

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

HEAVEN AND NATURE SING

THE SHIELD OF LOVE

A STORY OF GENEROSITY

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From the Editor | JOY TO THE WORLD

Winter is full of busyness. We shop and shovel and decorate and cook and celebrate and make resolutions in an attempt to fill ourselves up with happiness—or what we think is happiness. After all, it's the most wonderful time of the year, isn't it? In steps Advent. Like a field of snow on a starlit night, Advent is a place of quiet, of reflection and waiting—and, when we are ready for it, joy. How can we find peace in this season of bustling and hustling and make room for joy?

We live a #blessed life in a #blessed world. The song says, Jesus comes to make His blessings flow. For some of us this year, His blessings poured out in new relationships, a great vacation, a big raise, or a new grandchild. Though these blessings made us happy, and we may be grateful, it's possible they didn't strengthen our prayer life, increase our faith, or truly draw us closer to Him.

What if God's blessings for us this year were cancer, financial hardship, mental illness, divorce, or loss of a loved one? How do we find joy amongst the tears? That is the wonder of His love. Pain and loss can cause us to change focus, reevaluate, make room—and when there's room, His joy comes to fill it.

As candles flicker in the darkness every Christmas Eve, congregations around the world—including our own in Fort Collins—sing a lullaby to the Ruler of the World. Then light blazes, bells ring, and voices sing, "Joy to the World! The Lord is come." This Advent and beyond, let every heart prepare Him room.

Joyous Christmas, FPC friends.

—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

LET HEAVEN AND NATURE AND PROPHETS AND MARY SING

If the promotional aisles at King Soopers are any indication, then the “season” of Christmas began in the wee hours of the morning following Halloween when witches’ costumes and candy corns were replaced with twinkling strands of lights and bags of red and green M&Ms. I’m afraid our society does not give us much help in understanding our church’s season of Advent as a time of waiting and expectation for the Messiah.

Here at First Presbyterian Church, our theme for the Advent and Christmas season will be “Heaven and Nature Sing,” borrowing the phrase from the beloved carol, “Joy to the World.”

Each Sunday when we gather for worship, we are invited to join our voices with nature and heaven’s chorus to sing thanksgiving to God, lament for our sorrows, and hope for tomorrow. During this season in particular, we lean into the warmth and support of our community and experience the power of shared song, the resulting resound being greater than the sum of the parts.

Advent will begin with the prophets whose songs proclaim the promise of God: the light that has come and shall come into the darkness which cannot overcome it. In response, our melodies of gratitude will lift up our embrace of the ways of peace, love, and joy in this season of hopeful expectation.

On the final Sunday of Advent we will hear again Mary’s song, the Magnificat, from Luke chapter 1. While I have always loved this poetic and prophetic text, I have to confess that in reading it more carefully this year, I might prefer King Soopers’ red felt hats over Mary’s pointed words.

In scripture, we discover that God chose a peasant girl, Mary, to be the mother of Jesus. God didn’t choose the homecoming queen or a millionaire mother. God chose a young girl from a third world country, with dark skin, dark brown eyes, and dark brown hair to be the mother of Jesus. Mary is poor—dirt poor. She is poor and pregnant and unmarried. She is a mess. But she sings! And the words of her song are revolutionary.

Mary sings not just a solo aria about her own destiny, but a freedom song on behalf of all the faithful poor in the land. She sings a song of freedom for all who, in their poverty, still believe that God will make a way where there is no way. She sings of a God who “has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” Mary rejoices in God’s destiny—for her, and for a world about to be turned upside down.



This all sounds great until we remember that, by the world’s standards, most of us are the ones who are rich and comfortable and secure. Do we really want to wait for this Messiah who is going to challenge all of that? Can Mary’s God who overturns the way the world works, who elects the least and the last to bring into the kingdom, whose judgment in every sense will save the poor, the wronged and the oppressed really be our God?

