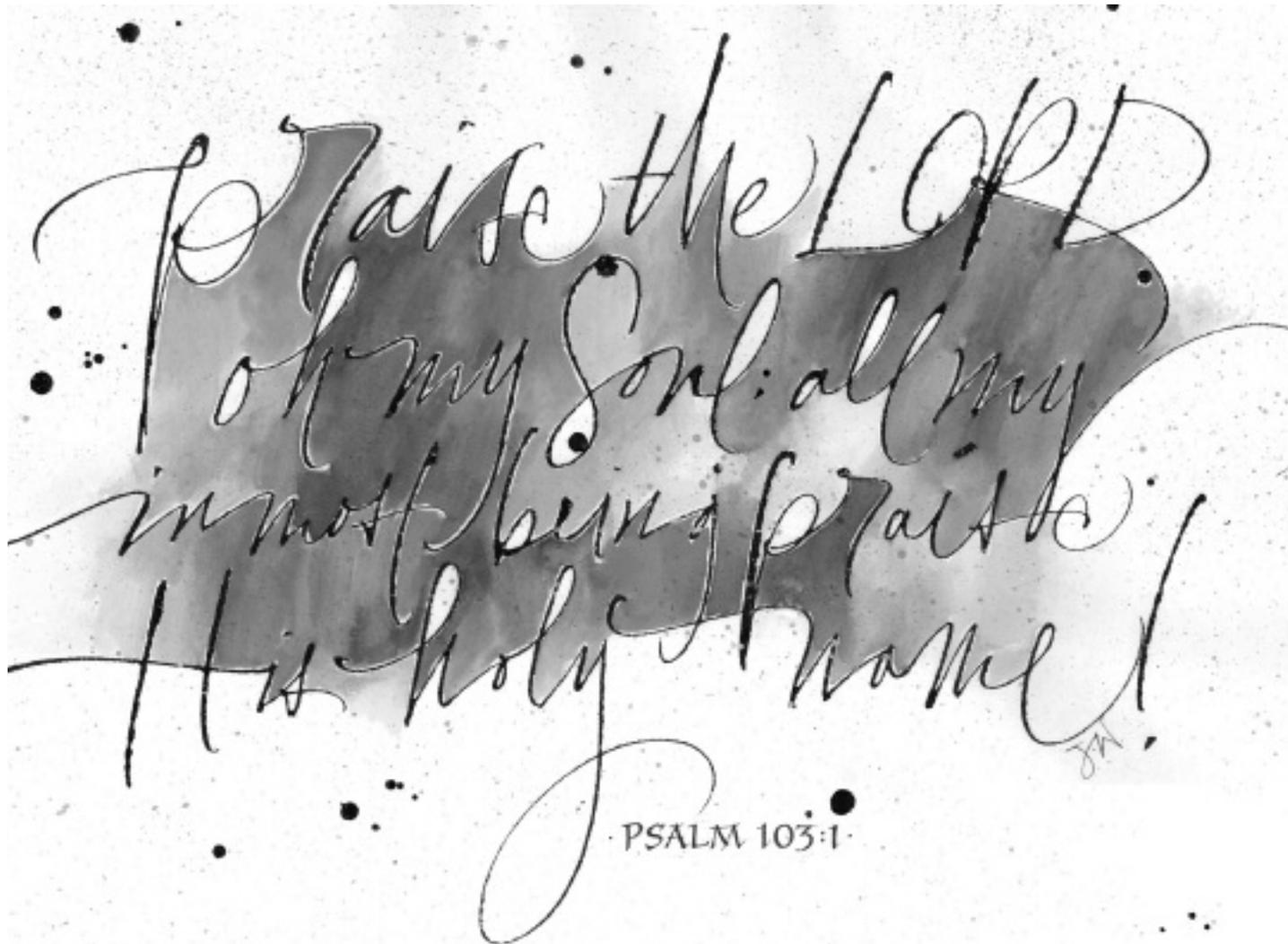


Epistle *to the Bonitians*



THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BONITA SPRINGS | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017



OUR MISSION

To welcome and nurture our community, help people grow as disciples of Christ, and present a positive witness in today's world.

First Presbyterian Church of Bonita Springs

A BIBLICALLY-CENTERED CHURCH IN THE PRESBYTERIAN FELLOWSHIP

9751 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs, FL 34135 | 239 992 3233 | 239 992 7547 fax | fpconita.org

Doug's Desk

Dear Members and Friends of First Church,

A new year brings another exciting and energizing winter season to Southwest Florida. Your church is ready to welcome all who come and provide great spiritual, cultural, and fellowship opportunities. I am relieved and grateful that all the various renovation projects undertaken over the past six months have now been completed, and we are fully operational. Among the new and improved aspects of our church are a resurfaced and improved parking area (giving us a net gain of approximately 30 more spaces), new and reupholstered furniture in the Sanctuary, various roof and air conditioning repairs, and a beautiful renovation to the Great Room.

In early December, we welcomed Dr. Allen Walworth to our seasonal pastoral staff. Allen and his wife Connie, who live in Dallas, are renting a home here in Bonita Springs through Easter, and you will have a chance to hear Allen preach and teach a number of times through this winter. Along with Pastors Steven, June and Brad, Allen brings great skill and expertise to our ministry team. It is a pleasure for me to work alongside these dedicated servants of the Lord.

A special task force of pastors, elders, staff and church members has been busy exploring our options for enhancing our church's communications and possible use of social media outlets. This is an area in which I frankly have no experience or expertise. Pastor Brad, who is very media-savvy, has taken the lead in this process. In December, we hosted an outstanding national consultant in all areas of church media and communication, and are moving toward some practical and exciting new possibilities.

During the month of January, we will again be privileged to host four graduate students from Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Boston. Each is completing a Master of Divinity degree in preparation for the pastoral ministry; all four are "millennials" in their 20s. They will be spending significant time with me and other members of our staff, as well as assisting in worship, teaching and other pastoral ministries. Investing some of our time and financial resources in raising up and equipping future Christian leaders is a wise strategy to prepare for the future of the Church. I am excited to think that pastors 40 years younger than I am will be here (even when I am gone) to reach their own genera-



Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt

tion for Christ and lead dynamic congregations. I invite you to consider a gift to the seminary scholarship fund through First Church. This year we are providing full or partial tuition scholarships to nine students at Gordon Conwell, and also developing personal relationships with them to mentor and guide them.

During the year 2017 I will be serving as Moderator of Peace River Presbytery, which is a collection of 37 churches in Southwest Florida (stretching from Bradenton in the north to Naples in the south). The ceremonial duties are time-consuming, but I am honored to represent our church in this way—and possibly be a support and encouragement to other congregations (most of which are not blessed with our resources).

My prayer for you is that you will find opportunities to learn and grow and be enriched by each worship service, concert, program and class offered this winter at First Church!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Doug Pratt

Christian Education

Sunday Mornings



Historical Books of the Old Testament: Joshua and Judges

D.I.G. • Begins January 8 • 10:10-10:50 AM • Great Room

Although Moses led his people out of slavery in Egypt and through the wilderness, it was Joshua who became the leader to take the people into the Promised Land. Joshua is a book full of stories of conquest, and deals with fear, trust and especially courage. The book of Judges has one recurring line: “And everyone did what was right in their own eyes...” Many would say that describes our culture today. Before there was a king in Israel, there were judges who were the leaders, and these are their stories. Both Joshua and Judges contain stories that inspire and stories that disturb. Our pastoral staff is leading this series.

Discussing *Mere Christianity*

Exploring the History, Meaning, and Relevance of C.S. Lewis’s Greatest Book

January 15-March 26 • 10:10-10:50 AM • Price Hall Chapel

During this 9-week DVD study led by Dr. Al Barrow, discover why *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis is one of the most read and beloved Christian books of all time. But, 70 years after it was first delivered on radio, what possible relevance can it have in today’s world? Host Eric Metaxas (author of *Amazing Grace* and *Bonhoeffer*) along with a variety of Christian leaders help us understand the timeless message of C.S. Lewis in fresh ways for a new generation. Hear what Philip Yancey, Alister McGrath, Devin Brown, Paul McCusker and Douglas Gresham have to say.

January Memory Verse

Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

– Psalm 119:105

Monday Evenings

Pastor’s Study

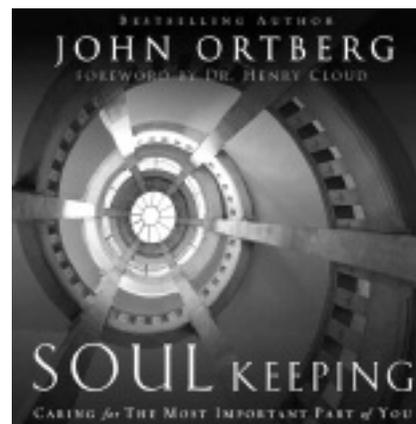
Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You

January 16-February 20 • 7 PM • Price Hall Chapel

This six-session, video-based study by John Ortberg shows that caring for our soul is necessary for our Christian life. What is our soul? Why is it important? We can learn to care for our soul so that it contributes to the depth and beauty of our relationships with God and others. Led by Pastors Steven Grant and John McWilliams.

“A soul without a center feels constantly vulnerable to people or circumstances. But the soul comes alive when it is centered on God.”

– John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*



Pastor’s Study “Monumental”

Monday, February 27 • 7 PM • CenterPoint

Come join us for the viewing of the Christian film “Monumental” followed by a time of discussion led by Pastor John McWilliams. It features the true story of its star and producer Kirk Cameron, a father of six, following him across Europe and the U.S. as he seeks to discover America’s true “national treasure.” Along the way, we get a new perspective of our nation and how the band of religious outcasts who founded this country hit upon a formula for success—establishing a nation of civil, economic and religious liberty.

Scribes of Hope II

**Coming to First Church Art Gallery:
January 20-February 17**

The foundation of the Christian faith is our belief in and understanding of the Word of God revealed through Scripture. Following the work of the original authors, generations of scribes faithfully transcribed these words onto parchment and paper, and honored the text by illuminating it.

For today's calligraphers, there exists a tension between traditional commitments to create work that is legible and a more contemporary view that emphasizes expressing the spirit of the text. *Scribes of Hope* embraces this tension.

The *Scribes of Hope II* traveling exhibit features 31 works across a wide range of approaches and includes traditional lettering and illumination; artist books and letterpress work showcasing fresh directions in calligraphic design; and letters created by hand and then scanned in the computer for further alteration.



