

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

**ONE
GREAT
HOUR OF
SHARING**

**SPEND A
WHILE ALONG
THE NILE**

DISCIPLESHIP

**EXTENDING
HOSPITALITY**

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From the Editor | STARTING SEEDS

Perhaps you know you can begin your summer garden in the eggshells of spring. Not being much of a gardener, I was surprised to learn that these right-sized, biodegradable seed-starters supply nourishment to tiny seeds. God's creation is amazing!

The sprouts of springtime make me think of planting, spring showers, and new beginnings. At FPC, we are starting seeds too. We are making disciples in our community, (p. 3). We are extending hospitality to the homeless, (p. 6). We are sharing boxes of love with struggling families, (p. 7). Fort Collins is good soil. These seeds will take root and flourish.

Over the past year, the Communications Team has been planting seeds toward changes for *The Messenger* newsletter. To support our efforts to live into our Vision, it has become necessary to spend less time producing a monthly publication and open up time for other communication avenues. Did you miss getting *The Messenger* in February? This issue of *The Messenger* covers "MARCH/APRIL/MAY." The new publication schedule includes just five issues each year.

Thanks for your patience as we lean into this new publication schedule and work hard to plant God's seeds of goodness in Fort Collins and beyond.

—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
531 SOUTH COLLEGE AVENUE
FORT COLLINS, CO 80524
(970) 482-6107
WWW.FIRSTPRESFC.ORG

MINISTERS | THE CONGREGATION
BRIDGE SR. PASTOR | JEFF HOFFMEYER
ASSOCIATE PASTOR | CINDY FROST
EDITOR | CATHY RICHARDSON

PUBLISHING GUIDELINES | THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via e-mail to crichardson@firstpresfc.org. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



**First
Presbyterian
Church**

PASTOR'S CORNER

DISCIPLESHIP



Discipleship, I suppose, is a funny word anyway. It's one of those churchy words, a word which Word may not even recognize as a real word. It's an important word, though, because Jesus made it the main thing: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt. 11:28). Discipleship is the process, the craft, of being a disciple, and of making disciples. It's about following Jesus, about God's way of being in this world, and sharing that way with others.

But it has nothing to do with being on a boat. There is no Disciple-Ship. This is where the Church has so frequently gotten it wrong. As Christians do their thing, as they follow Jesus, as they worship, as they come together to pray,

they often begin to operate as if they were in a boat, a kind of Christian cruise ship. They forget that being a disciple is mostly about making disciples. They forget the "all nations" part of the order that Jesus gave to the church.

"The Church is only the Church when it exists for others."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

FPC is not a ship. We are not out to sea. We are First Presbyterian Church, Fort Collins, called primarily to make disciples in this city. If we were out to sea, we would only have each other, and my call would be to be the chaplain of the ship. But that is not the case. God

has blessed this church to be a community within the city of Fort Collins. This means that all of the elements of our discipleship should be orientated to others. Our worship, our ministries, our budget—all of it should be about going and making disciples.

I think Jesus gave us that task so that we could experience God's joy. When we realize that we are blessed to be a blessing, that our life together is not about us, that the "church is only the church when it exists for others," (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), we will experience the joy that Jesus had when He was first forming the church with His disciples. That's what discipleship is all about.

—Jeff Hoffmeyer

40 DAYS

GOD IN THE WILDERNESS PLACES OF OUR LIVES

As ashes were placed on the foreheads of worshipers during the Ash Wednesday service we were ushered into the season of Lent with the reminder, "From dust you are and to dust you will return," (Genesis 3:19b). The thought can be a sobering one. We are people going from dust to dust. But what is this in-between time of wandering all about? To survive in this wilderness it is important to read the rest of the story and hear the full expression of God's character toward us in the wilderness. That is why serious study of the entire scripture, from Genesis all the way through Revelation, is important for a complete picture of who God has revealed Himself to be through Jesus Christ. Just picking and choosing a slice of scripture here and a slice of scripture there gives a sketchy and incomplete reading of the enormity of God's goodness to us.

Scripture affirms that, as confessing believers in Jesus Christ, "our names are written on God's hand," (Luke 10:20). and "our names are written in the Lamb's book of life," (Rev. 21:27). That strikes me as incredibly good news. We are known by name and claimed through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Just imagine it. We are loved and have great value in the eyes of our Creator, the Almighty God, the King of kings, our Everlasting Father.