With every breath within me, I believe the answer is, Yes!... and if we listen carefully, perhaps we will finally know that every song of the future apart from Mary’s is simply off key. Mary’s song reminds us that we are all in need of God’s transforming presence to help us strip away the false layers of comfort and security that we cling to and allow God to reside within us so deeply that we rediscover our identity as God’s children and reclaim our destiny as messengers of love, hope, and peace. If Mary’s song can become our song then Christ can come again in us. And this is the point of Advent—indeed, this is the turning point—not only for Mary, but for us all.

So let’s gather together and join our voices with heaven and nature, with the prophets and with Mary. Let’s sing until the God of old becomes our God anew again. Let’s sing until all the world hears us and makes this tune of resounding joy their own. And when Christ returns with his angels in power, may we join them and the whole company of heaven in singing, “Glory to God in the highest!” Glory to the God whose freeing Son, and whose freedom song, will yet be our own.

Peace,
Corey

heaven and nature sing

Advent & Christmas 2019 at First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins



"Joy to the World," the beloved Christmas carol, turns 300 this year. Composer Isaac Watt's invitation for us to raise our voices together as "heaven and nature sing" is as urgent this season as ever. In a world of conflict, division, and grief, we long for joy to break into in our lives, our families, and our community again. With hopeful hearts, we gather this season to discover that the depths of joy can be found in the midst of shared struggles, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion. These gifts of a faithful and loving God, present among us still, is reason to sing indeed! Repeat the sounding joy with us at FPC this Christmas season.

SUNDAYS | 9 & 11 AM | ADVENT WORSHIP

12.1 | The Promise of the Messiah (with communion)
12.8 | Zechariah's Song
12.15 | A Christmas Festival of Music Worship Concert
12.22 | Mary's Song (9 AM only)
12.22 | Children's Christmas Pageant (11 AM only)

SUNDAY | 12.1 | 6 PM | NIGHTLIGHTS

Realities For Children's Annual Tree-lighting

SUNDAY | 12.8 | 7 PM | BELLS OF CHRISTMAS

34th Annual Handbell Concert

WEDNESDAY | 12.18 | 7 PM | LONGEST NIGHT

Contemplative worship for those who find this season difficult

CHRISTMAS EVE

TUESDAY | 12.24 | 5 & 7 PM

Traditional Christmas
Candlelight Worship

SUNDAY | 12.29 | 10 AM

One blended worship service



Childcare offered
for children
up to age 5.



FPC LIVE
STREAMING
at firstpresfc.org



ALL EVENTS ARE FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
For more information, visit us online at www.firstpresfc.org.

First Presbyterian Church | 531 S. College Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80524 | (970)482-6107 | firstpresfc.org

First Presbyterian Church presents
Music with a Mission

The 34th Annual **BELLS OF CHRISTMAS**

a holiday tradition benefitting



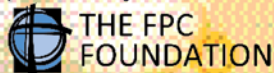
featuring

Chancel Bell Choir, Joe McConathy, Organ
and the Exquisite Brass Quintet

December 8, at 7:00 PM

ADMISSION IS FREE

presented by



A freewill offering will be taken to benefit Homeward Alliance,
a Colorado-based non-profit that empowers individuals and families
who face homelessness to survive, move forward, and thrive.



A Christmas Festival of Music
Sunday, December 15, at 9:00 & 11:00 AM

Sanctuary Choir, Chancel Bell Choir, and full
orchestra proclaim the story of the Nativity with
Lessons and Carols in two identical worship services.

THE LONGEST NIGHT

an evening of contemplative music,
scripture, stories, silence, reflection,
and healing prayer. Light a candle
in memory of a loved one or as a
sign of hope in the midst of the
darkness you may be experiencing.

December 18
7:00 p.m.

ALL ARE WELCOME.



FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT

MUSIC MINISTRY CHORAL SCHOLAR PROGRAM MAKES AN IMPACT

The Generosity Team has been asking fellow FPC members to tell their stories of generous living, not for personal accolade but for building up the body—spurring one another on toward love and good deeds—in the spirit of Hebrews 10:23-24— Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. This is one of those stories.

When I first walked into First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins, I was

looking for connections—fun connections to help me find areas of meaningful service and fulfillment. I soon realized that the Sanctuary Choir at FPC was meant to be one of these connections.

