

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

GLORIA: Christmas at FPC

Church of Character: CONTENTMENT

**GO INTO ALL
THE WORLD**

**LESSONS FROM A
TELEVISION DRAMA**

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From the Editor | GLORIA

The dark afternoons and evenings of winter catch me off guard this time of year. I look up from the shadow of the ordinary and wonder, where is Hope? Where is Love? Who knows Joy? Will there ever be Peace in our world?

Long ago, I imagine that a few lowly shepherds knew real darkness as they tended stinky, dirty sheep. Still, I imagine that they watched twinkling stars at night with hope. I imagine they waited for the wailing woofs in love. I picture their joyful smiles as they told stories around campfires. I imagine that they lived for peaceful nights in the field. Then, in a flutter of sound and light, the glory of the Lord shone around them—and everything changed.

This Advent and Christmas at FPC, we hope to encounter the One whose birth inspired that shimmering angel's song. Like shepherds, we will watch and wait for Gloria—and we hope you will come along.

December's clear, crisp canvas makes glimmering lights shine brighter. Whether it's the Greeley Grizwalds or a simple string of lights, electric glory rings out in celebration: Christ is born! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

Wishing you a merry Christmas and a glorious new year, dear FPC.

—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

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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 email 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

PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE

Hello Friends,

They say confession is good for the soul (and a pretty important part of Presbyterian life), so that is how I'll begin. I confess that I have started writing this Pastor's Corner article several times over the past two weeks and keep scrapping it and starting over. The opening line has consistently been something like, "Because of the tragedy/grief/divisions of _____ in our world/nation this past week, many of us enter into the season of Advent and Christmas with heavy hearts, some even anxious, afraid, or angry." The problem is that I never get past the second or third paragraph before another heart-breaking headline fills our screens and we're on our knees again in prayer: "How long, O Lord? Lord, have mercy."

The list seems endless: mass shootings targeting people of color, Jews in a synagogue, young adults enjoying a night out; ferociously divisive political rhetoric demonizing those on the other side of the aisle or border or neighborhood; hurricanes and wildfires destroying entire communities and hundreds of lives; and the horrors hidden behind the headlines in Yemen, Syria, Israel/Palestine, South Sudan, and beyond.

Of course, these concerns are all held alongside those of our own families, too. On Sunday, November 4 we remembered 23 saints in the FPC family who have passed away this year, and I know that many more of you have experienced deaths in your families as well. Challenges with a difficult diagnosis, physical and mental health, raising children and grandchildren, navigating tight finances, caring for aging parents, and trying to do it all while keeping our

everyday lives moving forward seems just about too much to tackle some days.

For our season of Advent and Christmas this year, I have chosen the simple theme **Gloria**. On most Sundays, we Presbyterian-flavored Christians encounter a gloria in worship when we confess our sins, are assured of our pardon, and then sing one of several versions of a Gloria Patri (*Glory to the Father*). The intention is that we offer this short acclamation or hymn of praise to God in response to God's grace and love experienced in our forgiveness. Said another way, we are both acknowledging the glory—the wonder, beauty, majesty, awe, power—of God and embodying and expressing God's glory in our own lives.

Gloria is often encountered in the Christmas story as the angels sing for the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest" (in Latin: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*). In the song of the heavenly choir, we understand that they are announcing the glory of God revealed in the birth of Christ. In other words, God incarnate in Christ, God coming to live among us, is how we experience God's glory (wonder, beauty, majesty, etc.) and, in response to Christ's life, death, and resurrection, we can now reflect that glory, that character of a loving, present-among-us God to the rest of the world.

Now, you may be wondering what this article's first two paragraphs have to do with the following mini theology lesson on gloria and what any of this has to do with our lives and our Advent and Christmas season. (And you may be wondering if I should have written another draft of this letter!) So, here's the connection for me:

Given the realities around us in the world today and in our daily lives, it is difficult—near impossible—to experience the glory of a loving and faithful God and reflect that glory to others. Sometimes it seems that glory is gone altogether or maybe that it's only for others or is disguised. This year we will explore the promise of Advent, a season of waiting and watching. We will affirm that if we pause long enough to truly see, then we will discover that God is indeed present among us. The hope of the coming Prince of Peace is still alive in us and can shine through us. I invite you to come along for the journey this season as together we discover again, in song, scripture, and story, the life-changing rebirth and renewal that God offers to us all—truly the Glory of God.

Peace,
Corey

The FPC women's retreat is back! Join us this coming spring of 2019, April 5 to 7, for a weekend of growth, relationships, deep breaths, and a lot of fun. All women are welcome to join us for a weekend retreat at the YMCA of the Rockies. Together we will dive deep into the story of Mary and Martha, the sister disciples, from Luke's gospel, chapter 10, verses 38 to 42.

As we explore this story together over the course of the weekend, we will ask ourselves what these two women can teach us today. Surely, some of us identify more with Mary—we so easily fall at Jesus' feet and become captivated. We sit still, pondering, listening, learning, and worshiping. And others find ourselves in Martha's character, generously offering hospitality to nourish and sustain the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Though this story is only a few short verses, it is rich in meaning and possible paths to explore. We will investigate what it means to be a Mary or a Martha. Is it possible to find a balance and be some of both? How do our own gifts and personalities impact our relationship with Jesus? We'll also ask questions about what this story can teach us about how we follow Jesus as a family and in relationship. What does this story teach us about worrying and taking our concerns straight to Jesus? And further, we'll look at how Jesus approached the "rules" of society, gender, and insiders and outsiders.