"Friend of Justice" by Rod Sawatsky; painting on canvas

On the cover: "Psalm 103:1" by Julie Wildman;
sumi ink and watercolors on Arches Text Wove

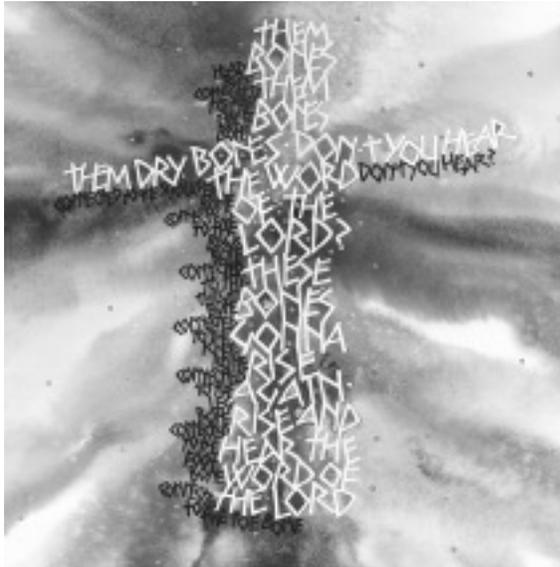


Internationally known calligrapher Timothy Botts is the curator of this exhibit, which is on loan from Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA). Here is what he says about the exhibit:

Scribes of Hope II is an opportunity to celebrate the centrality of the word in Christianity. But since God has revealed himself through both text and image — through Scripture and Christ made visible — it is not surprising to find lettering artists incorporating both elements in some of their pieces. The work in this exhibit represents a great continuum, an ancient faith that is vital with hope today. What a rich position for the artist to occupy, referencing the past as well as the present.

Like many works of art in modern collections, some pieces in this exhibit will raise questions. These may not seem hopeful, but they remind us that mystery and depth are very much a part of the Master of the Universe. Legibility has traditionally been part of the calligrapher's calling, but some of the work in *Scribes of Hope II* is not easily read. The parallel might be drawn to some twentieth century artworks wherein expression is primary and communication goes beyond a single "language." Calligraphers have been traditionally known for their high degree of craftsmanship, but some of this work is scrawled. These pieces serve to remind us that we occupy a messy world living and working with Gospel hope, evidence that God's coming Kingdom is not yet consummated.

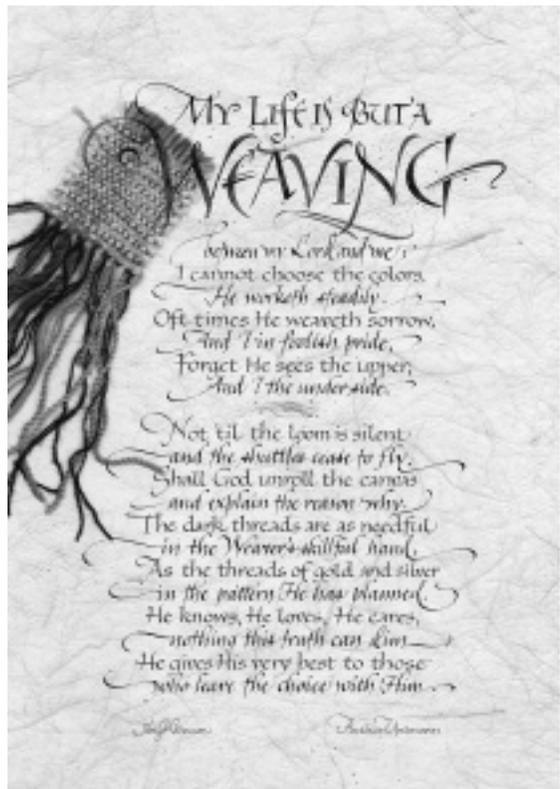
Timothy Botts
Glen Ellyn, Illinois



"Them Dry Bones" by Timothy Botts; painting based on Ezekial 37



"Blessed are They" by Charles Lehman, from Jeremiah 17:7



"My Life is But a Weaving" by Holly V. Monroe

One Artist's Journey

Over the course of his 30+ year career with Tyndale House Publishers (near Chicago), Timothy R. Botts has designed over 600 books and authored nine — including *Doorposts*, *Messiah*, *The Book of Psalms*, *Proverbs*, and a Bible illustrated in his calligraphy. Ever since his first grade art teacher defined him as an “artist,” Tim’s life seemed to revolve around artistic expression. His years at Carnegie-Mellon University earning a BFA in graphic design included an apprenticeship with Professor Arnold Bank — calligrapher of international stature whose career spanned the fields of education, publishing, advertising, print and architectural lettering. Tim was also influenced by the contemporary visual expressions of faith in the bold Pop art of Sister Corita Kent and the social realism of work by Ben Shahn. During three years in Japan, he studied traditional brush writing and gained deeper understanding of space and symmetry. An instructor at the College of DuPage since 1975, Tim’s award-winning work is part of the permanent collection of Chicago’s Newberry library and has appeared in numerous exhibitions. Tim and his wife, Nancy, have three grown children and 12 grandchildren, and reside in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

“As one who reveres the Holy Bible as God’s words, calligraphy became a natural link between my art and spirituality. In most of my work I am making word pictures — words expressed to look like what they mean. I’m always trying to come up with fresh ideas which get right to the heart of the message. The frequent joy comes from my personal experience with the gospel of Jesus.”

– Timothy Botts, from *timbotts.com*

FPC Leadership

Elders

Thank you for your service!

The following elders just completed their 3-year terms of church leadership in December. We want to acknowledge and thank them for their faithful service.

Ron Brown

Ron has served as chair of the Resurrection Garden Committee and on Strategic Planning.

Jim Croley

Jim has served on Strategic Planning and formed the IT Task Force.

Tom Grafton

Tom has served as Clerk of Session.

Mal Griffin

Mal was chair of the Building and Grounds Committee.

Dave Lyons

Dave served on the Mission Leadership Team and chaired the Saturday Night Service Task Force.

Mary Ann McCoy

Mary Ann chaired the Membership Committee.

Leadership through Service is a characteristic that Jesus lived out perfectly with every breath — never growing weary, always strong and giving power to the weak. God is everlasting and His understanding is unfathomable, yet He came down from heaven, taking on the robe of humanity in all its essence. He became a flesh-and-blood man who wept from sorrow, washed the feet of His followers, healed the sick, and died for our sins. By living (and dying) as our most perfect servant, Jesus showed us how to live and how to lead... with humility, yet with the power of His Father to uphold us. We place our hope in Him because “we are like clay jars in which this treasure is stored” (2 Cor. 4:7). Jesus tells us, “for the least among all of you is the greatest” (Luke 9:48).

This issue features those among us who choose to “lead through service.” We invite you to listen to what they say, in word and action. Be open to how the Lord may be leading you to serve in 2017, to grow in your love for Him and in the service of His kingdom.



Incoming elders (from left to right): Lynn Heinold, Ken Baldwin, Sharon Morrison, Janice Croley, GR Houck, Doug Mehle



Outgoing elders (from left to right): Mal Griffin, Dave Lyons, Mary Ann McCoy, Tom Grafton, Ron Brown, Jim Croley

New Class of Elders

Ken Baldwin

Ken (wife Charlotte) joined our church as an affiliate member in 2002 and full member in 2015. He was previously ordained as both an elder and deacon in his former church in Pennsylvania. At FPC, Ken is deeply involved with the Great Banquet and Men's Ministry. A former owner/operator of a textile business, he now enjoys golf, reading and Bible study. The Baldwins have three children and four grandchildren.

"One motivation for moving full time to Florida was to be closer to this church and contribute to its mission. As an elder, I can serve our Lord in gratitude for all His blessings and, perhaps, lead others to Him."

Janice Croley

Janice (husband Jim) joined our church in 2006. She has been active in Women's Ministry, served on the HR Committee and as wedding coordinator. Janice is the 2017 Women's Lay Director for the Great Banquet, an OSL member and serves on the BCF prayer team. A Florida resident since 1981, she is HR manager for a local imaging center. Janice enjoys cooking with her husband and small group Bible study. They have a combined family of four children and eight grandkids.

"In different times of my life, when challenges seemed bigger than me, I could always depend on my Lord to see me through. It gives me great joy and blessings to be in His service for my church, pastors and members as I am called."

Lynn Heinold

Lynn (wife Jill) joined our church in 2007 and has served FPC as an ordained deacon. He is a member of the Worship Committee Communion Team, active in the Great Banquet and often serves as an usher for church events. A Pennsylvania native, Lynn is former Manager of Commercial Operations with the Philadelphia Electric Company. He enjoys nonfiction, travel and experiencing life all over again with his grandkids.

"This church has greatly influenced me in my walk with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and I am thankful for this opportunity to serve Him and His Church."

GR Houck

GR (wife Joanne) joined our church in 2009. He is involved with the Bonita Christian Forum and Great Banquet, and volunteered at First Thrift Shop for three years. A former dentist who has lived in Ohio and Georgia, GR enjoys tennis and reading, and is on the board of his HOA. He and Joanne have two children and five grandchildren.

"First Church has been a place of significant spiritual growth for me and I am honored to serve God in this church that I love so much. He has blessed me more than I deserve; I want to give back in any way He leads."

Doug Mehle

Doug (wife Lyn) joined our church as an affiliate member in 2008 and full member this past January. He sings in the Men's Choir, has been a greeter, a volunteer at First Thrift Shop and attended the Great Banquet. Doug also attends a small group men's Bible study during season. A former resident of central Missouri, he was a McDonald's franchisee for 30 years, operating restaurants there. Doug enjoys golf, tennis, travel and reading. He and Lyn have two children, five grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

"FPC has been a great source of spiritual growth for both my wife and me. Becoming an elder supports that growth and presents an opportunity to serve."

Sharon Morrison

Sharon (husband Pat) has been a member of FPC for 29 years. She became a deacon in 2012, moderator of Deacons in 2014, and has been both a member and chair of the Visitation Ministry. Sharon has served on the Worship and CE committees, is an OSL member and involved in the Jail Ministry. A Collier County teacher for 27 years, she now works at Artis-Naples' Schrenk Photo Institute. She enjoys bluegrass and photography, loves nature, and has two children.

"Since attending the Great Banquet in 2009 I have accepted several assignments I thought I could not do — but God could... and did. So I am humbled to serve, and pray He carries me through once again."

Deacons

A sincere thank you goes out to the Deacon class of 2016 for their service in the many ministries and projects overseen by these officers. Many of them will continue to be active in these ministries.

The outgoing Deacon class includes: Joan Havens-Kester, JoAnn Hochstetler, Ann Luedke, Norma Reynolds, Judy Teasdale, Margaret Winn.

A special thanks to Judi Van Cleave who served as Moderator of the Board of Deacons this past year. Leslie Durling will serve as Moderator in 2017.

Our deacons are charged with serving the needs of the congregation. Originally (in the Book of Acts), they were the seven men appointed by the Apostles to take care of widows and the poor in the early church — giving the Twelve more time to focus on teaching and preaching.