Music has always been important to my wife Karen and me in our life together so we joined the FPC choir under the superb direction of Marv Crawford. The pleasure of worshiping with fellow musicians and contributing to the Sunday worship service was rewarding and satisfying, but for us that was just the beginning.

It turns out the FPC Music Ministry is wider and deeper than we had ever expected. Advanced through the Edward Anderson Choral Scholar Program and other church assistance, the scholarship program has brought in talented musicians from CSU who have greatly enhanced the Sanctuary Choir and allows choir members to engage with young, interesting individuals on the brink of their big adventures called life. As we have gotten to know and appreciate these young singers, Karen and I have encouraged them by



Karen Restad, Laura (Naomi's mom), and Naomi Wright



Karlin Gray presents the Anderson Scholar Award to Alexandra Young



Jun Terasawa submits applications



Naomi Wright, Chanjin Noh, and Karen Restad showing off their jack-o-lanterns

attending their concerts and recitals—which has given us great enjoyment.

After graduating with a Masters in Music, one of these FPC scholars realized he was facing some challenging hurdles with looming deadlines. Jun was studying at CSU on an international student visa from Japan. First hurdle: upon graduation he could no longer stay in CSU housing. Second hurdle: unless he was able to secure a work visa within a short amount of time, his student visa would expire and he would need to leave the country.

Knowing the visa clock was ticking, we invited Jun to stay at our home at this critical time in his life while he prepared job applications in music-related positions. We quickly discovered that Jun is a skilled sushi chef which made meal preparations exciting at our house. Several weeks and over 800 applications later, Jun landed a position at a small school in Valier, Montana. More culture shock as he adjusted to small-town living in northern Montana after his life in Tokyo with its high-rise apartment home. Thanks to social

media, we have continued to deepen our relationship with Jun, now teaching in Cambodia.

But before Jun left for Valier, he invited another CSU student choir member, who had lost her lease unexpectedly, to stay temporarily at our house. What a pleasant surprise when we came home from attending a wedding in California and met Naomi. We encouraged her to extend her stay with us while she continues her studies toward a Masters in Music education. Again, this opportunity to develop a relationship has resulted in much laughter, insight, tears and unexpected opportunities for support—and great blessings for Karen and me as we are privileged to participate in Naomi’s life!

Not long after, Naomi encouraged another choir member to join the household. From Korea, Chanjin is working on his Masters but planning to continue his studies in the DMA program at CSU. When his host family unexpectedly returned to Korea, Chanjin needed a place to stay. Because English is still a challenge for him,

Chanjin’s mother thought immersion could help accelerate the English learning process so encouraged him to make the stay at our house a longer-term arrangement. The past five months, Karen and I have worked with Chanjin as he prepares for a required English proficiency exam. The struggle and successes have made us fast friends.

Today our house is full of music and interesting people whom we love and who love us back. I have received more fun and fulfillment than I was looking for. These choral scholars are giving us the gift of meaningful friendships that will last a lifetime—and it was the FPC Music Ministry that opened this door.

—Jason Restad

“The Shield of Love”

**When I felt
That touch of spring
Yesterday
I washed my car
And waxed it
When it rained.
This morning
The droplets
On the hood
Stood upright
In tiny bubbles
Unable to penetrate
That coat of wax.**

**When I prayed to God
Last night
He must have washed my soul.
Bathed it in His love
Because
Today
When troubles came
They only
Stood outside
Unable to penetrate
That shield of Love.**

—Author unknown

From the moment I read this poem, I have never looked at a car being waxed without thinking of this “protection.” It makes complete sense then how God’s protection washes over us, allowing things not to penetrate and destroy us. A turtle in his shell—a shell that serves as a shield to protect him—rarely has to think about what’s on the other side of his shell. Whatever it is, it can’t hurt him, can’t even touch him.

Do we feel confident that we are being protected by a shield of love that God has created for us? Do we “peek out” as we could imagine a turtle might to see what is coming our way? There WILL be holes in our shield; hurts and disappointments may slip in. Yet, one who does not walk against the arrows cannot know the strength of his shield. In Psalm 5:12, David writes that the Lord blesses the righteous and surrounds them with His shield of love. That love is the basis of God’s grace and mercy.