Yet we still have wilderness places in our lives where the pain seems endless and our next step seems impossible to imagine; places where the injuries of life are cruel and maybe unjust. As parents, we often want to fix the hurts of our children instantly. I remember telling our kids, when they were young, "Let Mommy kiss it and make it all better." Much of the time that helped and my kids ran off comforted and happy. Their little hearts were lifted by knowing that I cared about their hurts and sadness. I was confident that I could fix so many things in those days. Time has taught me that an instant fix to a situation is not always the way that our Father God works through our hurting and sadness. Why doesn't He just kiss the painful, wilderness places and 'make it all better'? Why do we have to wait, wonder, and watch for outcomes?

God graciously gives us space in those wilderness places, to trust Him, to be comforted by Him, to learn from Him. Romans 5:3-5 puts it this way, "We also glory in our sufferings (wilderness places), because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." We may just want a kiss to 'make it all better' but God loves us enough to transform not just our situations but transform us through our wilderness experiences. During Lent, ask what wilderness Jesus is asking you to patiently endure. Ask the Holy Spirit to expose just what you need to learn from God's word. Worship with and be encouraged by this community of believers. Whatever wilderness you are passing through, remember that, "In all things, we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us," (Romans 8:37).

Let's meet each other in our wilderness places and know that God is there with transformation in mind.

—Peg Mussard

THE JOY OF SERVING

USING TIME AND TALENT AS A MINISTER OF CHRIST

Have you ever volunteered to do something then regretted saying, “yes,” then found that your serving was a very rewarding experience for you personally? It may have been the person or people you served, the activity you were involved in, or the other people serving along with you. Whatever the reason for your personal satisfaction, the experience was processed as a positive one and you would consider doing it again.

At FPC, we have many and varied opportunities for serving, and when we serve we are ministers for Christ. What greater joy can we experience than that of serving God’s people? One of the core biblical texts for lay ministry is Romans 12:4-8: “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him

govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

Just imagine how much more vibrant and caring our Church could be if each of us used our gifts in some way to minister to the body of believers at FPC! If each of us contributed an hour or two each week, or four hours once a month, we could accomplish so much in the workings of the Church and we would not be continually relying on the same handful of people who always volunteer to minister to the needs of others. An additional benefit would be that each of us would become connected to fellow volunteer ministers and would share in a corporate love and satisfaction in caring for God’s people. Instead of just one devoted member who comes in to wash the sanctuary windows, clean the kitchen and coordinate volunteer ministers for greeting and funerals, what if we had a team of volunteers who shared in these tasks and the joy of fellowship with others in serving? What a simple way to reap the benefits of using our gifts in God’s service.

The season of Lent it is a perfect time to reflect on your gifts and how you use them. Many of you contribute generously to the financial needs of the

Church. No one needs to stress how important this is to ensure that the Church can continue to conduct business as well as support specific needs of our community through mission outreach. We all need to recognize that in addition to our treasure, our time and talent are precious gifts entrusted to us by God and are to be used wisely. Perhaps during this season each of us can consider “taking up” one act of volunteer ministry—whether it be greeting a new guest, helping with coffee service, teaching a class, helping with MX dinners on Wednesdays, stuffing envelopes or preparing Sunday bulletins, helping with children, youth or senior activities, visiting a shut-in, or even calling new guests or seasoned members who have been unable to attend due to health concerns – each and every act is fulfilling God’s mission for you to serve His people.

In closing, challenge yourself to prayerfully consider how you are using your time, talent and treasure and, hopefully, the Holy Spirit will move you to find an area to use your gifts in joyful service to our very special community of believers.

—Patty Baker

PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE

“Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We would like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that it may take a very long time.... Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming in you will be. Give our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.” —Teilhard de Chardin

The PNC is trusting “in the slow work of God.” Please keep the pastor search in your prayers, knowing that the PNC is continuing to seek God's hand to lead the process.

—Pam Pierce

EXTENDING HOSPITALITY

FPC HELPS FAMILIES MOVE OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

FPC will be hosting the Faith Family Hospitality families again in May. Set up to prepare for the families will take place before services on Sunday, May 29. The families will arrive at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Tear down and pack up will be before services on Sunday, June 5. Redeemer Lutheran church has joined the faith communities supporting FFH and will be our support congregation.