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word “diakonos” which means “servant.” The origin of the ordained office of deacon is found in Acts 6:1-7 and those chosen were “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.” As the Book of Order describes them, deacons are officers of the church whose authority rests in their ministry of witness, sympathy and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, and sound judgment are best suited for this office.

At First Church, our deacons earnestly undertake the ministries involved in caring for our congregation. Serving in 3-year terms, they are involved in the following 13 ongoing ministry projects.

- Community Servants Recognition: organizing the annual event and cookie shower honoring first responders
- Flower Ministry: delivering flowers on Easter and Christmas to members not able to attend worship
- Food Basket Ministry: providing a holiday food basket to a church family in need of extra support
- Home Communion: arranging visits for those unable to attend worship each time the sacrament is served to the congregation
- Manger Tree: organizing the collection and distribution of member-donated Christmas gifts to community after-school programs
- Memorial Service Ministry: providing a prayerful presence at FPC memorial services in support of the bereaved family



Incoming deacons (from left to right): Loren Luppés, Sandy Flaig, Linda Faas, Elaine Morton, John Fisher. Not pictured: Joan Robinson



Outgoing deacons (from left to right): Joan Havens-Kester, Margaret Winn, Norma Reynolds, JoAnn Hochstetler, Ann Luedke, Judy Teasdale

- Military Care Ministry: overseeing the prayer list for those in active service who are associated with our church, and providing the means for members and friends to send a care package to those deployed overseas
- Mission Liaison: keeping the Diaconate aware of all First Missions initiatives through contact with the Mission Leadership Team
- New Member Follow Up: contacting new church members to extend a warm welcome
- Prayer Coordination: focusing on the importance of prayer and managing the prayer network to cover concerns of members, lay leaders and staff
- Salvation Army Bell Ringers: recruiting volunteers for kettle stations before Christmas
- Sunday Morning Hospitality: helping with “First Stop” — our coffee & fellowship time after services
- Visitation Ministry: caring for those who are sick, recuperating from illness or in need of remembrance through a personal visit, phone call, card or letter. The Prayer Shawl Ministry works in conjunction with our Visitation Teams.

New Class of Deacons

Linda Faas

Linda joined our church in 2008 after moving from Richmond, VA. She has been attending the Women's Ministry programs and is interested in all areas of service. Linda is a former insurance agent and also worked in medical billing for a surgical group. She enjoys travel, kayaking, Bible study and spending time with family.

"At a time in my spiritual journey when I needed guidance and direction, this opportunity presented itself unexpectedly. I feel it was an answer to prayer and look forward to serving."

John Fisher

John (wife Dot) joined our church in 2014 after retiring and moving to Bonita. He immediately became involved in the FPC Jail Ministry for 18 months and, more recently, the Florida Kairos prison ministry. John was born in Scotland, grew up in Toronto, and spent 36 years in multiple positions in international sales/marketing at Caterpillar Inc. He enjoys travel, history and global politics. John and Dot have two children and one granddaughter.

"I have been given a very good life. I feel God has a hold on me and my Christian work has only just begun. I would like to become more of a servant-leader in the church."

Sandy Flaig

Sandy (husband Scott) joined our church in 2011, coming from Massachusetts where she was active in parish councils, Eucharistic ministry, Bible study and mentoring young couples. At FPC, she has served as a greeter, been involved in our Membership Committee and faithfully attends several Women's Ministry studies. Long retired from the Center for Ministries at Merrimack College, Sandy enjoys tennis, reading and FGCU basketball. Sandy and Scott have three children and six grandkids.

"The concept of being Christ's hands and feet on earth is very powerful to me. I think every day provides an opportunity to minister to others."

Loren Luppés

Loren (wife Donna) joined our church as an affiliate member in 2009 and full member in 2015, moving to Estero from Decatur, IL. He was previously ordained as a deacon in his former church. At FPC, Loren sings in the Chancel Choir and faithfully attends his Great Banquet reunion group, Men's Ministry Fellowship, BCF and concert events. He is a former engineer, retiring as president of Tate and Lyle—a global provider of food ingredients. Loren enjoys boating and golf, and has two children and three grandchildren.

"I look forward to serving and getting to know our members better, helping and comforting others, and reinforcing my commitment to our Lord and Savior."

Elaine Morton

Elaine (husband Dan) joined our church in 2012, after attending for several years and moving from Connecticut. She has served with the Visitation Ministry and Resurrection Garden Committee, regularly attends D.I.G, Women's studies and her Great Banquet reunion group. A retired nurse, she was Senior Director of Education Worldwide for United States Surgical Corp for 18 years and also published a book in 2006, *Mom's the Word*. She enjoys golf, reading, and her family—five sons, 21 grandkids and six great grandchildren.

"Ever since I joined FPC, I have felt an increasing presence of the Lord in my life. Serving as a deacon is a wonderful gift that He has given me along this road."

Joan Robinson

Joan joined our church in January 2015 and has since been active in the Great Banquet, Women's Ministry, Jail Ministry, Home Communion and Visitation. She is a Tuesday Singer, a member of the Chancel Choir and sings with the Naples Phil Chorale. Joan served as an ordained deacon at her former church. Now retired, she was a radiology technician at Tufts New England Medical Center in Boston, and has a home in NY state. A distance master swimmer, Joan loves art, piano, kayaking and morning devotions.

"It is both an honor and a privilege to serve God through First Church and put my Christian faith into action."

Sundays

Our winter schedule of three services includes First Light at 7:30 AM followed by full services with choir at 9 AM and 11 AM. CenterPoint is open for the two later services.

Adult Bible studies are held from 10:05 to 10:50 AM in the Chapel and Great Room. Children's Sunday school (Neon Kids) for ages 6 months through fifth grade is held during the 11 AM service. Childcare for children ages 6 months to 3 years is available at the 9 AM service as well as during adult Bible study.

Coffee and refreshments, what we call our "First Stop," is offered after each service in McClure Hall and the Art Gallery.

First Light

Our Sunday "early bird" service is held at 7:30 AM. It includes all the basic worship elements of music, message and Scripture—having the same preacher and message as the later services—but neatly packaged into a 40-minute time frame. Coffee and refreshments are available following First Light; make that your first stop before getting on with the activities of your day.

A Time of Prayer & Communion

Sundays • 12 Noon • Price Hall Chapel
This opportunity to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion and experience a time of healing prayer (except on Sundays when the sacrament is shared during worship) is held after the 11 AM service. Come to Price Chapel where one of our ministers will be present to welcome those who wish to take Communion and receive healing prayer offered by our prayer teams.

January 15

The King's Brass, musical guests
Family Worship (11AM)

January 22

New Horizons Super Kids Club Choir
Huntley Brown, guest artist
Ordination & Installation of Church Officers

January 29

Kirkin' o' the Tartan
Drama: Saint Columba

February 5

Lindsey Graham, guest artist
Souper Bowl of Caring

February 19

Barbary Coast Band, musical guests

Special Services

Ash Wednesday Worship
March 1 • 7 PM • Sanctuary
Hanover College Choir, musical guests

Mondays

Evening Pastor's Study

January 16 – February 20
7 PM • Price Hall Chapel
February 27
7 PM • CenterPoint

Wednesdays

Family Night

January 18 – February 15 • 6-7:30 PM
Family Ministries Center
Wednesday night is Family Night with programs for all ages! Children age 3 through 5th grade can join in Lil'K or KIDMO. There is Illumination for middle and high school students, and, for parents, a parenting class with Pastor Brad. See pages 20-21 for more information. Childcare is provided for children 6 months–2 years of age.

Saturdays

CenterPoint Praise

5:30 PM • CenterPoint
First Church offers an alternative evening service that features contemporary praise music in the casual atmosphere of CenterPoint. The same Bible-based message is delivered by the same pastor as the following Sunday morning. Music is led by a featured artist each week.

Epistle *to the Bonitians*

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017

Editor: RJ Flower-Opdycke
Copy Editor: Donabeth Urick
Design: gilurickdesign

Contributing Writers:

Ken Baldwin	Sharon Morrison
Trusha Barner	Elaine Morton
Dr. Al Barrow	John & Sally Myers
Cheryl Bauer	Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt
Nancy Bolognese	Norma Reynolds
Timothy R. Botts	Joan Robinson
Alison Corner	Rev. Brad Rogers
Janice Croley	Dave Stauffer
Connie Duquin	Donna Tenfelde
Linda Faas	Judi Van Cleave
Jeff Faux	Al Vandam
John A. Fisher	Rev. Dr. Allen Walworth
Sandy Flaig	

Margaret Gieselmann	Contributing Photographers:
Lauren Hargis	Dave Nichols
Lynn Heinold	Dave Reynolds
G R Houck	
Carl Johansen	Cover graphic by calligrapher/ illustrator Julie Wildman
Loren Luppés	
Rev. John McWilliams	
Doug Mehle	

The Great Banquet

A banquet is being prepared... for you!

The Great Banquet is part of a family of ministries at First Church that brings people together for a life-changing experience of God's grace. The Great Banquet weekend is a 72-hour experience, beginning on Thursday evening and ending Sunday evening. For three days, guests live and study together in a worshipful time of singing, prayer and discussion. During each of fifteen talks given by laity and clergy, the theme of God's grace is presented. Guests participate in the daily celebration of Holy Communion and experience God's grace through the prayers and acts of a loving, Christian community.

Team leaders work for months in advance, making preparations for each banquet. The teams consist of members of our church who have already experienced the Great Banquet and work behind the scenes to make this event unforgettable for each person attending for the first time. Guests are enveloped in the love of Christ, lifted up in prayer and given the opportunity to experience a true Christian community.

Do you want to strengthen your spiritual life? Do you want a better understanding of prayer, the sacraments and Christian action? Do you strive to live a Christian life that bears fruit for God? Do you seek to know Jesus as Lord and Savior and to make Him known? If your answer is yes to any of these questions, God may be drawing you toward accepting His invitation to the Great Banquet. We welcome your R.S.V.P.

Men's Great Banquet – February 9-12, 2017

Women's Great Banquet – February 16-19, 2017

For more information, contact Community Lay Directors:

David Mustian at 239-498-5972 or jadmust@aol.com

Jerry Weisenauer at 239-948-8056 or jerry@jerrylw.com

Personal Testimonials

Al Vandam: In 2013, during a local Bible study group discussion, I heard the term "Great Banquet." As a spiritual journey newcomer, I asked, "Where in the Bible was this banquet mentioned?"

The ensuing description of a three-and-a-half day "live in" spiritual immersion seemed far over my head requiring too much advanced knowledge. My mind said "wait a year" until I was "Biblically smarter." While bike riding, a thought or voice (I now know it was the Holy Spirit) came into my mind and said, "Go and you will jump start your spiritual journey." I attended Great Banquet #25 at age 71 and emerged as a believer of Christ and a changed man.



