refreshments at 9 a.m. on Sept. 16 at First Presbyterian Brandon, 121 Carver Ave., followed by the screening at 10 a.m. Admission is free, but individuals must register by calling the church at (813) 689-4567.