Thanks to many volunteers our host week in December was a success. Sharon Miller and Pat Sherwood wanted to make sure that there were enough matching linens for the families. They worked diligently to get store managers to offer deep discounts at Bed, Bath and Beyond and secured generous gift cards from Walmart and Target. Members of WINGS and other church members purchased additional bedding and towels. Our FPC children prepared gift bags for each family member.

A total of 57 different volunteers provided about 300 hours of service to make the December hosting week possible. Volunteers set-up rooms, prepared and served dinner, hosted

evening and overnight, washed linens and moved the beds and personal belongings of the guests to the next congregation. Dale Hoerner and his staff provided facility assistance and security. It does take a lot of effort to have a successful host week.

The three families that were with us in December continue to make progress. Fawn has secured a paid internship and is applying to Project Self-Sufficiency. Her son, Zayden is enjoying learning at his new daycare and loves to help with laundry at the day center. Mary and her family have moved on and are still in the Fort Collins area. Bea has found employment and she and her children have moved out of the program. Three new families have joined the program for a total of 4 families: 5 adults and 11 children ranging in age from 2 months to 10 years.

FFH continuously evaluates how they can help families move out of homelessness. In addition to the emergency overnight shelter in faith communities and the day center shelter programs that FFH offers today, the

organization is currently looking at the feasibility of transitional housing using the old Crossroads Safehouse. This program would allow families who have stabilized through the emergency program to have a limited but more stable space while they save and continue classes and counseling in the FFH program. This would also free up more space for emergency shelter for other qualified families. FFH's goal continues to be to move these families into self-sufficiency and permanent housing.

FPC will host the families again August 21 to 28 and December 18 to 25. If you are not receiving Tom Christen's updates, please contact Tom or Janet Schuchmann to be added to the list.

Requests for volunteer sign up for the week beginning May 29 will go out in early May.

—Janet Schuchmann



BOXES OF LOVE

DEACON EASTER FOOD BOXES SUPPORT PROJECT SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As we approach Easter and think of new beginnings, we at FPC have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of families who are seeking a new beginning themselves. You can fill a food box for a local single-parent family who is making the transition from dependence to independence. Currently we have a list of 51 families we can help, totaling 51 single parents and 105 children.

FPC Deacons partner with Project Self Sufficiency (PS-S) which began in this area in 1986 and mentors low-income, single-parent families who are struggling to make ends meet and overcome the cycle of poverty. PS-S helps these parents earn a college degree or certification and secure work with a sustainable wage for their family. In 2014, all 13 college graduates in the program found career employment. PS-S clients spend from two–eight years in the program, including a year of career exploration and a year to complete a job search. Clients also are connected to community resources to ensure they have safe, affordable housing, reliable transportation and childcare. They are paired with an advisor who helps them throughout the various phases of the program. Even after a client attains that first career position, they can stay in the program for up to six months and continue receiving support.

One client was on the verge of quitting college due to the cost of daycare for her two- and four-year-old sons. Childcare costs often are the greatest barrier for single parents trying to earn a degree. PS-S helped her obtain a childcare scholarship which allowed her to continue classes and complete a double major in Human Resource Management and Finance. She now is employed as a Correctional Officer with benefits and opportunities for advancement. She thanked PS-S “for believing in me and stressing the importance of building the foundation of self-sufficiency one brick at a time.”

The Deacons Easter food box project is underway and we need your help! Please visit the Deacon table in Shepardson Hall March 6 or 13.

1. Select a family from the PS-S list and take home a (numbered-by-family) box to fill with food items. We include a list of suggested foods.
2. Return the filled box on or before Palm Sunday, March 20, making sure the box # of the family is visible on the box.
3. All food items should be nonperishable. A letter from the Deacons and a King Soopers gift card to purchase meat or produce will be included with each Easter food box.
4. If you would like to make a monetary donation, checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church with “Deacons Fund” noted on the memo line.

Please join us in this effort to support dedicated single-parent families on their journey to a better life.

—Glenice Risheill and Mark Ausbrooks



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Around the world, people lack access to food, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. Each gift to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) serves to help change the lives of people in these challenging situations. The Offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need.

The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering, received during the season of Lent, makes a difference in the world through three impactful programs: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People.

Last year FPC members donated almost \$2,000 to OGHS. Donation envelopes can be found in pew pockets and brochure racks. OGHS "fish banks" for children are available on the third floor of the education wing. Donations should be made no later than the Sunday after Easter. Your support is appreciated by people all around the world.