The word *retreat* comes from Latin, meaning to pull or draw back. With this in mind, retreats like this one offer us a chance to pull back from "normal" life so that we can shift our attention and intention, for a short period of time. Sometimes it can be so hard to hear God's voice through the noise of every

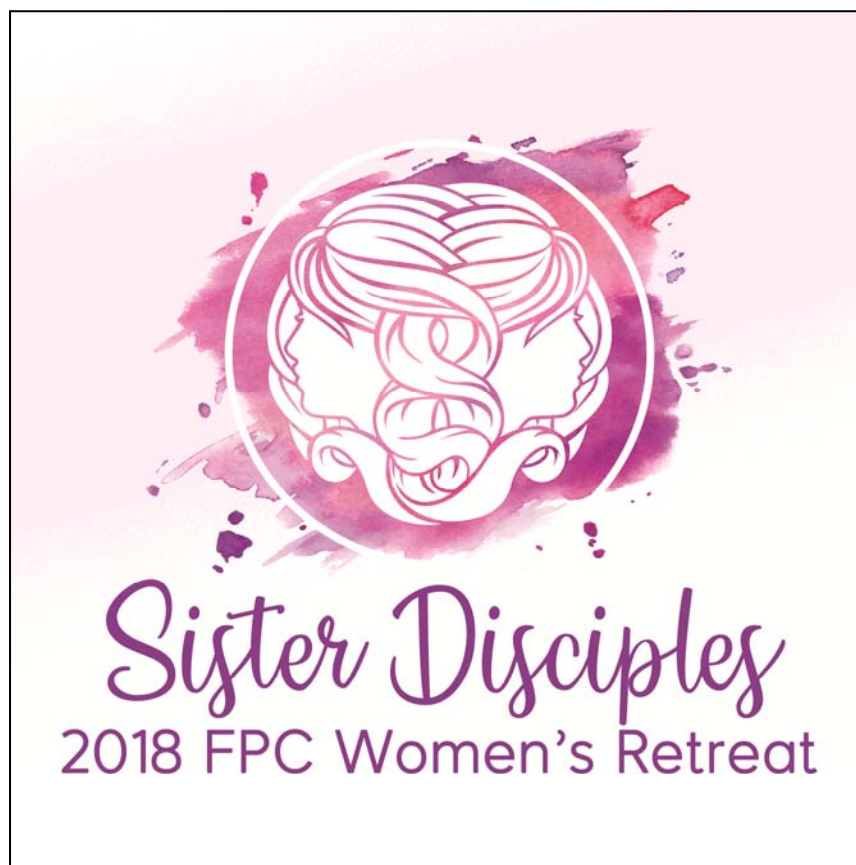
day life. But, beyond just a chance to pull back in our own lives, retreats offer us the chance to do that within a community. Research suggests that having friendships and meaningful relationships are the single most important aspect of our overall health and well-being. Retreats can offer us a chance to create, strengthen, and nurture relationships with each other without other distractions and time constraints. In a sense, this can be a

Like Martha, sometimes we choose to get lost in the busyness of life: the details, the preparations, the lists. Perhaps we use our to-do lists as a way to hide from loneliness, despair, sadness—or even to temper our own hopes and try to ensure a certain "result." Of course, our lists and tasks serve a great purpose and are necessary. But Jesus reminds us that, ultimately, there is only one thing that is truly important, urgent even. There is only one thing that can rest our weary and anxious hearts. Only one that can offer us a chance to break free from our despair and sadness. And one place to find hope. And that is in Jesus. So, will you choose him?

At times, Jesus calls us, like Martha, away from our daily hustle to sit at his feet. Simply to listen and know that he loves us, not because of *what* we do, but simply because we are *who* we are. My hope is that this retreat will provide that space and time in your life. Space and time for you to pull back and listen, to sit at Jesus' feet with other women, to grow in your

faith and in relationship. Of course, this particular retreat will not work for everyone this year. No matter if you can attend this retreat or not, my hope is that you find that space and time somewhere in your life!

—Miriam Nelson
(details on page 5)



"booster shot" for relationships. And, more specifically, we need each other as we travel this journey of faith. We can learn from and challenge each other as we grow in our own faith. We can also walk alongside each other, finding affirmation, support, and even humor in life's challenges we thought we carried alone.

Now, I know many of us immediately ask the questions of possibility:

- Who will take the kids to soccer?
- How can I leave when I have so many responsibilities?
- Do I really deserve this time just for me?

Sister Disciples

2018 FPC Women's Retreat Details

Who? This retreat is for any and all women. Feel free to invite friends, family, etc. All are welcome.

What to expect? We'll share plenary/keynote time, small group discussions, worship, fellowship, crafts and other activities, quiet time, and games.

When? Friday, April 5 to Sunday, April 7. We will meet up at the YMCA after dinner on Friday and finish before lunch on Sunday.

Where? In the mountains of Estes Park at the YMCA of the Rockies. We will stay in one of their lodges in hotel-style rooms and share meals in the cafeteria. Participants can choose to stay in single rooms or share a room with a roommate.

Other details? You can register online using myFPC. The cost is \$175 for a shared room or \$250 for a single room. This cost includes lodging for two nights, meals, and retreat activities. The registration deadline is February 1. After that date, we will take registrations as space is available at the YMCA, and the registration costs will increase by \$10 (to \$185 and \$260). Scholarships are available (contact Marge Rice).