Alison Corner & Al Vandam

Alison Corner: When Al returned from the Great Banquet, he was very excited about his weekend, having accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior! Very quickly, I noticed a distinct change in Al. He was faithfully setting aside quiet time for prayer and morning devotions but, more importantly, he was trying very hard to be a more considerate spouse. As his reminder, he taped a sign above the coffee pot which reads: "Are you willing to do whatever it takes TODAY to make your marriage what God intends it to be? How could God use me TODAY to show HIS love to my spouse?"

I think the change in Al after he attended the GB was my inspiration to seek a deeper relationship with God. Although a lifelong believer in the Holy Trinity and a church-goer most of my adult life, I did not have the strength of faith that Al now possessed. He encouraged me to attend the Women's Great Banquet, which I did in 2015. I emerged from the GB a more spiritually guided person, and started a daily practice of morning prayer and devotional reading. It has deeply influenced my life and strengthened our marriage.

Al & Alison: After several years of attending FPC and with the commonality of attending the Great Banquet influencing our lives both as individuals and as a couple, we joined First Church as members together.

Today, we carve out time for morning devotionals and often discuss the day's "Daily Bread" readings as well as Doug's sermons and interpretations of the Bible. We are a "changed" partnership—sharing Grace at evening meals, faithfully going to church here and in Massachusetts, and participating in church activities. We are also more tuned in to each other's feelings, able to better talk through the invariable "relationship issues" and take inward pride in the progression of our spiritual journeys.

De Colores!

He Keeps Coming Back

by John A. Fisher

My upbringing may be a little different than the average FPC parishioner (“we are what we were when”). I was born in St. Andrews, Scotland. My parents emigrated to Canada, where I grew up in Toronto. We had a comfortable life. My father was an active elder in our local church. Our Christian lifestyle led me to serve as a counselor for an urban church camp for inner city children and in soup kitchens downtown.

But there was this unsettledness in me that wanted more. So I put my Christian upbringing behind me, left a very good job in Toronto, ended a serious relationship of three years and, like most immigrants, came to America with great expectations. After moving to the U.S. at the age of 28, I admit I have had a comfortable life... lived in nice houses, had good friends.

Over the course of 36 years with a large multi-national company, I became “worldly wise.” Holding multiple positions in international sales, marketing and product management, I traveled globally and saw much. Most recently living in Hong Kong for three years, I traveled in mainland China and southeast Asia. This experience made me quickly realize how blessed life is in the United States. I have a wonderful wife (from PA), two married daughters and one grandchild.

With all this comfort and security, I fell into a church “routine.” But God kept knocking at my door. We have all heard that He sometimes allows us to undergo trials and tribulations in our lives to remind us of His truth. Well, many of my trials revolved around health issues, including cancer in my 40s, heart disease in my 50s and a serious stroke at 60. Because of these difficulties, I often recall James 1:2-4: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Looking at me now, you would think I was the epitome of good health. I can now say that my trials were indeed a joy! As my Christian friends have said, God has a hold on me.

Today, I am actively seeking God, willing to take risks for Him and asking, in all situations, “How can He use me?” I became a member of First Church in 2014. Drawn to serving on the Mission Leadership Team, I became involved weekly in the Jail Ministry for 18 months. Recently I joined

the Florida Kairos prison ministry program at Desoto correctional center in Arcadia, Florida. Kairos is an international prison ministry program similar in structure to the Great Banquet, which I have attended multiple times.

In conclusion, I recall the line from a popular novel in the 60s: “The truth knocks on the door and you say ‘Go away, I’m looking for the truth’. And so it goes away. Puzzling.” (Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*)

The truth is: the absence of God is never permanent. He keeps coming back — to shape and mold us into His servant-leaders. To quote Paul’s letter to Thessalonians, “Rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (I Thess. 5: 16-17).



(Left to right) Norma Reynolds, Stevie Joslin and Polly Grafton with Manger Tree donations.

Manger Tree “Thank You”

Our deacons report that your Manger Tree gift donations were delivered to 584 local children at New Horizons Super Kids and Super Teens in Bonita and Estero, the Bonita YMCA and the Pinewoods after-school program in Estero. Thank you for brightening their Christmas! First Church expresses gratitude to Deacon Norma Reynolds (with help from husband David Reynolds) who chaired this project for the past two years, to this year’s committee—Deacons Betty Cardwell, Polly Grafton, Wendi Owens and Margaret Winn—and the many who assisted with delivering the gifts.

Please continue to pray for the child you sponsored throughout 2017.

Welcome Dr. Allen Walworth

Dr. Allen Walworth is serving on our pastoral staff this season; he began in December and will be with us through April 2017. Allen and his wife Connie have been part of our congregation for the past 10 years. During this time, Allen has occasionally preached on Sundays and has also shared his consulting expertise with us on several projects. His great passion for the Word and genuine love for God's people is matched by his personal energy and pastor's heart. We hope each of you get to know Allen as he assists our pastoral team in teaching, preaching and worship leadership. He will also offer support in congregational care and to our stewardship and finance committees. The *Epistle* invites you to listen in as Pastor Allen shares some of his thoughts and sentiments.

EPISTLE: What made you say “yes” to being a seasonal part of our pastoral staff?

AW: When Pastor Pratt first approached me to consider and pray about this seasonal pastoral role, I was immediately drawn to the idea. I count Doug as a dear friend, for whom I have the most profound respect as a preacher, pastor, leader and Christian believer. On those occasions when he asked me to preach here, I have been blessed by the overwhelming encouragement and response of the congregation. So, to be given the opportunity to dive even deeper into the life of this great church, and to partner with this wonderful staff and lay leaders, is a tremendous privilege.

In the winter, our congregation dramatically swells more than seven times in worship attendance compared to the summer. So, with characteristic creativity, Pastor Doug and Session considered an accordion-style staffing model — adding more pastoral “hands on deck” seasonally to help cover expanded congregational needs without adding year-round personnel costs.

I am blessed to be one of those extra pair of hands and additional pastoral voices serving FPC this winter. I also know that my service here will only deepen and bless my own spiritual life, and the exposure to the creativity and boldness of this ministry team will give me even more depth and insight to offer churches with whom I will consult in the future.

EPISTLE: What has given you the greatest joy and/or sense of fulfillment in serving the Lord?

AW: I love God's Word—reading it, studying it, hearing it, and then teaching or preaching so that others might experience the transforming power, surprise and insight that can only come from God's heart to ours. When preaching is effective, it is because both the preacher and the listener bring



Education:

Samford University, BA in Religious Studies
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity & Doctor of Philosophy in New Testament studies

Pastorates: 18 years as Senior Pastor for three Baptist churches in Alabama and Texas, ranging in size from 1,300 to over 9,000 members

Teaching: Adjunct faculty member, teaching New Testament and Greek at Southern Seminary and Samford University

Consulting: Currently Exec. VP of Generis, partnering with churches to accelerate generosity and stewardship

Family: Married to Connie, entrepreneur and former attorney; five adult children and five grandchildren; live in Texas

Hobbies: Golf, tennis, travel, walks on the beach

their heart and soul to the sermon. Preaching is not a monologue, but simply one voice of a conversation.

One of the things I have most admired about this congregation is the passion, responsiveness, sense of humor, and willingness to apply the sermon to their personal lives. This unique partnership between the worshiper and preacher at FPC creates the sacred space for God to speak in diverse and profound ways to each of us—in ways more mysterious and personal than a preacher could ever imagine on their own.

I also greatly enjoy working with the ministry team, and in concert with committed lay leaders, as we serve the Lord and the church. I have always cherished and celebrated the diverse and magnificent gifts of a church staff, and the way God weaves those strands into a glorious tapestry of ministry.

Finally, I find great fulfillment and joy by just walking around and greeting the people as we gather for or leave worship. Those few seconds or minutes of personal interaction are some of the most important aspects of pastoral ministry for me.

Inventive in Hospitality!

by Trusha Barner, Director of Missions

“Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.”

Romans 12:9-13 (The Message Bible)

When I think of the missionaries and mission organizations that I have come to know and love, I think of these verses of Scripture. Our mission partners love from their center. They are alert servants of the Master and they certainly don’t quit in hard times! When I think of First Church and its many members and friends, I also think of these verses, especially verse 13: “help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.”

This past year was certainly a year of learning, helping and serving. In 2016, our congregation supported the heart of First Missions through many events and projects: sponsoring children on Compassion Sunday, participating in the Pregnancy Resource Center Baby Bottle Campaign and Walk 4 Life, supporting International Justice Mission on Freedom Sunday, meeting our visiting missionaries, touring local mission organizations, donating toward Syrian/Iraqi refugees and hurricane survivors in Louisiana and Haiti, and sharing God’s love with OCC shoeboxes! There is no lack of “hospitality” at First Church when it comes to recognizing need and wanting to help.

As we move into a new year, I am inspired by this quote I recently read from Martin Luther King Jr. When talking

about the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) he said:

The first question the priest asked, and the first question the Levite asked was, “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” (Andy Rau, “Why Didn’t They Stop? Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Parable of the Good Samaritan,” April 4, 2012, biblegateway.com/blog)

In today’s world, helping the needy may not always be easy. They may look different, sound different and think differently than we do. Time, finances and worrying about what others will think make us wonder, *What will happen to me if I choose to help?* And yet God clearly gives us the mandate to “go and do likewise” in Luke 10:37.

How exciting to once again have an opportunity to be inventive in hospitality in this new year! To start the New Year by asking God to show us where and how to serve. Could we pray for a mission or mission organization we have never prayed for before? Could we volunteer somewhere we have never volunteered before? Could we give financially, could we write a note of encouragement, could we go on a mission trip—the possibilities are endless! Thank you, First Church, for your service... and for asking the question, “What will happen if I don’t serve?” I am looking forward to another year of being inventive in hospitality!

Mission Leadership

First Missions would like to recognize those whose heart for missions has led them to serve. Thank you for your inventive hospitality!

Outgoing Mission Leadership Team Members:

John Fisher
Lynn Lyons
Sandy Ritchie
Sarah Thompson-Griffin
Dave Lyons, Session Liaison

New Mission Leadership Team Members:

Carla Hawkins
Pat Hazen
Donna Roberts
John Cardwell, Session Liaison



Membership

Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to all who filled OCC shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse to deliver to children in 140 countries worldwide! We are also very grateful to the wonderful ladies who knitted/crocheted the hats that went in the boxes as well as the many volunteers who helped make this such a success. Because of all of you, First Church sent 946 shoeboxes for distribution to God's children, bringing them Good News and Great Joy!

Organizing 946 shoeboxes is no small feat! It took a small army of volunteers (plus a few helpful grandchildren) and most of McClure Hall to ready the boxes for shipping.