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

- Works within communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters
- Receives 32% of funds raised



Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)

- Takes action to alleviate hunger and its systemic causes, and helps create access to healthy food for entire communities
- Receives 36% of funds raised



Self-Development of People (SDOP)

- Partners with people and communities with tools for development and education to alleviate poverty, oppression, and injustice
- Receives 32% of funds raised

HISTORY

Started in 1949, One Great Hour of Sharing is a long-standing ecumenical effort aimed at raising the funds necessary to provide relief and reconstruction for communities in the aftermath of disaster. What started as an hour-long radio appeal has evolved over the years, varying from eight to 29 participating denominations, and has become the most participated-in Offering in the PC(USA).

Today, projects supported by One Great Hour of Sharing are underway in more than 100 countries.

SCHOLARSHIP

MATTHEWS LEFT A LEGACY FOR EDUCATION

Klon Matthews was an educator and administrator in the public education system until retirement. Moreover, he was an outgoing and exuberant disciple of Christ, and a cherished member of our First Presbyterian Church family. The Klon E. Matthews Scholarship Program was established in 1999 to honor his support for and belief in education. Each year, the Klon Matthews Scholarship Fund can award up to four scholarships in the amount of up to \$1000.00 each.

The objective of this scholarship program is to equip Christian men and women through higher education, and to award those who have the desire to grow on their walk with Christ.

Applications for the scholarship will be available March 15, 2016, in the church office or on the church website (firstpresfc.org) and are due April 15, 2016. All candidates must be:

1. A member of First Presbyterian Church
2. Provisionally accepted as students into undergraduate or graduate degree programs for the coming academic year by an accredited university or college
3. Students currently carrying or planning to carry a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester

The following materials are necessary for a complete application:

1. Completed and signed application form
2. One letter of recommendation from a faculty member
3. One letter of recommendation from a First Presbyterian Church member
4. An optional additional third letter of recommendation
5. One original copy and six copies of all application materials

All scholarship awards will be formally announced and presented in May.

—Mary Krings

A CHURCH OF CHARACTER

ATTENTIVENESS

The character quality for this issue of *The Messenger* is attentiveness (versus distraction).

Attentiveness can be defined as: "Showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided

concentration." It could also be defined as: "Giving a 'hearing heart' to the people or projects that need our concentration."

"Attentiveness begins by asking God for a 'hearing heart.'"

— from: *The Power for True Success: How to Build Character in Your Life*

How do you feel when you try to explain something to someone, and they don't seem to be paying attention to what you are saying? No matter if it is a spouse, child, boss, employee, friend or acquaintance, it can be extremely frustrating. Paying attention to what is being said is important, whether it is a 911 call involving a life-or-death situation, or a discussion with your spouse about the day's activities. Being attentive to others is an important way for us to show the other person that they are important to us. It is important that we respect one another, recognizing that there is a time to listen and a time to talk.

Keys to attentiveness:

1. Look at people when they speak

Distracting sights and sounds can affect your ability to focus and accurately understand what someone is saying. The more divided your attention, the more likely you are to miss important details of what is being said.

2. Learn to really listen

Make listening a priority, and others will be more likely to give you their full attention when you have something to say. Listen with your total attention being on what the other person is saying, rather than thinking about what you are going to say next.

3. Ask questions when you are unsure of something

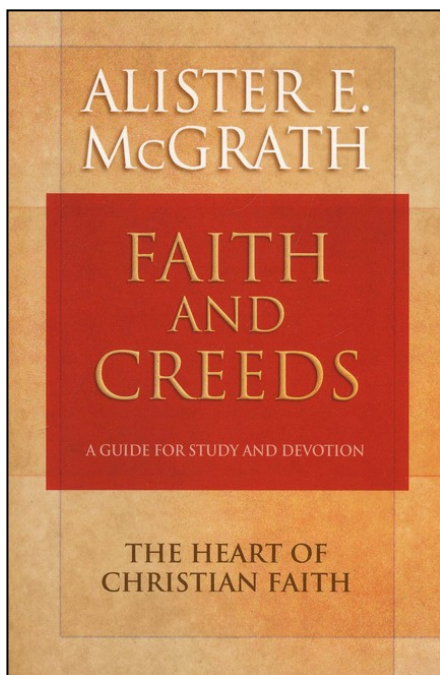
Asking questions not only enables us to express interest and a desire to learn, but it also helps us clarify and confirm information.