More questions? There will be a table in Shep Hall between services on Sundays in January. Also, feel free to contact any member of the planning team: Dana Theis, Janet Schuchmann, Madgetta Dungy, Marge Rice, and Miriam Nelson.

CHURCH OF CHARACTER

CONTENTMENT

The character quality for the Winter 2018 Messenger is CONTENTMENT (versus covetousness).

Contentment can be defined as realizing that God has already provided everything I need for my present and future happiness. It can also be defined as realizing that true happiness does not depend on material conditions.

Contentment comes as we realize that God is all we really need and that He will never leave us. We can be satisfied in Him, knowing that He is the supplier of all our physical and spiritual needs. Contentment begins by knowing the purpose for our lives: "The chief end of man is to know God and to enjoy Him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism). If we just keep this brief, meaningful statement in mind, everything else seems to fall into place as we put our focus on God and our relationship with Him. We find contentment!

**"For I have learned,
in whatever state I am, to be content."
—Philippians 4:11**

As strange as it may seem, contentment is based on a mutual desire between us and God. One of the great mysteries and wonders of life is that God has a desire for each one of us! We know clearly that we have a great need for God, but the idea that He also desires us seems strange at first. However, God desires our fellowship and our hearts. Additionally, He intends us to be the instruments of righteousness to do His will in this world because He works in this world through believers like you and me. He wants *us* to do *His* work! Wow! And we obviously have a clear need for God. God created us to have a daily need for Him. He did not create us to survive on one meal a month but on daily food—both physical and spiritual. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). We need to be fed, both physically and spiritually, every single day, and so we depend on God to provide for these daily needs.

It's pretty easy to start to think that we provide for our needs and wants through our own efforts, but when things go wrong, we see that God really is in control of all things and that we are absolutely dependent on Him in every way. Consider the opening words of the Doxology, "Praise God from whom *all* blessings flow." Let's really think about the meaning of these words when we sing them and especially think about them during this season of Thanksgiving and Christmas—how God provides for us so abundantly and in so many ways, thereby giving us all we need to live a life of contentment.

GO INTO ALL THE WORLD

Mission News



This December, please help welcome and encourage our beloved Nigerian partners in ministry who will be visiting Fort Collins: the Isichei family from Faith Alive. For more than 10 years, FPC has supported this ministry that serves the poorest Nigerians through healthcare, education, and spiritual care.

Dr. Chris will be joined by his wife, Dr. Mercy, who is studying this year at Northwestern University in Chicago, and their three children: Emily, Prince, and Joe. While Dr. Chris has transitioned Faith Alive leadership to a colleague, he still serves patients there regularly in addition to his paid medical positions at other hospitals.

You can greet the Isicheis and learn updates on Sunday, December 16 between worship services at church or during an open house at the Nossokoff home (2506 Jadestone Court) from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. that afternoon.



Did you know that our congregation is currently serving through Habitat for Humanity locally, nationally, and globally? Through your volunteer efforts at the build site and monetary donations through the Center for Mission and Outreach, Munawar's and Rebecca's family home is almost ready. They are so appreciative of our church's support, along with about 15 other local churches, to help build their home. Please join them at their home's dedication on Sunday, December 16 at 1:00 p.m. at Harmony Cottages (northwest corner of Harmony and Taft Hill).

In 2019, our church will join other local churches to build a home for Natasha's family. She's a single mom who says that she's dreamt about having a home of their own. "I hope that none of my dreams ever seem too overwhelming or too big for me so that my daughter will grow up knowing that our God can do anything." Their home will also be at Harmony Cottages, where Karen Restad will be scheduling our church's volunteer days in 2019. Karen can often be heard saying, "This is so much fun!"

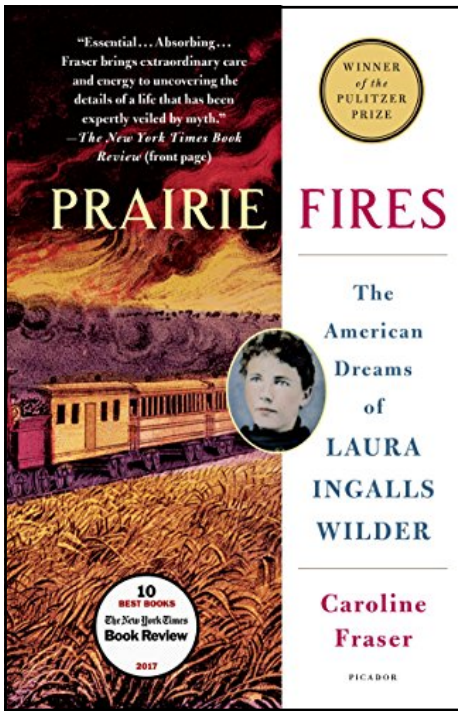
Nationally, a team of people from FPC will be going to Sebring, Florida with Habitat for Humanity in February to build a SIPS-panel home in an area hit hard by Hurricane Irma last year. They'll also be studying *Bridges Out of Poverty* to gain a better appreciation for helping in the United States. "I look forward to going on another disaster recovery trip with our congregation, having enjoyed serving together on multiple trips after Hurricane Katrina," says Mark Nossokoff.