Membership Classes

Saturday, January 21 • 9-11 AM

Sunday, January 22 • 5:30-7:30 PM

Classes are held in McClure Hall

First Church extends an invitation to those interested in learning more about church membership. This class, led by Senior Pastor Doug Pratt, covers what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be Presbyterian, and what it means to be a member of First Church. You'll hear a little of our history and get a snapshot of our various ministries. Connect with others new to our church; get to know our pastors and church leaders; discover opportunities for fellowship and service. Various options for membership will be explained; there is no obligation to join at that time. Choose the session most convenient, then contact Membership Coordinator Rebecca Harley (239-229-8953) to reserve your space.

If you have any questions about church membership or our membership classes, contact Rebecca or visit the Welcome kiosk in the Narthex on Sunday morning.

Order of St. Luke: Ready to Serve



On November 19, three new members were inducted into the Order of St. Luke by OSL Chaplain Pastor June Barrow (far left) and Convener Margaret Gieselmann (far right). They are: Richard Bailey, Lyn Blinkhorn and Donna Lee Allenson.

The Bonita Springs chapter at FPC is Mercy and Grace, inspired from Hebrews 4:16. For those interested in membership and service, OSL provides in-depth study of Jesus' healing ministry. Contact Margaret Gieselmann (mgieselmann@att.net) for more information.

Steven's Study

Dear Friends,

At the start of every new year, our Session and Board of Deacons have the blessing of welcoming a new group of elders and deacons to their ministries. These members of God's church have responded to God's call through the voice of the congregation to serve and they are worthy of our gratitude and honor. Pray for them as they serve the Lord and our church. Together with the pastors, our deacons and elders provide discernment and leadership in fulfilling God's purpose for our church's mission. Though deacons and elders are given authority by the congregation as the Bible requires, theirs is a servant leadership carried in a way consistent with the character of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

It is very informative to consider the biblical requirements for deacons and elders. Usually when we think of officers of the church, we place emphasis on what they do—that is, on the tasks they are expected to fulfill. The Bible says very little about this. What the Bible emphasizes is the character of the church officers. The biblical writers chose to focus more on who they are rather than what they do, because who they are will determine what they do and how they do it. The Apostle Paul describes what Timothy and Titus are to look for in choosing elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9. For deacons, Paul gives his instructions in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Further, the Apostle Peter adds another dimension to the office of elder in 1 Peter 5:1-3. Peter exhorts the elders to be “shepherds” of God's people.

I have developed an elder training program which we have used here at First Presbyterian Church for four years. This program reflects this biblical emphasis. Though we do explore some of the tasks elders are required to fulfill, most of the training is designed to give the new elders a chance to study the biblical witness concerning elders and to examine their own lives as they take on not just the office, but the calling to be an elder. Being an elder is more than having a seat at a board meeting; it also means taking on an identity and the responsibility to be the spiritual shepherds of the church. It is my plan to develop a similar training program for future classes of deacons.

As far as the elders are concerned, there are three words that Peter and Paul use to describe the same office of elder. Two of the three are used interchangeably. The first of these words is *presbuteros* which is translated “elder,” and the second is *episkopos*, which is sometimes translated “bishop.” Perhaps the best way to understand these two words since



Rev. Steven Grant

they are used to describe the same office would be the term “overseer.” Peter then adds a third dimension when he uses the word *poimon* as he exhorts the elders to be shepherds. One might ask, “Why have different words for the same office?” I submit that all three combine to give a more complete understanding of who an elder is supposed to be. *Presbuteros* refers to the officer's spiritual maturity; *episkopos* refers to the officer's authority; and *poimon* is added to describe the nature of the overseer's ministry. We can say, then, that elders are spiritually mature Christians who exercise authority over a congregation of God's people in a manner of a shepherd who exemplifies our Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

The word for deacon is *diakonos*, which means “servant.” Whereas the elders exercise authority through their shepherding ministry, deacons exercise theirs through service. Our deacons fulfill many acts of service for our congregation, often quietly, “behind the scenes” as it were. They have such a heart for God's people that their joy is to be God's hands and feet to minister to those in need. The origin of the deacon's ministry is found in Acts 6:1-7. Deacons provide a ministry of witness, sympathy and service. Stephen, the church's first martyr, was one of the very first deacons.

Probably the most important requirement for officers of the church, next to their unshakable faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, is his or her submission to the authority of God's Word. Essential guidance to the equipping of the saints to serve as officers in God's church is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

May God's blessing, guidance and strength be upon our deacons and elders as they strive to lead, serve and shepherd the people of God!

Pastor Steven Grant

Volunteer Spotlight

by Dave Stauffer

John & Sally Myers

John and Sally both grew up in the Independence, Missouri area, before they knew each other. John's father, who served as Chief of Police there, was an acquaintance of President Harry Truman.

John was always active in the Presbyterian Church in Independence and became a believer in Christ during high school. As an adult, he married and raised two sons and a daughter in the church.

Sally accepted Jesus at the age of 14 while attending her Southern Baptist church. She married and raised her two sons in that church. Sally explained that, at ages 15 and 16, both her sons were anxious to attend their church because they were allowed to drive the family car on Sundays. In 1988 Sally lost her husband to illness.

John and Sally were both employed in the banking industry—John was a regional bank president and Sally served as a regional executive VP. Through mergers and acquisitions, they were eventually both employed by Bank of America. They became acquainted on a professional basis in



the early 1980s, reporting to the same boss. After John's divorce in 1997, he was transferred to North Carolina and so began their "thousand-mile courtship."

John and Sally married in 2000 in the Methodist Church while living in North Carolina, then moved to Kansas City. Both retired in 2010, then traveled the country in their motor home. They had been spending winters in Southwest Florida. In 2014, Sally let John know that she intended to move to Bonita Springs and wondered if he was coming along with her.

Soon after moving, Sally and John became members of First Church. "At first," Sally said, "we were overwhelmed by the size of this church." Both clearly remember their first personal encounter at FPC. They had met Carl and Beth Johansen, who warmly welcomed them and made them feel like part of the church family.

"We believe in the ministry of all believers," John said. "We know God puts people in certain situations for a reason." Sally added, "It's important to reach out wherever the Lord places you." Reaching out as faithful servants is exactly what they do. Both have been active Thrift Shop volunteers since joining our church. They love the interaction with other volunteers and the customers.

John serves on the Men's Ministry Leadership Team; Sally serves on the Women's Leadership Team and volunteers with the Café of Life. Both usher on Sundays and during Bonita Christian Forum events. They were introduced to the Great Banquet by Chuck and Jeannette Vogt several years ago and remain deeply involved with the GB ministry.

"God provides opportunities, not coincidences," John and Sally stated. "We are so grateful to be in Southwest Florida and members of this church. We've traded the cold and snow for the pleasure of serving God!" It's a "win-win" for everyone!

Remember: First Thrift Shop...

- Open Monday through Saturday, 10 AM – 3 PM
- Offers free pick-up of furniture
- Accepts donations of gently used clothing, household items and furniture

Call 239-992-0285

Brad's Blessings

*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government
and peace there will be no end."
Isaiah 9:6-7*

Happy New Year!
With the New Year, our attention has shifted toward all new things. We've made New Year's resolutions and new plans for 2017. New semesters are beginning at school with all new classes and fresh syllabi shock. We have a new President of the United States and a new cabinet (as of January 20). How quickly we transition away from the Silent Night overlooking the manger back to the whirlwind pace that has become all too commonplace!

Have we already moved past the birth of Jesus? Have we already forgotten the joyful chorus of the angels singing what we can only imagine was Handel's Messiah?

Isaiah reminds us that the birth of "Immanuel" is the in-breaking of a whole new reality; God is with us! The infinite has become finite. The immortal has experienced mortality. The Holy One without form has taken up flesh and blood and upon Himself the sins of the world. The Kingdom that has come as a result of the Christ-child is marked by the Peace of God, which will have no end.

"Of the greatness of His government and peace, there will be no end."

Yet, if we are to be honest, our celebration has come to an end. Our decorations have come down. We have moved on... and the Silent Night seems more like a fuzzy dream that we struggle to recall as we've been awakened with a start.

It is true that we cannot remain by the manger forever. In fact, Jesus didn't stay in the manger forever. However, we can live in the reality that God is with us forever. In France in the 17th century lived a humble monk by the name of Brother Lawrence, whose singular desire was to live his life in such a way that he was constantly aware of the presence of Christ. In *Practicing the Presence of God*, he wrote:



Rev. Brad Rogers

For me the time of activity does not differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are together calling for as many different things, I possess God in as great a tranquility as when upon my knees at the blessed Sacrament.

Couldn't we use a little bit of that Tranquility? A smidgeon of the Peace promised, which defines the Kingdom of God?

Of course we could! And God has made it possible.

The Incarnation of Christ was the in-breaking of a new reality; God is with us! However, living in the light of this reality is not easy. The incessant pressures of the world vying for our gaze make it difficult to keep a singular focus upon God to remember this new reality. As a result, living in the peaceful presence of God takes practice.

Brother Lawrence offers a simple process for a singular focus. He writes:

...as I worked, I would continue to hold familiar conversation, offering to Him my little acts of service, and entreating the unfailing assistance of His grace.

When I had finished, I would examine how I had performed my duty. If well, I gave Him thanks. If ill, I besought His pardon.

Then, without losing heart, I set my spirit right, and returned anew to His presence, as though I had never wandered from Him.

Thus, by rising after every fall, and by doing all in faith and love without wearying, I have come to a state in which it would be as little possible for me not to think of God as it was hard to discipline myself to it at the beginning.

Though we may leave the manger, may we never forget that God is with us. And because of this reality, may we practice the presence of God and experience the peace that surpasses all understanding.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Brad Rogers

Spiritual Development Center

Who We Are

Rev. Steven M. Grant, M.Div.

Associate Pastor/Program Director SDC

Alfred R. Barrow, Ph.D.

Director of Spiritual Life

Maria Karl, CBC

Certified Biblical Counselor

Rev. June G. Barrow, M.A., M.Div.

Assistant Pastor

How We Serve

The Center offers compassionate and confidential counseling, spiritual direction, “Day Away” retreats, support groups, and classes related to marriage & family as well as spiritual and emotional growth. Central to this work is our focus on Biblical truth and counseling excellence. Appointments may be scheduled by calling the Center at 239-221-8250. There is no charge or fee for services.

Our Location

The Center is located directly across the street from the main church campus:

9696 Bonita Beach Road, Suite 207
2nd Floor, down the hall on the left

Our Mission

Our mission is to help individuals and families, no matter their background, meet the challenges they face in a complex world, to strengthen their relationships with one another and with God, and to offer opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.



What is Christian Counseling?

by Dr. Al Barrow

As a very young boy, I remember going to my mother and sharing frustrations I had at school. She would sit and listen patiently. Sometimes she offered encouraging words, but always she would pray with me.