4. Avoid distractions

The human mind has an amazing capacity for "multi-tasking." However, it keeps track of multiple tasks by shifting focus back and forth between the different tasks – it is not fully focused on all the tasks simultaneously. To be a truly attentive listener, learn how to give others your full attention by eliminating distractions.

LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE



One of my favorite current religious writers is Alister McGrath, formerly of Kings College London and now at the University of Oxford. Once at Oxford I had the opportunity one on one to discuss some questions on the Trinity with him.

Again a good find from the Westminster/John Knox Press is the publication of McGrath's five-volume series *The Heart of the Christian Faith*. I ordered the first four for our church library. The titles are *Faith and Creed*; *Jesus Christ*; *The Living God*; and *The Spirit of Grace*. Volume five is due to be published in the spring.

Alister McGrath's own words best describe his aim in writing this series. "The 'big picture' of the Christian faith that I aim to set out in this series is something that makes sense both of what we see around us and what we experience within. Traditional introductions to Christian belief have

tended to treat its ideas—such as incarnation or redemption or the creeds (to which we will return later)—as if each is a little box or watertight compartment, unconnected to any other, to be opened up and explored individually. I would like to take a different approach, one that emphasizes the importance of seeing the whole, not just examining its constituent elements, because it seems to me that in order to appreciate individual beliefs, you need to see the big picture of which they are part. So in this first volume we will begin with the 'panorama,' as it were; then in the next four volumes we will move on to the 'snapshots,' as we look at individual beliefs in more detail.

"As I am writing primarily for 'ordinary' Christians rather than professional theologians or clergy, it seems fitting to draw on three of the great lay theologians of the twentieth century—G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers. These writers each showed a remarkable ability to grasp the essence of Christianity, to express it in ways that connect up with everyday life—through powerful prose, memorable stories and vivid analogies—and to defend it to those who doubted." (*Faith and Creeds: A Guide for Study and Devotion*, vii, viii.)



In the past two years many of Paul Parsons' sermons have reflected an unusual familiarity with the religious customs of the ancient Hebrew people. This caused me to pay particular interest when I came across a new comprehensive history of Israelite religion published by our denominational press, Westminster/John Knox Press.

Rainer Albertz, a German Old Testament professor, in two volumes describes the history of the religion of Israel and Judah as an interplay between historical demands, religious experiences, and theological reactions, in an ongoing struggle over the appropriate religious responses to God and the social practices that need to go with that.

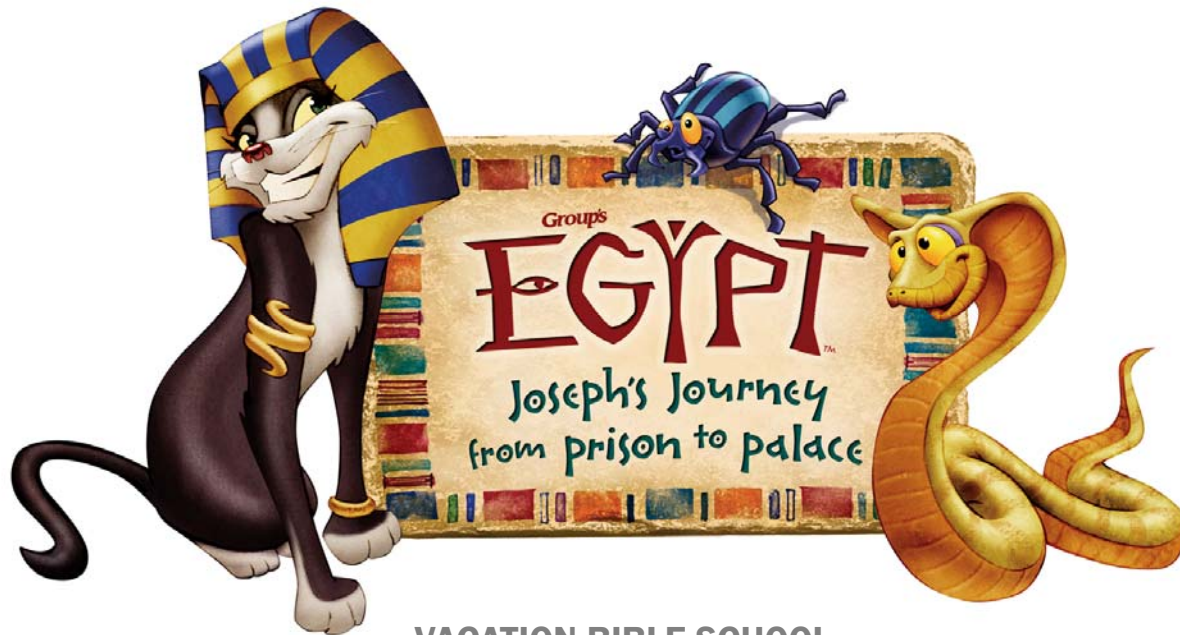
Volume 1 bears the title *From the Beginnings to the End of the Exile*. Volume 2 is *From the Exile to the Maccabees*.