Globally, consider being part of a Presbyterian build in Guatemala next summer! Erika and Mark Nossokoff are leading a team from our church, Westminster Presbyterian Church, and Harmony Presbyterian Church to a rural area in Guatemala to build either a home, stoves, or latrines from July 13 to 21. Plan to attend an informational meeting at the Nossokoff home (2506 Jadestone Court) on Tuesday, January 15 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. They'll offer monthly meetings for team building, cross-cultural education, and spiritual growth (based on *Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions*). Jean Tonoli, Habitat's FPC co-champion with Karen, went on a church Habitat trip to the Dominican Republic in 2017 and describes the trip as "a wonderful combination of fun adventure travel, forming new friendships within FPC, and most importantly learning from people in a different part of our world and joining with them in a 'building up' endeavor." Cost of the trip, including airfare, will be between \$2,000 and \$2,500 (with a \$500 discount for Thrivent Financial benefit members), and fundraising options are available.

—Erika Nossokoff

LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE



I think back to how the Little House books of Laura Ingalls Wilder enchanted me as a child. Many teachers from the mid-20th century through the present day have required students at all levels to read books in this famous Little House series. Students usually find the books both interesting and entertaining. The first book, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was published in 1932, and in the years to follow many young readers eagerly awaited the appearance of the next volume.

I was introduced to the Little House series by an aunt who was a college professor of English and Elementary Education. She was very enthusiastic about the Wilder books and made sure that I read every one. I faithfully followed the lives of the Charles Ingalls family as they moved westward from one little house to the next, enduring fires, blizzards, droughts, and insects intent on destroying their crops. Charles Ingalls was a courageous

optimist with a dream of raising his family on farm land of his own. His second daughter, Laura, enthusiastically shared his dream. Even when she was exhausted from a day-long run beside a covered wagon along a hot, dusty trail, she enjoyed the adventure. Evenings were even better than days because it was then that Charles, with eyes twinkling, sang and played his fiddle. Moreover, when his plans were repeatedly thwarted by weather, Native Americans, and government interference, he never let go of his dream. He philosophically maintained good humor on both *The Banks of Plum Creek* and *The Shores of Silver Lake*—and even during *The Long Winter*, as his family suffered through blizzards and seemingly incurable diseases.

In later books, 15-year-old Laura, who had excelled in school, became a teacher in a small frontier school. In the town of DeSmet, South Dakota, a large, friendly group of young people enjoyed frequent sleigh rides, and Laura developed many new friendships. Most important was Almanzo Wilder, a young homesteader who eventually proposed marriage to 18-year-old Laura. Apologetically, he told her that the house he was building for them would have to be “little.” Without hesitation Laura replied that she had always lived in little houses and that she liked them! The final book of the original series is *These Happy Golden Years*, which ended with Laura and Almanzo starting their life together.

A follow-up book, *The First Four Years*, was one I refused to read because someone told me that it was “just too sad.” The book begins happily enough. Laura and Almanzo settled in the little house and scarcely a year after their wedding, their daughter Rose was born.

However, their second child was a baby boy who died at the age of nine months. The Wilders struggled through multiple hardships and financial difficulties until they were finally forced to leave their first little house. The couple continued to struggle financially, with Laura contributing what she could by raising chickens and doing menial tasks for acquaintances. Recalling the satisfaction she had earlier achieved by writing newspaper columns, she resumed writing and submitted contributions to a farm journal. Daughter Rose grew up all too quickly, and the two strong-willed and opinionated women often disagreed, especially about politics and writing styles. Eventually, they decided that their top priority should be to earn money to help with family finances. They collaborated to write a successful series of Little House books intended for children readers.

If you want to know more, please read *Prairie Fires, The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, written by Caroline Fraser, a skilled and respected author who found herself intrigued and irritated by the plethora of conflicting information about Laura Ingalls Wilder and the entire western movement in the United States. The result of Fraser’s many years of careful research was *Prairie Fires*, appreciated by those who simply enjoy an informative and interesting nonfiction book, as well as by *The New York Times*, which listed the book as one of the 10 best published in 2017.

n.b. This book is available at your FPC WordSouce Library.

—Ann Thomas

REQUIREMENT? A CARING HEART

HOSPITAL VISITATION TEAM NEEDS YOU

“I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

—Matthew 25:36

For 10 years, my grandmother lived with my family. She moved in when I was a teenager after my dad died. At one point, Grandma and I even shared a bedroom, and at night I would hear her faint whispers as she spoke to God in the dark from the twin bed beside me.

It wasn't an easy time for my mom, who had to negotiate doctor appointments as well as her mother's complicated idiosyncrasies. But for me, Grandma's presence felt warm, comforting, and easy. She was funny and sweet and told wild stories of ducking behind barrels to avoid Prohibition-era shootouts in New Jersey where she grew up. She would punctuate her tales with a shake of the head as she stared at the floor, sinking into the flood of memories from a near century of life.

Grandma continued to live with my mom right up until her death. I was living an hour away at the time and was fortunate to make it to Grandma's bedside in the hospital, along with my mom and my two sisters, to send her off with love, tears, and hugs. Grandma had deep faith and was not afraid to die. In fact, at one point the nurses in the room started talking about Grandma's imminent passing. With a smile, Grandma called out, "I'm not gone yet!", and despite the weight of the moment, everyone had a good laugh.

That day at the hospital, I was nervous to see my Grandma. I was younger then, but even so, I recognized the need to put these feelings aside and focus on the profound matter at hand—to shower Grandma with love as she passed on to her Heavenly home. And so we did, and it was hard and beautiful.