My mother was instrumental in leading me to a relationship with Christ and, on one occasion, she shared with me a Scripture passage I have never forgotten. It was 1 Corinthians 1:3-4: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trouble, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

The Apostle Paul then explains in verse 5 that, “just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” Now certainly, the “suffering” of a little boy was nothing to that which Paul experienced, but the message was the same: the suffering we experience and the resulting comfort we receive from God serves to make us a comfort for others by sharing the comfort God gave to us. My mother pointed out that any suffering I would experience in my life could be used to help understand others better and, in so doing, comfort them. Sharing the comfort of God then became the foundational principal upon which I eventually viewed Christian counseling.

As a Christian psychologist, I’ve learned through the years that God desires, more than anything, to be a comfort for those who seek Him. Isaiah 42:3 tells us a treasure about God, “a bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.” In Psalm 51:17, we are told that “a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” But many times, we do not avail ourselves of this comfort. We pretend that we don’t need it and that we have everything under control.

Christian counseling provides a place to bring a contrite heart, a broken spirit, or even anger and frustration over circumstances out of our control. The counselor provides a safe setting not only to seek but also to experience God’s comfort—and to understand how He is working in their life. This is done primarily through sharing, prayer, and reading and reflecting upon God’s Word, the Bible.

Through sharing with a Christian counselor, we can learn to be more open about our difficulties and, by so doing, starve the shame that often grows with secret and pent up struggles. When God’s comfort arrives, shame dies. Christian counseling helps us see that prayer is a conversation with God; that, when we ask, He is ready to give no matter what the need. In Christian counseling, Scripture is opened and becomes the voice of Him, who is the God of all comfort. His Word provides the truth about who we are, who God is, and how He wants to work in our lives.

Ultimately, Christian counseling provides a haven and rest for all those who are weary and burdened down. We at the Spiritual Development Center consider it a privilege and humbling honor to help others realize Jesus’ declaration that, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

continued on page 30

Let Your Light Shine Brightly!

At Neon Kids, our mission is to partner with parents to lead children into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Neon Kids provides quality programs for children ages 6 months through 5th grade. We invite you to visit us on Sunday mornings before worship. Check your children in at the Children's Desk for both nursery or Neon Kids Sunday school. You can also visit us on the web at neonkids.org to catch up on all the latest news.



Preschool Administrator Nancy Bolognese helps out on stage during the Children's Christmas program.

Children's Christmas Program

This year's Christmas program included the students of Wonder Years Preschool, Neon Kids and Illumination. They filled the Sanctuary stage dressed as townspeople, barn animals, angels, stars, the three wise men, shepherds, the drummer boy and, of course, Mary and Joseph. The story of Jesus' birth was illustrated through narratives and songs performed by all the students. The program was followed by birthday cake for Jesus in McClure Hall. Heartfelt thanks go out to all the parents and families who attended to make this program such a joyous occasion.

Family Night Programs

Wednesdays, January 18 – February 15
6-7:30 PM • Family Ministries Center

Children ages 3-5 years of age are invited to join Li'K. During this multimedia Bible exploration called "I Can Love," we will sing, play and explore how Jesus' love is the greatest gift ever!

Kids in grades 1-5 are invited to attend KIDMO's "Imagine." We will discover the extraordinary plans that God provides for His children. Join in the adventure with Johnny Rogers and his radio-world cast as we learn how to be STRONG and COURAGEOUS for the Lord!



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Sunday Mornings

Children's Choir

10 AM • Family Ministries Center

Children grades K-5 are invited to learn about God's love through music as inspirational religious songs help them "find their voice."

Attendance may be week-to-week. Contact Associate Director of Sacred Arts Peter Lewis (plewis@fpchonita.org) for more details.

Neon Kids Sunday School

11 AM • Family Ministries Center

Children 3 years through 5th grade are encouraged to participate in an array of fun and engaging activities that communicate important Bible truths in a safe and loving environment.

Kids Night Out

Friday, January 27 & Saturday, February 25

5-8 PM • Family Ministries Center

Children of FPC and Wonder Years, ages 1-11, are invited to our monthly Kids Night Out for fun, fellowship, crafts and games. *Look for more information in upcoming Sunday bulletins.*

Questions?

Contact Children's Ministry Coordinator Lauren Hargis
at lhargis@fpchonita.org or 239-992-3233.

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 5:16

A Divine Calling

by Pastor Brad Rogers

Once called to be a parent, we quickly realize it as our most important task in life. Everything changes; raising this child takes priority. But are we ever sure how we are doing?

As a parent myself, I know it is easy to measure our parenting skills by comparing ourselves to those around us, or by the number of activities our kids are involved in, or by how obedient our children are, at least in public.

What if none of those standards actually get to the heart of how we are doing as parents? What if we determine that we are doing better than most other parents, that our kids are involved in more activities than other kids, and that (at least in public) our kids appear to be better behaved than other kids, and yet we've still missed the mark.

One of the central images used in Scripture to help us understand God is the image of God as Father. In fact, as Christians, we believe that this is not merely an image for God, but part of God's eternal nature. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and, as parents, God as Father is the standard to which we should strive. We have much to learn from God about this unique and sacred calling.

There is one way we can avoid the pitfall of assessing ourselves as parents by standards that miss the mark: by setting aside time to get together with other parents to explore how God can lead us in the exciting, challenging, beautiful, frustrating yet divine CALLING of parenting.

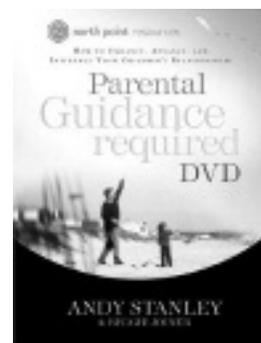
Parents Group

January 18 - March 8 • 6-7:30 PM • Lightner Conf. Room
Of all the assignments God gives us during our time on earth, none is more sacred than raising our children. We invite you to join us Wednesdays evenings as we seek to partner with you for this great responsibility.

“Parental Guidance Required”

Andy Stanley and Reggie Joiner, founding pastors of North Point Ministries, based in Atlanta

Stanley is one of the leading communicators in Christianity today and author of over 20 books. Joiner is the founder of the reThink Group and author of *Think Orange*—a strategy through which two influences in a child's life—home and church—work together to ensure that every child has a greater impact through a life-long faith in Christ. His Orange Curriculum is used for our Family Ministries at FPC.



Together in *Parental Guidance Required*, Andy and Reggie tackle the challenges of parenting, helping us to learn from our Heavenly Father how to be Christian parents. When we do this, there is no limit to the positive influence our parenting can achieve.

Wonder Years Preschool

For the holidays, Wonder Years students, parents and teachers participated in Operation Christmas Child, filling over 40 shoeboxes. Our families also participated in the giving of gifts for the Manger Tree and collecting canned food for the Café of Life. The students along with their parents visited a local assisted care facility where they passed out gifts and sang Christmas songs. We also enjoyed our Children's Christmas Program and winter break.

As the New Year begins, Wonder Years has much to celebrate with the start of the semester, winter projects and many activities. During February, the “month of love,” we will talk about Jesus and discover how much he loves us. On February 3, we celebrate our 100th day of school and our love for reading by preparing for Dr. Seuss Week. Our families will also participate in a children's used clothing drive for the Café of Life.

The 2017-2018 school enrollment begins in January for current students and, in February, we will hold open enrollment for the community. We have been truly blessed. Our prayers were answered as we began last year with increased enrollment. We are praying for another successful year!

Nancy L. Bolognese, Preschool Administrator



Men's Ministry Fellowship

Changing Men's Hearts One at a Time



Ambassadors of Faith... What God Intended

by Bill Jones, MMF Chair

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. – 2 Corinthians 5:20 (ESV)

Isn't it strange how certain events, or comments that people make, stay with us? Let me give you just three examples from my life.

1. During junior high, we heard a speaker who had been lost in the Arctic. He told us he took advantage of the dangerous situation by making notes of the things he saw, and those notes turned out to be valuable. His observation was that, no matter where we find ourselves in life, we should seize the opportunity to make the most of our situation, especially if it is unusual.

2. In college, I attended a breakfast for students at the state capitol. The only thing I remember was the speaker saying, "One thing that identifies leaders is their ability to see a project through to completion."

3. Finally, a few years ago my wife and I stopped at a Wendy's for lunch. We saw a couple, about high school age, sitting in the corner bowing their heads in prayer before enjoying their meal.

MMF SCHEDULE

Fellowship Breakfast & Bible Study
Thursdays • 7:20 AM • McClure Hall

For more information, please contact Steve Thompson (765-427-5299; smt4444@gmail.com).

"The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

— Proverbs 20:5

MMF VISION STATEMENT: To build relationships with men, to mutually encourage them, and bring them closer to Christ through fellowship and discipling.

The names of the individuals who gave me these impressions are lost or unknown to me. We all have such memories — some come from acquaintances, many come from strangers, some from just "people watching." Obviously speakers, teachers and preachers hope and expect some of their message to be remembered. However, the couple in Wendy's made a silent unintended witness to us by honoring God during a simple daily activity.

The Arctic explorer did not get lost by simply taking a wrong turn. Like us, he made a choice; then unexpected opportunities and benefits occurred. At First Church, we are blessed with many chances (and choices) for spiritual and personal growth — we just need to recognize them. One such opportunity, coming in February, is the Great Banquet — an experience full of unexpected benefits. Another relevant pathway is involvement in mission work. Just check out the First Missions Directory to discover many ways to serve.

I retired this year, and it occurred to me that the great leaders in the Bible, including Moses, Paul and Jesus, did not hope to eventually retire. All of them were active leaders to the very end of their lives. God wants us to do His work, where we are, with the talents He has given us, through the opportunities He will provide.

As we begin 2017 in the Men's Ministry, we will encounter some great leaders as well as some leaders of the future. The Gordon-Conwell Seminary students will join us, as will representatives from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Ismael Hernandez will also be back with us again. The founder of the Freedom & Virtue Institute in Fort Myers, Ismael is leading initiatives to encourage self-reliance among underprivileged children. His book *Not Tragically Colored* (available in the BookCenter) is well-documented on the consequences of many government programs. Ismael is following God's call on his life by leading a quiet revolution to uphold the dignity of the poor and transcend racial identity.

In the 2001 remake of the film "Ocean's Eleven" there is a scene where Tess (the lead female character) confronts the casino owner whom she had just seen disrespecting her on a closed-circuit camera. She says, "You of all people should know...there's always someone watching."

It is the same with us in life. I have found that we are always being observed, usually without realizing it, so our actions and comments can make a difference. As Christians, we represent God to others and, by following His call, can unknowingly be a positive influence. We want to be the "ambassadors" that God expects us to be... so that we can be the blessing to others that He intends.