I like the idea of God’s love encompassing me, shielding me—and I pray for that shield for those that I love—as I’m sure those of you reading this do as well. Every day I have the opportunity to have a shield of faith surrounding me. A shield that in the darkest hours of life’s journey, when that darkness of the storm sees our grip most often tighten, I sometimes feel that I can relax, go back in my “protective shell,” and sit this one out.

“Those who live by God’s law will walk through the rough roads of life shielded by God’s love and faithfulness,” Psalm 25:10.

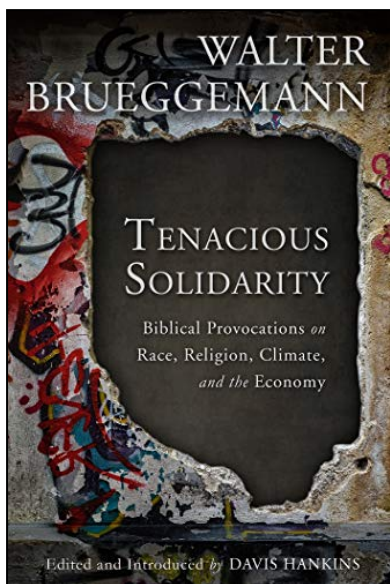
—Marge Rice



LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE

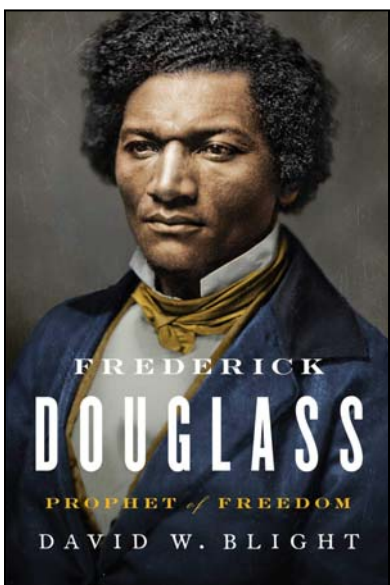
Your Word Source Library has some new books!



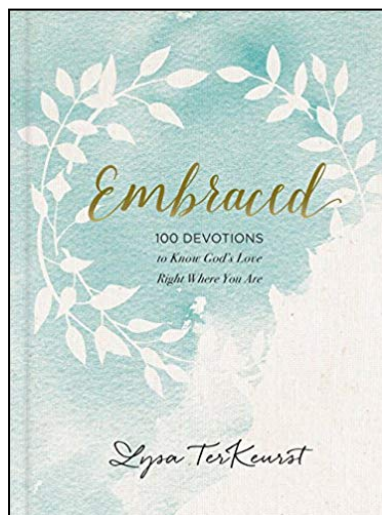
Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy featuring essays and new writings from 2014 to 2018 by the foremost American Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann. It is edited by Davis Hankins. Fortress Press

"With an inquisitive eye, an invincible passion for truth and honesty, and a crackling imagination, Brueggemann invites us to think more deeply, in

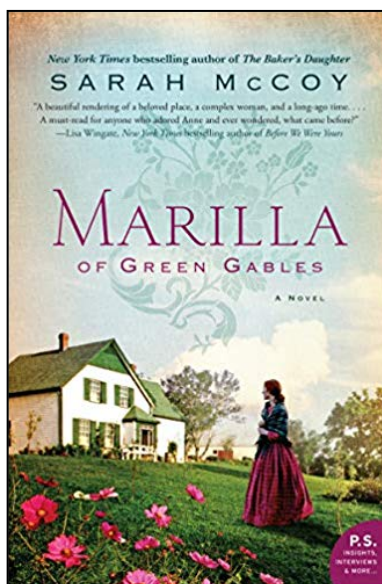
accord with the 'transformational potential' of the biblical witness-about contemporary social, political, and economic issues that would deny our agency and steal our hope for a better world. Who better to lead us into a tenacious solidarity with the God who lives in and beyond scripture than Walter Brueggemann. He has himself long been an exemplar of provocative testimony; we readers have long been and shall remain his grateful students." —Samuel E. Balentine, Union Presbyterian Seminary



Pick up a book review from the library bulletin board on **Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom**. Donald Shrive, president emeritus of Union Seminary in New York, has written an in-depth review of this great American by author David W. Blight from his research has included much new material about Frederick Douglass' life from birth to death.