Each contains a plethora of notes for every chapter. Full indices provide subject matter and Biblical references by chapter and verse. This makes the two volumes a useful reference set for those interested in both serious and casual Old Testament study.

In view of the current world situation, I went immediately to the section on the Exile. It was interesting to learn that being removed from the synagogues and temple in their native Promised Land, the displaced Hebrews used this experience to develop some religious practices in their homes which are still observed by Jews today.

The volumes are perhaps not for every church member, but are proper reference material for our library. However, when spotting them in a Sunday morning library display, pick them up and let them roll around in your hands to get a feeling for the vastness of Hebrew religion that laid the groundwork for the coming of the Messiah.

—Jane Rolston



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

SPEND A WHILE ALONG THE NILE

This June, children 3-years-old (entering Kindergarten in the fall of 2017) through children finishing 5th grade will visit EGYPT at FPC's Vacation Bible School. At EGYPT, our children will get to meet Joseph every day, whether in prison or in the palace. Joseph was a young man who faced heartbreaking trials, discouraging moments of hopelessness, joyous victories and tear-filled celebrations. Scripture shows us that Joseph proclaimed a steadfast faith in God. At EGYPT VBS, children will discover that God is with us today the same way He was with Joseph.

EGYPT Marketplace will be open every day. Children will choose the shops they would like to visit to learn about authentic Egyptian culture. There will always be something new to make, taste, or see. They could get our hair and make-up done at the Barbershop & Salon, make something in the Toy Shop, try their hand at brick making, beading, make Egyptian collars and have a snack at the Egyptian Food Market.

We will start and end each day with celebration, a time of worshipping together. The children will also be grouped in 'Egyptian families,' putting on their Family Bandura (These were a big hit last year!). Each Egyptian Family Leader will help the children connect their experiences of the day to their own lives and discuss how they see God's hand at work today, what God means to them and how they can share that love with others.

Hey, grown-ups, this is for you! VBS reaches out to children all over our community and we have the opportunity to make a difference with God's help. VBS requires more than 60 volunteers. Please consider helping before the event or dedicate your mornings to the kids that week. Maybe you would like to be

an Egyptian Family leader and really get to know the 8–10 children in your family. Or wouldn't it be fun to be a shop keeper as the children visit your shop each day? If you would like to be a part of VBS in any way, contact me ASAP, (970)482-6107 or acrawford@firstpresfc.org.

Registration begins on our website mid-April, 2016. The cost is \$20.00 per child or \$50.00 per family. The dates are June 13–17, 2016 (a week later usual) from 9:00–11:30 a.m. each day.

"It is our prayer that through your EGYPT VBS, lives will be touched, hearts will be changed and your entire community will never be the same again. And we will be praying for you, asking God to guide and bless you on this first-hand adventure into the life of Joseph," VBS Publishing Team said. And this is my prayer for our children and our volunteers, too, as we spend a while along the Nile in ancient EGYPT—Joseph's Journey from Prison to Palace.

—Alice Crawford





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Holy Week

at First Presbyterian Church

March 20: Palm Sunday Worship, 9:15 & 11 a.m.
Children's procession of the Palms at 9:15 a.m.

March 24: Maundy Thursday Worship, 7 p.m.
Marking the Last Supper with communion.

March 25: Good Friday Worship, 12 p.m.
Homily by Rev. Eric Sunderland, Westminster Presbyterian Church.

March 26: Community Easter Egg Hunt, 1-3 p.m.
A fun, family event that will include crafts, face painting, a bake sale, and, of course, an awesome egg hunt! Bring your own basket. All are welcome.

March 27: Easter Sunday Worship, 9:15 & 11 a.m.
A glorious celebration of the Resurrection. Bridge Senior Pastor Jeff Hoffmeyer will launch a new sermon series, "IF."