2016-2017

Bonita Christian Forum



The Bonita Christian Forum was launched in 2005 to enrich the cultural and spiritual life of the Bonita Springs area. Its intent is to raise the visibility of the Christian message in our community, to provide a gathering place for Christians from various local congregations, to inspire and challenge those who follow Christ, and to present the life-changing work of Christ to people who have not yet met Him.

In the years since its inception, the Bonita Christian Forum has firmly established its place in our community as a venue for some of the most notable voices of our time to share their Christian testimony. Beginning with former major league pitcher Dave Dravecky, the Forum has welcomed speakers from the worlds of business, sports, medicine, government, science, film and the media.

Kirsten Powers

Tuesday, January 31, 2017 | 7:00 PM

Frank Wolf

Tuesday, February 21, 2017 | 7:00 PM

Leslie Wickman

Monday, March 20, 2017 | 7:00 PM



POWERS

WOLF

WICKMAN

All events begin at 7:00 PM

Doors open at 6:15 PM

Friends of the Forum

The Bonita Christian Forum is offered to the community at no charge so that the life-transforming message of the Gospel is available to everyone. The Friends of the Forum sponsorship program helps to underwrite each season of speakers. Become a Friend of the Forum for the 2016-2017 season. Consider one of these levels of sponsorship:

Level 1

Gift of \$150 or more | Friends receive two (2) General Admission tickets for each event. *(Note: General Admission seating is located in the Sanctuary and in CenterPoint, and is strictly on a first-come basis the night of the event.)*

Level 2

Gift of \$300 or more | Friends receive reserved seating for two (2) in the Sanctuary for each event.

Level 3

Gift of \$750 or more | Friends receive preferred reserved seating for four (4) in the Sanctuary for each event.

Level 4

Gift of \$1,000 or more | Friends receive preferred reserved seating for two (2) in the Sanctuary for each event, a book by the speaker (whenever possible) and are invited to a private reception, where they can have a photo taken with the speaker.

Please remember!

- **CARPPOOL.** Help us maximize the limited parking available!
- **PARKING.** Traffic control on Bonita Beach Road and a professional crew in our parking lot together will manage traffic flow and direct cars to the next available space.
- **BRING YOUR TICKETS** to guarantee entry.
- **BE PATIENT.** Many who come will be unfamiliar with our campus. Watch for opportunities to be helpful and ensure a good experience for everyone!

Season 12 is dedicated to **Bill Wilkerson**, a committed Christian and member of First Church who was instrumental in establishing the Forum. Bill and his wife Judy co-chaired the first Forum Planning Committee and, over the years, worked diligently toward its success as a platform to proclaim the Christian faith.

Visit bonitachristianforum.org for more information.

Women's Connection

The mission of the Women's Ministry of First Church is to help women of all ages reach UPWARD to a deeper relationship with Christ, reach INWARD to one another in love and fellowship, and reach OUTWARD to our community and world in service.



The New Year

by Donna Tenfelde

As we look to the coming new year, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy" (1 Corinthians 14:1). Many think of "prophecy" as meaning the ability to predict the future but, in fact, its purpose is to communicate God's message to His people—providing insight, warning, correction and encouragement.

The root meaning of the Hebrew word for "prophet" is "one who speaks for," which led to define "prophesying" as "speaking for God, interpreting His will to others, publicly preaching His words." (Ernest W. Marter, "What Is Prophesying?" December 1973, *ministrymagazine.org*)

Did you ever feel as if a certain thought or revelation came directly from God? Jesus told us the Father would give us an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would be in us forever (John 14: 16-17). Revelation often comes through God's Word, which is why we study it; and prophecy may come through an inner witness that we share with others.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." John 16:13 (NLT)

My prayer and wish for all the lovely women of FPC is for a New Year filled with the blessings of good health, happiness and the awesome knowledge that the Lord is at our side.

If you have any questions about Women's Connection, please contact Women's Ministry Coordinator Donna Tenfelde (239-992-3233 ext. 293 or dtenfelde@fpcbonita.org).

Are you receiving the Women's Connection e-newsletter for the latest news? Don't miss out! Contact us at womenoffirst@fpcbonita.org and we'll get you on the list.

Join Us in the Journey!

Women's Connection invites the women of First Church to consider beginning the New Year with a resolution: to delve deeper into God's Word and experience the fellowship of Christ-believers through one (or all!) of our studies. Topics vary but all are relevant, and our goal is consistent and unwavering—to grow in faith, hope and love.

Manna for Monday

Resumes Monday, January 16 • 2 PM • Price Hall Parlor

Study: *People Are Asking... Is This the End?*

by Dr. David Jeremiah

Never have the headlines been this jarring, cultural changes this rapid, or moral decay so pronounced. We cannot afford to ignore these warnings. This DVD study can help us better understand the role we each play in this changing world.

Working Women's Fellowship

Tuesdays • 7 PM • Lightner Conference Room

Study: *Your Thought Closet Makeover* by Jennifer Rothschild

Every woman also has a "thought closet" full of everything she has said to herself over the years. This DVD study encourages us to clean out the junk in our minds and replace hidden negative thoughts with positive truths from God's Word.

Wednesday in the Word

Wednesdays • 9:30 AM • McClure Hall

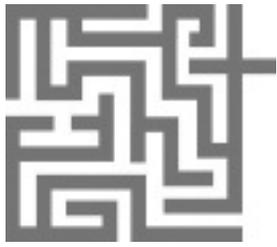
Led by Pastor June Barrow

January Study: "A Warm Welcome: Christian Hospitality"

All of us know how good a "warm welcome" feels. As followers of Jesus, how do we practice hospitality? Is it a gift, a responsibility or a privilege? Does it mean cooking like Martha Stewart? We start the new year remembering times we have felt warmly welcomed, times we have welcomed others, and look carefully at what the Bible teaches us both by direct instruction and by example.

continued on next page

Preparedness Ministry



*“Without counsel plans fail,
but with many advisors,
they succeed.” – Proverbs 15:22*

MISSION STATEMENT: To identify, understand and prepare for life's challenges in wholeness with Christ in mind, body and spirit.

The Preparedness Ministry works year-round in order to present timely seminars that offer positive witness toward life's challenges. These events are free and open to church members as well as the community. The speaker's presentation is 45 minutes to an hour, followed by time for questions. Information packets are also available.

I'll Worry About That Tomorrow

Tuesday, January 17 • 7 PM • McClure Hall

Are you living your life as Scarlett O'Hara might? Do you have a plan if your life is suddenly turned upside down by illness, divorce or the death of a loved one? Are you organized and informed about your assets? It is estimated that 90% of all women will need to manage their own financial future due to life's unexpected events. Wealth is about more than just your money; it is also about your life and the things you value most. There are vital elements that should be at the heart of your future plan. Join us as financial advisor Marsha McDonald addresses the special needs women face while sharing principles of good financial decision-making. Take control of your future, now—not tomorrow!

I Didn't Save Enough – Now What?

Thursday, January 19 • 2 PM • CenterPoint

The last years of one's life can be very expensive. Are you prepared financially and aware of all your benefits and entitlements? Wealth and finance are mentioned over 2,000 times in Scripture. But God's definition of wealth may be different than yours. Being informed about your finances as well as the matters of your heart are first steps in good decision-making. Financial advisor Marsha McDonald has valuable suggestions on making the most of your retirement—to not just live, but to prosper.

How to Live to 100

Thursday, February 23 • 2 PM • CenterPoint

It's not how long we live—it's how well we live. Naples, Florida, a Blue Zone, has been declared the #1 city in the U.S. for retiring in good health (“Twelve Great Places to Retire for Good Health,” Kiplinger's Personal Finance, August 2016, kiplinger.com). It has also been ranked the happiest, healthiest city by the Gallup-Healthways State of American Well-Being (well-beingindex.com). What is a Blue Zone? How does it make you live longer and healthier? NCH-sponsored Blue Zone Project speakers will explain how we can control 70% of all factors that influence our health. Do you want to add 10 quality years to your life? Learn the Power 9® principles to live longer and make healthier choices.

For more information on these seminars, contact Connie Duquin (239-287-7649; cjduquin@comcast.net).

Women's Connection *continued*

February/March Study: “Gems from Ephesians”

Each week along with a gem from this Epistle, we will look at someone who had an encounter with Jesus in one of the gospels. Ephesians teaches us a great deal about who Jesus is and who we are because we are Jesus-followers. Understanding our identity in Christ brings about peace, confidence and joy.

Wednesday Prayer Group

1st & 3rd Wednesdays • 11 AM • Price Hall Parlor

We invite any and all prayer warriors to join us and pray for the needs of our church, community, country and world.

Moore on Thursday

Thursdays • 10:30 AM • Price Hall Chapel

Study: *Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy*
by Beth Moore

The second half of this study (begun in October) takes us through chapters 7–12. Our focus is on Daniel's visions and how they correlate with visions in the book of Revelation. Join us as we learn about Daniel's prophecies and how they apply to our lives today. You are invited to bring a bag or box lunch; drinks are provided.

Concerts at First Church

2016-17 Fine Arts Series

This season's Fine Arts line-up is an eclectic mix of brass and cabaret along with the best in classical music performance and choral works. We are also bringing the future of music to the Bonita community with a world premiere composition and the voices of the newly-established City of Palms Youth Choir. Don't pay more to hear world-class music; support the Fine Arts Series—right here in your neighborhood!

Ticket order forms are available at the church. Tickets may be purchased at the Ticket Office, Monday–Thursday, 9 AM–3:30 PM, or at the door prior to each concert. For more information, call the Concert Line at 239-992-3410 ext. 250.

The Fine Arts Series is being presented as a fund raising effort for the First Academy of Music's (FAM) financial aid program. FAM provides high quality musical instruction for students of all ages and levels of skill. Private lessons on individual instruments are offered as well as group musical experiences for children and adults, with performance opportunities over the course of the program year. Financial assistance is available to qualifying students aged 18 years and younger enrolled in private lessons at the school. For more information, call the music office at 239-992-3410 ext. 232 or visit firstacademyofmusic.org.

Tim Zimmerman and The Kings Brass

January 15, 2017 • 3:00 PM | Tickets: \$10

Gulfshore Opera

"Diva on Detour" with Patricia Racette

January 22, 2017 • 3:00 PM | Tickets: \$48 & \$68

Naples Philharmonic

"Around Town: Mozart and Tchaikovsky"

February 7, 2017 • 7:30 PM | Tickets: \$35

Naples Philharmonic

"Around Town: Beethoven and Vivaldi"

March 16, 2017 • 7:30 PM | Tickets: \$35

Fort Myers Symphonic Mastersingers Presents Jason Bahr's "Symphony No. 2"

April 2, 2017 • 7:00 PM | Tickets: \$25

Jeffrey Faux, conductor

Also featuring the City of Palms Youth Choir

2016-17 Concert Series

The Alex Fox Band "Guitars on Fire"

January 13, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The Bretts

January 20, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The David Osborne Trio

February 3, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The Barbary Coast Show Band "Farewell Florida Tour"

February 24, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The Annie Moses Band

March 10, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The Ditchfield Family Singers "The Music of Your Life"

March 24, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

Tickets are free but required for seating and available to the public at the Ticket Office 10 days before each concert date. Sponsorship information is available at the church, online at fpcbonita.org and also by calling the Concert Line at 239-992-3410 ext. 250.