Some of those same feelings arose several years ago as I contemplated new ways I might serve at FPC. Hospital visits scared me. But what if someone in our church were ill, injured, or even dying, and they needed someone by their bedside? What if they had family nearby, but still wanted prayers and encouragement from their church family, to help affirm God's presence and know they are loved and cared for during a difficult time?

I felt unqualified to know what to say or do in this role. I was afraid that the sights and smells of the hospital would trigger upsetting feelings from my family's own health emergencies. Of course, fear is a liar, and a pretty good one at that. It tries to drown out God's power, presence, and peace. I didn't know it yet, but the seed that God had planted that day in the hospital with my grandma was stronger than my doubt, and the Holy Spirit nudged me forward.

I sent an email to Marge Rice letting her know about my interest and availability to do hospital visits: as a stay-at-home mom, I had flexibility in the morning. Tuesday mornings, to be exact.

And then something amazing happened.

Marge wrote me back that same afternoon:

Bev Barker was just in my office asking if I might know of ANYBODY that might want to be a hospital visitor — she needs a Tuesday person! She is going to call you and explain how it works, and let you know what is needed, and see if you are interested. You would be great - and a real source of joy for people in the hospital!! Thanks for letting me know.

Bev, Marge, and I all felt God's hand in this moment. How could I not feel encouraged to embrace this place God had so clearly put me? To feel assured God would provide every need?

Three years later, my hospital visits to help care for our church family are the most fulfilling acts of service I've ever done. God has blessed every visit with His grace and presence. This simple act of sitting by someone for 10 minutes during a difficult time so often means the world to them. Until I joined the hospital visitation team, I had never prayed for people aloud sitting right there next to them. Yet, this act of connecting with God and one of His children in need is an experience I love. He provides the words—and everything else.

About FPC's Hospital Visitation Team

- Our small but mighty team needs more people—aka, YOU!
- You commit to “check in” to the church office once a month, at an assigned week, to visit hospitalized church members. *One visit* per hospitalized person per week is usually sufficient (even if their stay is longer).
- Visits are brief, depending on your availability and the hospitalized person's wishes—usually 10 minutes.
- Substitutes are available if you have a conflict.
- Pastor Glenn Perica has graciously begun offering occasional training to answer any questions our team may have, provide helpful tips, and pray for us.
- Contact Betsy Towle by email, mtowle0@gmail.com, or phone, (973) 670-9058, for more information.

Hospital visits truly are one of the most meaningful and important ways that we can show compassion and love for our church family. Thank you for considering this ministry!

—Audrey McDill

SESSION NOTES

Greetings from your 2018–2019 Session! This year marks a change for Session members and Deacons as the timing of “new members” has moved from January 1 to July 1. A July 1 date better coincides with the beginning of the new program year in September and also allows new Session members to have a few months of orientation before it’s time to jump into next year’s budget. Session membership has decreased to 12 this year from 18 last year. Deacons have increased from 12 to 18 to better provide for the needs of our growing church.

As in recent years, Session minutes are available in a notebook near the receptionist desk in the office. Members are free to peruse these during office hours. If you have questions, please contact one of the Ruling Elders for clarification:

Class 2019

Anita Kelly, Mark Nossokoff,
Bill Risheill, Julie Willson

Class of 2020

Bob Meroney, Deanna Robertson,
Walt Schuchmann, Karen Weitkunat

Class of 2021

Madgetta Dungy, Pam Genson,
Lynn Johnson, Pam Larsen

Fall signals the start of FPC’s Stewardship Campaign. This is an important time of the year as we consider giving time, talent, and finances. As a growing and on-the-move church, there are a number of activities and programs to be supported; however, let’s not forget day-to-day maintenance and utility costs. These costs are not exciting by any means, but they provide the infrastructure for all programming and activities on the FPC campus. Please prayerfully consider a time/talent pledge and/or a financial pledge for 2019.

In Christ’s Name,
Your 2018–2019 Session

AN UPDATE ON BOBBY

FROM



faith family hospitality

One of the reasons that I enjoy volunteering with Faith Family Hospitality (FFH) is the opportunity to interact directly with the participants being helped.

One of the first families I grew to know was Bobby, his preschool daughter, Lisa, and his two boys, Josh and Jake. Bobby impressed me the first night as he and the kids were having a late dinner. Lisa was running around, and Bobby said to her, “Lisa, come over here and have dinner with your family.” Bobby read a lot, and one time asked if I understood the meaning of something in his book. He was not reading fluff.

I was visiting with Jake one Saint Patrick’s Day evening. The kids had been in the parade on the Fort Collins Nursery float, and I mentioned that I had seen them in the parade. Jake said, “I am half Irish,” which is not difficult to believe with his ruddy complexion and red hair. I asked what the other half was. He thought a minute and said, “Chinese,” and went on to say, “I can speak Chinese too.” However, he was a bit tongue tied when I asked him to say something.

Bobby soon found a house to rent. The landlord needed some yard work done, and Bobby was able to do that to cover part of the rent.

I have seen Bobby from time to time at Fort Collins Nursery. He is the one they call when they need an expert on plant diseases. I was in Fort Collins Nursery as the crowds were thinning this fall and was able to have a nice conversation with Bobby.

Bobby’s mother passed away three years ago, and Bobby inherited her house in Wellington. All of the kids are doing well. Josh, the oldest, is now 13. Bobby had just started at Fort Collins Nursery when he entered the FFH program. He is now a part of the Outside Management Team and supervises the Tree and Shrub Area.