In her latest devotional, **Embraced: 100 Devotions to Know God is Holding You Close**, Lysa TerKeurst shares wisdom, prayers, and key verses that point to God's devotion to His followers. Her stories and encouragement focus on God's determination to stay near to His people in all seasons and messes of their lives. She uses Deuteronomy 2:2–3 "turn north" often.



If you are a fan of **Anne of Green Gables**, you will welcome the novel **Marilla of Green Gables**, which tells the story of the woman who grew up and matured at Green Gables before the days of Anne. Sara McCoy has done much research to make the story rich in historical detail of turbulent times and life on Prince Edward Island in the last half of the 1800s. She weaves in many connections with the Anne Series. If you cry at the end of the book, let me know, for we shall be

"kindred spirits" as Anne Shirley often said.

—Jane Rolston



from the Director of Children's Ministries

Looking Back...

- Ministry FOR Kids:** Our Sunday School is going strong! We average about 30 children a Sunday. AND—we need Sunday School teachers for every other week in the 1st–3rd grade 9:00 a.m. classroom. Please let Pam know if you can help out.
- Ministry WITH Kids:** We had a great Fall Festival with games, crafts, and prizes, and a glow-in-the-dark dance party! We have had a fun and busy fall! Twice our families have helped provide a sack lunch for those experiencing homelessness. In September, the children and the youth made breakfast bags for the Murphy Center. In November, an intergenerational team assembled sack suppers for the Murphy Center's warming house. (We will do this between services every second Sunday through March.)
- Ministry BY Kids:** Our kiddos provided service in many great ways!
- September 14: Family Resource Fair at Murphy Center—we provided games and big bubbles for the children who came.
 - October 23: We made thank you cards for our veterans, which were distributed at the VFW on Veteran's Day.
 - November 20: We decorated cookies for NightLights.

Looking Forward...

- Ministry FOR Kids:** We will continue the PC(USA)'s curriculum, "Growing in Grace and Gratitude." We like its positive approach and empowering imagery of God and ourselves.
- Ministry WITH Kids:** Mark your calendar for these fun, family-friendly events:
- January 19, 5:00–7:00 p.m.: We are looking forward to our Potluck and Talent Share! It will be a fun evening and a way to get to know each other better (more info below)
 - March 4, 3:00–5:00 p.m.: Annual Easter Egg Dyeing Day. Anyone who wants to dye eggs or help our families dye eggs are welcome. Bring as many hardboiled eggs as you want, and we will provide the rest
- Ministry BY Kids:** Plan ahead to spread a little love:
- During MX on February 2, from 6:00–7:00 p.m., we will be making Cupid Cards for our Seniors. We will deliver them on Sunday, February 9, at 12:30 p.m.



Do You Have a Little-Known Talent or Hobby?

I like to sing!

My family can lip sync a song!

Sunday, January 19

5:00–5:45 PM
Potluck

6:00–7:00 PM
Talent Share

Does knitting count?

Any talent you want to share is great! The object is not a professional performance! It is a chance to get to know each other better in a fun way. We will only be able to accommodate **12 acts**, so sign up with Pam Armstrong ASAP!



At this time of year, it is easy to get caught up in gift-giving. Each of us has loved ones and special friends that we want to surprise with the perfect present. Like us, God also loves to give gifts! We have been given a combination of physical and personality traits as well as talents and abilities that make up our unique being. God wants us to share and use those gifts that we have been given.