Café First: Stop by for a visit

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM to 4 PM

Located in the Art Gallery area of our church, Café First is THE place to come to relax, read a book, connect to free wi-fi, or fellowship with friends. Indulge in a hot cup of premium coffee or tea and treat yourself to a pastry from the area's finest bakeries! (Self-serve/contribution.)

Love and Respect: Having the Marriage You've Always Wanted

Thursdays, January 19-April 6 • 4 PM • Student Ministries Center

Based on the best-selling book, *Love and Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, this 12-week class features video from a live retreat with Dr. Eggerichs and his wife, Sarah, as they focus on a practical understanding of Ephesians 5:33. Dr. Al and Pastor June Barrow will lead discussions and provide instruction to supplement the readings. Comments from last year's class include: "Will put you back on track"; "Helps to resolve conflict"; and "Gave us new approaches to deepen our love and friendship."

To register, email Dr. Al Barrow (abarrow@fpcbonita.org) or leave a confidential voicemail by calling the Center at 239-221-8250. If you call during office hours, Tuesday-Friday, 9 AM to 1 PM, our receptionist will assist you.

Meet Diane Temple

The SDC has a new face! Since October, Diane Temple has served as ministry support for the Center. Whenever you call or walk in between 9 AM and 1 PM, Monday through Friday, she will be there to greet you. Serving as both receptionist and office manager, Diane juggles the schedules of Dr. Al, Pastor June and Maria, while performing many of office tasks.

Originally from Long Island, NY, Diane has lived in Massachusetts and, for the last 30 years, in Southwest Florida. She previously worked as a lab technologist in lab management and as a care coordinator. Diane has attended First Church for the last three years. She has an adult son and daughter, and four grandchildren. A resident of Bonita Springs, she enjoys gardening, sewing and reading.



In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Our heartfelt Christian sympathy extends to:

Christine Wheale on the death of her husband, Robert Thompson Wheale, July 12; Donna O'Neill on the death of her mother in July; Jody Stauffer on the death of her mother, Miriam Crowe, October 14 in Missouri; Rebecca Lawson on the death of her husband, William Lawson, October 20; the family of Sandy Wilson who died October 22; Imogene (Gene) MacDonald on the death of her husband, James MacDonald, October 24; Charles Fredericks on the death of his son, Craig Fredericks, in Iowa; Dan Killian on the death of his wife, Dianne Killian, October 29; Eric, Lisa and Alex Weesner on the death of Eric's mother, Darlene Weesner, November 2 in Ocala; Deanna Morgan on the death of her husband, Dr. Thomas Morgan, November 2; Ann & Dean Sperle on the death of Ann's brother, William Switzer, on November 28; the family and friends of Alvey Rushton who died on December 2; Jerry Gray on the death of his wife, Toni Gray, December 3; Joanne Horn and Charlotte Friede on the death of Louis Horn (husband and brother-in-law, respectively) on December 5 in Wisconsin; Stan Whetstone on the death of his wife, Joan Whetstone, December 11; Joe & Karen Mollahan on the death of their 19-year-old grandson, Michael, in Michigan; the family of Paul Davenport, who died on December 29; Jack & Pat Hazen on the death of Jack's sister, Rae Burgess, on December 29 in New York; Mary Ann Mulroy, who lost her granddaughter and son-in-law in a plane crash; and Richard Ellingwood on the death of his wife, Faye Neely Ellingwood, on January 2.

Please remember loved ones in the military

These individuals are loved ones to members and friends of our church who are currently serving our country. Please pray for their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, and their safe return to their families. Names with an asterisk are currently deployed.

Andrew Bean, Gideon Bernthal*, Cpt. David Cullen, Christian Dobush, SFC Aaron M. Haynes, Cpt. Paul J. Najarian*, Catherine Oakley, Miles Oakley, Katie Payne*, Patrick Ryan, Sarah Ryan, Barrett Schake*, Dylan Michael Sipos, Kristin D. Stahl*, Thayne Stahlacker, John Stanton, Trevor S. Thrasher, Jeffrey Tolbert, Tyler Van Kampen, Eric Williams, Zach Williams, Jonathan Wise, Deisy Wolfe, Matthew C. Wolfe, John N. Yacos, Kyle York.

Church Directory

All of our staff are committed to the mission of First Presbyterian Church and would like to make ourselves available to assist you in whatever way we can. The directory listing below, although not comprehensive, includes contact information that may be helpful to you.

PASTORS

Rev. Dr. Douglas G. Pratt Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
Rev. Steven Grant Associate Pastor
Rev. Brad Rogers Associate Pastor
Rev. June Barrow Assistant Pastor
Rev. Allen Walworth Ministry Consultant

dpratt@fpconita.org
sgrant@fpconita.org
brogers@fpconita.org
jbarrow@fpconita.org
awalworth@fpconita.org

ADMINISTRATION

Elsie Nesbitt Administrator
Ed Gonzalez Office Manager
Dave Reynolds Accountant

enesbitt@fpconita.org
egonzalez@fpconita.org
dreynolds@fpconita.org

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Dr. Al Barrow Director of Spiritual Development
Maria Karl Biblical Counselor

abarrow@fpconita.org
mkarl@fpconita.org

BOOKCENTER

Ed Schick Manager

eschick@fpconita.org

FACILITIES

Bill Gilmore Property Superintendent

bgilmore@fpconita.org

FAMILY MINISTRY

Nancy Bolognese Preschool Administrator
Lauren Hargis Children's Ministry Coordinator

nbolognese@fpconita.org
lhargis@fpconita.org

HOSPITALITY

Vivien Wain Manager

vwain@fpconita.org

MEDIA

Tommy Hillegass Media Specialist

thillegass@fpconita.org

MEMBERSHIP

Rebecca Harley Membership and Volunteer Facilitator

rharley@fpconita.org

MISSIONS

Trusha Barner Director

tbarner@fpconita.org

PARISH NURSE MINISTRY

Stephanie Stec RN & JoAnn Hochstetler RN Parish Nurses

parishnurse@fpconita.org

PASTORAL SUPPORT

Donabeth Urick Executive Assistant, Pastor Pratt
Judi Van Cleave Pastoral Assistant

durick@fpconita.org
jvancleave@fpconita.org

PUBLICATIONS

Rita J. Flower-Opdycke Manager

flower@fpconita.org

SACRED ARTS

Jeff Faux Director
Peter Lewis Associate Director
Cheryl Bauer Director of First Academy of Music/Administrative Assistant
Scott Fox Ticket Coordinator

jfaux@fpconita.org
plewis@fpconita.org
cbauer@fpconita.org
sofox@fpconita.org

THRIFT SHOP

Lynne Stauffer Manager

lstauffer@fpconita.org

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Donna Tenfelde Coordinator

dtenfelde@fpconita.org

2017 SESSION

Moderator
Rev. Dr. Douglas G. Pratt

Clerk of Session
Dave Nichols

ELDERS

Ken Baldwin
John Cardwell
Janice Croley
Judy Graham
Mike Greene
Lynn Heinold
John Holdeman
GR Houck
Carl Johansen
Stevie Joslin
Doug Mehle
Sharon Morrison
Gary Norbo
Lin Rhode
Nelson Robbins
Paul Spinka
Jack Wallace
Sharon Weisenauer

2017 DEACONS

Moderator
Leslie Durling

Betty Cardwell
Leslie Durling
Linda Faas
John Fisher
Sandy Flaig
Jim Gelhaar
Barb Goff
Karen Hatten
Polly Grafton
Bob Lorenz
Loren Luppess
Ron Maki
Jerry Meier
Elaine Morton
Wendi Owens
Joan Robinson
Judi Van Cleave
Linda Wallace

Office: (239) 992-3233
Fax: (239) 992-7547

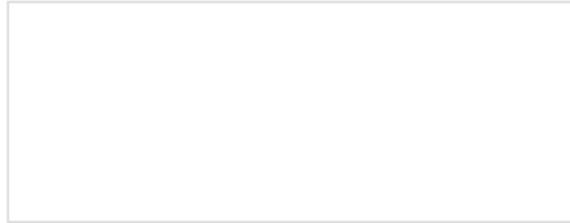
First Academy of Music: (239) 992-3410 x232
First Thrift Shop: (239) 992-0285
Spiritual Development Center: (239) 221-8250
Wonder Years Preschool: (239) 948-6677
Ticket Office: (239) 992-3410 x250

fpconita.org



PO Box 2168
Bonita Springs, FL 34133

Non-Profit Organization
U S Postage
PAID
Bonita Springs FL
Permit #14



Kirkin' o' the Tartan

On January 29, First Church observes the annual “Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan” which celebrates the Scottish heritage of the Presbyterian Church. Both the 9:00 and 11:00 AM services will include a procession led by the Harp & Thistle Pipe and Drum Band, with members of our congregation carrying tartan flags. If you would like to participate by carrying a flag, please contact Cheryl Bauer (cbauer@fpcbonita.org or 239-992-3233 ext. 232). The Drama Ministry will present a one-act play on Saint Columba, Christian missionary to Scotland in 565 A.D. Set on the Isle of Iona, we listen in on his conversation with King Bridei. Worship will also include the presentation and blessing of the Clan Tartans with members of the St. Andrew’s Society of Southwest Florida.

From Scottish History

In remembering our Scottish heritage, we recall the Reformation of 1560, when the Scottish Parliament ratified the Scots Confession of Faith, abolishing the jurisdiction of the Pope in Scotland. Written by John Knox and five colleagues, it continues to this day as one of the foundations of the Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church. The word “kirk” is the Gaelic (ancient Scottish) word for “church.” The ceremony of Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan is of American origin but based on Scottish history and legend. When the Scots were defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the British banned the keeping of any Highland culture. Forbidden to speak Gaelic, carry weapons, play their ancestral bagpipes or wear clan tartans, it is said they initiated a secret tradition of attending church one day a year wearing a concealed piece of tartan. This covert act of defiance came to be known as the Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan.

In America

Our present-day Kirkin’ ceremony is believed to have been originated by Rev. Peter Marshall, a Scottish immigrant who was appointed twice as Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. He was a member of the St. Andrew’s Society of Washington D.C., who assisted him with the first Kirkin’ service in 1943. Since 1954, the Washington Kirkin’ service has been held at the National Cathedral. Today many Scottish, Caledonian and St. Andrew’s Societies across the U.S. hold Kirkin’ services, with the majority of them celebrated in Presbyterian churches.