Bobby said the FFH program meant so much to him and his kids. He said that neither he or the kids will forget the experience. He said that he tells everyone about the program.

Bobby said that he wishes he could give back to FFH, but he is exhausted by the time he gets home. I reminded him that he has arranged for Fort Collins Nursery to provide centerpieces for FFH dinners. I also told him that by spreading word on the program, he is giving back.

Bobby’s radio buzzed and our conversation ended. They needed a plant expert to help a customer inside.

You can be a part of this rewarding ministry. FPC will host a new group of families beginning December 16. During the week, FPC will provide these families with meals and a warm place to sleep. We need you to help. Roles include meal preparation, evening and overnight hosting, room set-up and tear-down, and laundry after the guests move on to the next faith community. For more information on how to help, contact Janet Schuchmann (571)212-1698, Betsy Towle (973)670-9058, or Mark Ausbrooks (970)214-1197.

LESSONS FROM A TELEVISION DRAMA

I don't often find a TV series that I enjoy watching, but this season has been different. There are two rather engaging series with some great life lessons weaved throughout the story lines.

The first one is "God Friend Me." This is the story of a preacher's son who claims to be an atheist and has a podcast where he is free to speak his "There is no God" message. However, God has a different plan for him and sends him a "friend request" on social media. Part of the story involves his trying to discover who set up the "God" account; meanwhile, God keeps sending other friend suggestions, and each time he follows up on these suggestions, he unwittingly becomes an agent of change in the lives and destinies of others. Each episode poses outcomes that the skeptic might insist are "coincidence," but the manner in which the story unfolds makes it clear that God is intervening to assure the atheist son meets the person whom God has sent as a friend request.

The other series is "New Amsterdam." This series is about a young doctor who is named Medical Director of a struggling hospital. He has previously turned around another failing hospital and is hired to do the same at New Amsterdam Hospital. Instead of assuming an "I'm in charge here!" role, his first love is taking care of patients, and he breaks the rules in an attempt to heal the system. Despite the facts that he has been handed a diagnosis of cancer, he is in a struggling marriage, and his wife is pregnant with their first child, he continues to put his patients and the staff first over all other considerations, including finances. When tough situations arise, his first response is always, "How can I help?" And he walks the walk: he finds a way to help, even abandoning his responsibilities as Chief Fundraiser for the hospital.

What strikes me from these two series is (a) how they parallel real life and (b) the lessons to be (re-)learned from each. I believe that God walks with us each and every day and that He often puts people and situations in our lives for our benefit and for theirs. When we receive a request for help or when a person crosses our path with special needs, perhaps we should ask ourselves, "Did God place you here in my life for a reason?" Even in the midst of our busy lives, maybe we can slow down and really look at the person in need, asking ourselves if there is some small way we can help make their life a little better.

Likewise, when someone in our family, including our church family, shares a problem or crisis with us, do we cringe inside, afraid to take on one more issue? After all, we have enough on our plates without taking on the problems of other people! We may even respond with the need to "unburden" ourselves of all of our own problems and demands on our time. Sometimes, we may find ourselves thinking, "He/She always has crises in his/her life—I can't deal with it!" What if, instead, we asked, "How can I help?" Just as in the series, the person with the problem or crisis usually has a suggestion or a specific request for help. Often times it is a small request that could easily be met by us, but feels like a huge weight lifted off of the burdened individual. And what better feeling is there than to know you have helped out someone in need?

You don't need to watch television to witness the workings of God all around you, but these lessons from television dramas are food for thought as we come into the Season of Giving.

—Patty Baker



CARING TOGETHER

CONGREGATION MAKES UP THE CARING TEAM AT FPC

While the sign “Director of Caring” hangs over my door at FPC, the caring in this church extends far beyond this door and far beyond me. I am reminded of Corinthians 12:7: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” We are all given the privilege and responsibility to “care for the common good.” I see it every day through volunteers, deacons and elders, the pastoral team, those who sit in pews offering a simple prayer, those who write a note of encouragement, and those who write a note of suggestion of what can be done better or what pieces we might be missing in our caring.

It’s important to have the encouragement, and it’s important to have a light shine on ways that we as a church can be more helpful. As I wrote in a short paragraph in the bulletin this last week, we all, at many times in our lives, need someone to walk alongside us. There is always room (and a need) for us to be a strengthening aid to fellow believers in need. This may look like offering to pick up someone for church, taking someone to a doctor’s appointment, buying groceries, etc. If you are wanting to be that person who walks alongside on occasion, please leave your name with me at the church, and when that need arises, I will match you up with that person in need.

If however, you are that person in need of some of those services, please let me know that as well (at the church office). While we may not have a specific team of volunteers right now for your specific need, I will always put your need in the bulletin as a request, knowing that God will stir someone’s heart to step up and say, “I can fill that need.” While we as a Caring Team in our church office cannot always meet all these needs, you as a Caring Team in the congregation can help make this a reality.

There are services in our community as well that have a caring

team of sorts of their own. I would encourage you all (if you have a need) to look at these services listed below and look into them as a way of answering some of your needs.