This happens in a variety of ways. Some like to cook and share meals with those in need. Some can sing or play a musical instrument to enhance worship. Some can work with power tools to build housing for those in need. And some have the gift of leadership. What does that leadership entail? Leadership is the ability to listen to others, to discern what is needed and what God wants us to do in the world, and to work with others to accomplish goals.

We ask that you prayerfully consider the gifts of leadership or service which God has given you or someone you know. Many rewards that come with serving in a leadership position or being on a service team. You don't serve alone. All leadership positions at FPC are structured in such a way that when you join the Session, the Deacons, or the Nominating Committee, people are already in place who want to help you grow into your leadership responsibilities. If you have questions about specific leadership roles, ask an elder, a deacon, or any member of the nominating committee, and we will be glad to discuss the rewards and responsibilities of particular areas of service at FPC.

The Church Nominating Committee will be starting its formal campaign at the beginning of January to nominate church leaders for the upcoming year. However, if you feel called to nominate yourself or someone else right now, a copy of the nomination form is provided to the right. Simply fill it out and turn it into the church office or give it to one of the Nominating Committee members listed below.

—The Nominating Committee

Lynn Johnson, Chair
Mike Bohart
Linda De Waay, Elder
Mike Griffith

Penny Hillman-May
Jack Miller
Sue York, Deacon

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” —1 Peter 4:10

FPC LEADERSHIP NOMINATION FORM

It might be you or someone you know, but it starts with a tug at the heart: it’s God calling us to leadership in the church. It is, after all, our hearts that God seeks and cherishes. The Holy Spirit works to put forth leaders to work within our church family. Please review the roles described below. Then consider submitting your name or the name of another church member for consideration.

ELDERS

- 3-year term
- Along with our pastors, elders supervise the spiritual life of FPC. They have oversight for all areas of church life, 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 October through March as needed

Self-nominations are encouraged!

NOMINATION FORM

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 2, 2020

DEACON CORNER

As reported in the last *Messenger*, the 18-member FPC Board of Deacons is made up of nine teams that are each assigned to manage specific tasks. In each *Messenger* throughout this year, you will meet each devoted Deacon duo and find out what they are doing to support the members of our church family.

Fellowship

Katie Schmieden and Duane Krings lead the Fellowship Team.

Katie, along with her husband Rob have been members of FPC for over 25 years. They have two grown children, Drew (33) and Andrea (29), who both live in Fort Collins. Katie is serving her second term as a Deacon and feels called to this ministry. She enjoys spending time outdoors paddle boarding, playing tennis, hiking, biking and playing with her granddaughter. She works fulltime at Webber Middle School as the school secretary. Katie enjoys her work and feels like it is part of her mission in life. She has been there 21 years and still loves it.

Duane Krings moved to Fort Collins in 2012 with his wife Mary and two boys, Owen (12) and Elliot (10), and joined FPC a year later. Since joining Duane has kept active in the church, volunteering in our van ministry, serving coffee and bagels between services, and is now in his fifth year as a

deacon. When not volunteering, Duane works as an engineer at Intel and plays an occasional game of tennis.

Katie and Duane are our Fellowship Deacons, whose main focus is keeping the fellowship hour staffed with volunteers to make and set up the coffee, lemonade, and bagels we all enjoy. Their dedicated team is a small cadre of volunteers who serve as little or as often as they like, picking their own days to serve. It's a great team to start out in if you are thinking you'd like to volunteer more but are not sure how much time you can commit to, or if you just want to feel more connected to the church community and get to know more people. If you think you might like to join this team you can contact Katie at kschmieden@hotmail.com or (970) 988-4511 or Duane at duanekrings@gmail.com or (503) 754-1974, or just join online under the 'Deacons – Fellowship' group in MyFPC.



Katie Schmieden



Duane Krings

Hospital/Short-term Rehab Visitation

Betsy Towle and Nancy Randa lead this team. They say:

Our small but mighty team needs more people—aka, **YOU!**

- You commit to “check in” with the church office once a month, at an assigned week, to visit church members in hospital or rehab facility. One visit per person per week is usually sufficient.
- Visits can be brief, depending on your availability and the person's wishes.
- Substitutes are available if you have a conflict.
- Pastor Glenn Perica has begun mentoring and providing helpful tips to our team.