- **SAINTS (Senior Alternatives in Transportation)** serves people 60+ years old who are unable to drive here in Fort Collins. While many of their rides are to medical offices, they also take clients to the grocery store, the hairdresser, and the Senior Center to name a few. It is a free service. **Call (970)223-8653.** If you are that person who does NOT need a ride, please think about joining SAINTS as a volunteer driver. All are welcome. Everyone has a bit of saint in them.
- Another transportation system in our city is **Dial-A-Ride.** It’s a door-to-door service for individuals who are prevented from using the Transfort’s fixed-route system. There is a very minimal fee for this transport, but it is a system that has proved to be most valuable to many of our citizens here in Fort Collins. **The number is (970)-224-6066.**

While there are many opportunities for finding caring in Fort Collins, I only highlighted these two at this time. There is a wonderful resource guide (that you may pick up at the church front office) that highlights countless caring services in this town. I would encourage you to pick one up.

There are innumerable ways to help the hurting or lost in their time of need and to truly be the “hands and feet” of God. I will continue every day—with the help of so many of you—to serve, to learn, and to be available in your time of need. We all have a bit of saint in us, and we all have available the strength that God offers us. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12).

—Marge Rice



FIVE ADULTS TO EVERY CHILD??



In Pastor Corey’s sermon about how to help our children embrace a faith that “sticks” with them throughout their lives, he cited a study that advocated a ratio of five adults to every child in a church. Every child should ideally have five adults outside of their family who know them by name and have an interest in their lives. I confess that at the same time I was giving a heartfelt thumbs up, my eyes widened and I thought, “Is this even possible?!” Well let’s see how this could work in the life of a hypothetical child we’ll call ... “Pammy Rae.”

When Pammy Rae was an infant, she was baptized into her church family. In unison, they vowed to help her grow in faith, surrounded by love. In those first months, she was tenderly cared for by adults in the nursery and held by several others because she was really adorable. As a toddler, still adorable, she was greeted with smiles and guided with patience as she became more mobile and confident in the big room with all of the food. In her preschool years, she had awesome Sunday School teachers and was allowed to be a chicken in the Christmas play. Throughout her

childhood, her parents took her to as many intergenerational events as possible. Luckily for Pammy Rae, the grownups in her church came to these events even if they didn’t have kids or grandkids there. So she had a great conversation with a Church Grandpa while they were making Christmas wreaths at the Advent Celebration. She was on the same team as a Church Aunt at an All-Church Game Night. One of her older Church Siblings helped her make a Valentine to give to a Church Grandma. Pammy Rae had tremendous Sunday School teachers every year! She especially enjoyed her Prayer Partners! (She had gotten to know seven of them by the time she got to middle school.) Vacation Bible School was so much fun that she became a volunteer herself when she was a teen (and no longer called Pammy Rae.) By the time she graduated, our hypothetical child had added more teachers, Confirmation Mentors, helpers, and Mission Chaperones to the list of people in her church family who knew her by name and took an interest in her life. Finally, there came the day when she brought her own child forward to be baptized. As the congregation vowed in unison to

help raise her child, she prayed that they would be like the loving church family that had raised her.

Let’s continue to be that church family.

—Pam Armstrong

EVENTS COMING UP:

December:

- Christmas Play, *Telling the Story Again*, Sunday, December 23, 11:00 a.m. Christmas Eve Service

January:

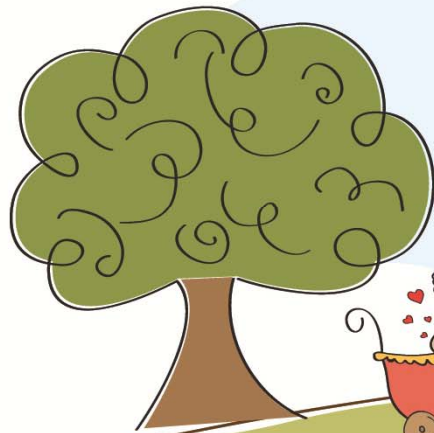
- All-Church Game Night, Friday, January 25, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Something for everyone! Giant board games! Card tables! Liberty puzzles! Games from every decade! Snacks!

February:

- Cupid’s Cards: a Ministry BY our children. Sunday, February 10, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Come and help our kids make Valentine cards for those in our community who could use a little extra love!

welcome little one

Announcing special new arrivals:



Olivier Ronald

son of Cassandra and Cameron Lemmon
born September 17, 2018

LauraJane Marie

daughter of Amanda and Andy Werner
born November 1, 2018

Paxton Gerald

son of Allison and Christopher "TC" Tobin-Campbell
born November 6, 2018

A NEW SEASON BEGINS

CLASSES FOR ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION BEGINNING IN JANUARY

The Center for Discipleship and Spiritual Formation has exciting winter classes planned for Sunday-morning Adult Spiritual Formation and Wednesday-evening Midweek eXperience (MX)! Start making plans to attend our winter programs—you won't want to miss these interesting and informative offerings. Here's an overview of what's coming up:

MX for Adults, Session 1, beginning January 30, 2019

- **Series on Compassion** led by Ginny Mack and Laura Reid, both mental health professionals.
- **Discover Membership Classes** (January 30 and February 6) to learn more about who we are as a church, what we believe, and where and how you might find a good fit for involvement. If you sense that FPC is where God is leading you for worship, growth, and service, you will also have the opportunity to formally join our church family at the end of the classes.
- **Ash Wednesday** dinner and worship service (March 6).