Hospital visits truly are one of the most meaningful and important ways that we can show compassion and love for our church family. If you can't volunteer, an important way **all church members** can help is by letting Betsy or Nancy know of any family member or friend who would like a visit.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Betsy Towle, (973)670-9058 or mtowle0@gmail.com, or Nancy Randa, (630)728-1573 or nanranda@gmail.com.



Betsy Towle

activities at FPC about eight years ago. Having being raised as a Southern Baptist and Rod as an Episcopalian, it was with much thought that they chose to become members of FPC three years ago. Brenda feels that her involvement in this church and the many friends she has made here are a great blessing and opportunity for her to grow as a Christian and as a person. A retired educator, Brenda enjoys reading, Pilates, walking, and especially traveling whenever possible. She and Rod are very involved with their two children, Tyler and Lara, son-in-law Ben, and their greatest joy who is their two-year-old grandson, Cedar.

have the option to sign up to provide meals if and when they are available.

Call the church office and talk to Marge Rice if you know someone who needs a meal or if you would like to be added to the meal maker team.



Nancy Randa

Karen Landau is a retired architect. She moved to Fort Collins three years ago from Florida to be near her daughter and grandson. She became a member of FPC shortly after moving and enjoys the friends she has made. She was raised Presbyterian. Karen's hobbies are quilting, playing bridge and puzzles.



Brenda Wiginton

Brenda and Karen's Deacon Meal Team provides several meals to members of FPC who are in need. Do you know someone who might need help with meals delivered to their home? Maybe they just had a baby, have health issues, or just got out of the hospital. The Meal Provider Team has even helped families who gathered together after a funeral. Do you know someone who needs some extra help with meals?

Meal Providers

Brenda Wiginton and Karen Landau head the Deacon Meal Provider Team.

Brenda Wiginton moved to Fort Collins shortly after her marriage to Rod McCormick in 1975. She began attending and being involved in many

They are also always looking for people who enjoy cooking. Could you cook a meal or two? Perhaps you might only want to volunteer once a year. All volunteers are valued. When they have a meal request, the Meal Provider Deacons email the team members who



Karen Landau

9 WAYS TO WHOLENESS
 The FPC Womens Retreat is back March 6-8, 2020!
 Beth Mueller will lead this weekend together using the Enneagram personality types that aid self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-development.
 Consider inviting a sister, a mother, a daughter, a friend—it makes a great Christmas gift!
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: February 7, 2020. Register now at firstpresfc.org.

LIVING INTO OUR VISION

BEING AN OPEN AND WELCOMING CHURCH

As we approach Advent and Christmas, and with Easter not far behind, we experience many visitors who come to FPC for the first time or the first time in a while. We certainly have a reputation for being a warm and welcoming church, but we can always do more! Our vision together is to be a Christ-centered, open, and welcoming church on the move. Advent and Christmas — with extra events, spectacular music, and the draw of this holy season — present us with a perfect opportunity to more fully live into our vision of being an open and welcoming church!

Now, you might think to yourself that we have ushers and greeters to welcome people — that is their job. Or, we have staff who reach out to visitors — that is their job. And you wouldn't be wrong, but being a welcoming church is more than that, and we each have a role to play! Welcoming is not just the work of a small group of people; rather, it is the congregation as a whole that is the most important group for welcoming visitors!

First impressions are lasting impressions. Most first time visitors have made up their minds about whether or not they will return to the church within the first 10 minutes of walking in the door — that is before the sermon, maybe before the choir sings, definitely before a cup of coffee during fellowship time. Research shows that as someone walks in the church door the first time, the first question on their mind is about the culture: “is there anyone here like me?” We want people to know that yes, they will find others like them, and we welcome everyone, no matter who they are. The second question they ask is more personal, “Is there anyone here who is interested in me?” That means that in order to be welcoming, we have to both invite people into our space *and* we have to take the next step of actually listening to them. This is something we can all do!

A 2018 study by Barna Group found that the number one thing people are looking for in a new church home is knowing that they will be welcomed. The second is friendships, and the third is support during difficult times. Similarly, they found that the single most important factor in why a visitor continues to come back to the church is a sense of authentic community. In other words, people are coming to church looking first for a friend; everything else we do is secondary. What does that mean for us? Of course we will continue to pour effort into spectacular worship and educational programming for all ages. And we will continue to live out our call to be the hands and feet of Jesus. But, perhaps the most important thing we do at church, especially for visitors and newer members, is to welcome them into the community and help them to connect in relationship with people in our church family.

—Miriam Nelson

What does welcoming look like? What can I do?

- Warmly greet everyone who walks into the church and comes within 10 feet of you. Also, think of the “rule of 3.” It takes roughly three minutes for a visitor to leave the sanctuary and get to their car, and that is one of the best times to initiate a conversation! So, for the first three minutes after worship ends, target only people you don't know for conversation. This will help to break up the “holy huddle.” Churches often fall into the trap of thinking they are friendly because they are friendly to their friends, but might not actually be to people who aren't “friends” yet.
- If you do not know someone's name, ask it! Yes, of course, you might accidentally ask someone's name who has been a member for 40 years; but, if you don't know their name, they probably don't know yours! Embrace the opportunity to meet someone and learn their name, even if it feels awkward.
- You could always say something like, “I'm not sure I've seen you before...I'm [Your Name],” or “I think I recognize you, but I'm so sorry that I can't remember your name...I'm [Your Name].” Visitors will often self-identify and give you more information on which to follow up. And, we can just agree to give each other grace if we don't remember a name and introduce ourselves again!
- Repeat their name after they give it to you, for example: “It's nice to meet you, John, I'm glad you are here!”
- If someone asks for directions, walk them to their destination rather than point the way.
- Try to avoid using “insider language” (e.g., Shep Hall).
- If you are in a position of a longer conversation with a visitor, ask them something about themselves (job, did they recently move, what brought them into FPC, etc.).
- Introduce visitors to someone else so they can make another point of contact.
- Invite people to a specific class, event, or program.
- Acknowledge that visitors might feel uncomfortable and let them know you felt the same way the first time you attended.
- Ask them to sign the pad in the pew with contact information for a follow-up note from Miriam.
- Take your cue for physical contact from each person you greet. Do NOT hug everyone — many are not comfortable with that contact (even people you know well). You can offer a hand, but someone might not be comfortable with that either, especially during cold and flu season. When in doubt, err on the side of LESS contact.
- Remember that some visitors might prefer to fly under the radar a little. If you sense them pulling back, don't try to pressure them into a conversation.
- Most important, be yourself!

welcome little one

Announcing a special new arrival:

Russell Solomon

son of Robyn and Nathan Reisch
born November 14, 2019



Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death in America?

Many of the risk factors are preventable.

Get your cholesterol, blood pressure, and glucose tested for free!

25- minute, one-on-one, confidential appointment with a nurse.
Test results, recommendations, and follow-up provided.



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Offered at First Presbyterian Church!
Tuesday, Jan. 28
Wednesday, Jan. 29
8:00 AM - 10:30 AM

The test is free for residents of the Health District of Northern Larimer County, which includes Fort Collins, Laporte, Wellington, Timnath, Livermore, Red Feather Lakes and Bellvue. The cost for all others is \$15.00



See healthdistrict.org for a full list of Health District services

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Mardi Gras PARTY

Tuesday, February 25

6:00-9:00 PM

CooperSmith's, Downtown FC

Watch firstpresfc.org
for tickets!





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YOU'RE INVITED
to be a part of a vibrant worship experience!

Watoto

The Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda performing a
FREE CONCERT of their new album, "We Will Go."

January 25, 2020
6:00 PM
First Presbyterian Church
Fort Collins

The poster features a vibrant, geometric background with colorful triangles in shades of teal, yellow, purple, and blue. Three photographs of young children from the Watoto Children's Choir are integrated into the design: a boy in a white shirt and blue overalls, a girl in a blue dress, and a girl in a colorful patterned dress. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold sans-serif and large, flowing script fonts.