MX for Adults, Session 2, beginning March 13, 2019

- **Lenten Study**

Adult Spiritual Formation Classes

Strength for the Journey: Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living, beginning Sunday, January 6, 2019

- **The Epiphany** led by Madgetta Dungey and Lynn Johnson (January 6 and 13). This fundamental look at Epiphany considers the ways that God's presence is being revealed in our lives.
- **All-Church Breakfast** with no classes (January 20)
- **Postcards from the Edge** led by Rev. Andy DeJong (January 27 to March 3). Discover the plain and hidden meanings of each of the seven letters written to the seven ancient churches described in the Book of Revelation.
- **Dr. Holmes Rolston** will lead a class on March 10 and 17.
- **Observing Lent through the Stories Jesus Told** led by Drs. Mike and Nancy Smith (March 24 to April 14) and based on the Lenten sermons of Peter J. Gomes.

“Here is a trustworthy saying: if anyone sets their heart on being an overseer, they desire a noble task.”

—1 Timothy 3:1

NOMINATION FORM FOR GOD’S OVERSEERS AT FPC

It may be you or it may be someone you know, but it starts with a tug at the heart: it’s God’s calling to help oversee our church. It is, after all, our hearts that God seeks and cherishes. The Holy Spirit works to put forth leaders to do the noble task of looking after our church family. Please review the roles described below and submit yourself or another member for consideration.

ELDERS

- 3-year term
- Along with our pastors, elders supervise the spiritual life of FPC. They have oversight for all departments, including financial and organizational
- Two to three meetings monthly

DEACONS

- 2-year term (first as an apprentice, second as lead deacon)
- The caring arm of our church who share love, sympathy, and compassion in concrete ways
- While all Christians are called to love others, our deacons provide an organized way to bring the love of Jesus to our church members and community
- Time commitment varies. Each pair of deacons leads a team that cares for members in need, visits the sick and homebound, provides emergency assistance, and supports the congregation in caring for one another both in and outside the church

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- 1-year term
- Identifies, considers, and calls members to serve in leadership roles
- Meets November through February as needed

Self-nominations are encouraged!

NOMINATION FORM FOR GOD’S OVERSEERS

Please write your name or, if you are nominating someone else, his or her name below. Feel free to nominate a person for more than one position.

Name

- Elder
- Deacon
- Nominating Committee

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY FEBRUARY 3, 2019



**You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands. —Isaiah 55:12**

FPC has been awarded a \$5,000 planning grant from The City of Fort Collins through The Nature in The City program (fcgov.com/natureinthecity). This program seeks to create community gardens within the city that improve access to nature and enhance wildlife habitats. As the building and population density increases along the Mason Street Corridor, the greenbelt areas on the east and south sides of the FPC sanctuary have been identified as suitable for a community garden.

A task force of FPC members has been created to pursue this initiative. Task force members are Bob Addleman, Roger Heins, Jack Miller, Peg Mussard, and Corey Nelson. Don Genson serves as staff support to the task force.

This task force will be partnering with Russell-Mills Studios (russellmillsstudios.com), a local landscape architectural firm, to develop an initial plan consistent with the city guidelines. Upon city approval of this plan, the task force anticipates applying for an implementation grant in 2019 with the city. Russell-Mills Studios has partnered with the City of Fort Collins for the redevelopment of the Dalzell Alley, the Bohemian Foundation for the Music District (both are located in the block immediately south of FPC), the Gardens on Spring Creek, and the perennial gardens on the north side of the University Center for the Arts, 1400 Remington Street. If you would like to participate in this exciting opportunity or want to know more about it, please contact any of the task force members for more information.

—Bob Addleman

THE LONGEST NIGHT

We invite you to a special service that will be held at FPC at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 19. The service, a new offering during the Advent season, is entitled "The Longest Night" and will be held in the Sanctuary.

What is The Longest Night service? For many people, we realize that Christmas can be a difficult time. Some have recently lost a loved one, some are lonely, some have lost a job, and some are suffering from illness or the pain of a broken relationship. Others feel financial stress or the burden of past memories. The Christmas season can make it all the more difficult to cope. In response, we will gather together for a time to acknowledge the darkness within our lives and look toward the light of the Christ child who is coming among us.

Reflecting on her experience attending the service last year, Mary Garcia said, "For those of us who have lost a loved one, the holidays can be a very lonely and sad time of the year. Our Longest Night Service is so healing. To be able to sit in the Sanctuary and listen to Scripture is very cathartic. It makes me think back to how good and faithful our God is ... and it makes me thankful that God has gifted us with our memories."

We welcome you to join us for a time of contemplative music, scripture, stories, silence, reflection, and healing prayer. There will also be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one or as a sign of hope in the midst of darkness you may be experiencing. Afterwards, we will join together for a time of fellowship and refreshments. You may know someone else who would like to attend this service, too. Invite them to come with you.

As a community of faith, we affirm that while we each walk the path of grief in our own way, none of us have to walk it alone. Together, we will hold one another up, carry one another forward, leaning into the promises of our God in whom we shall mount up with wings like eagles. We shall run and not be weary. We shall walk and not faint.

December 19

7:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church
531 S. College Avenue

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gloria

CHRISTMAS EVE 2018
at First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins

SUNDAY | 12.23 | 11:00 AM

Family Christmas Eve Worship & Kids' Nativity Play
"Telling the Story Again" featuring FPC Children and Youth

MONDAY | 12.24 | 5:00 & 7:00 PM

Traditional Christmas Candlelight Worship
featuring the Sanctuary Choir, Chancel Bell Choir,
Exquisite Brass Ensemble, and Organist Joe McConathy
(Van service available for the 5:00 PM Service by reservation before 12.21.)

SUNDAY | 12.30 | 10:00 AM | WORSHIP
One morning worship service