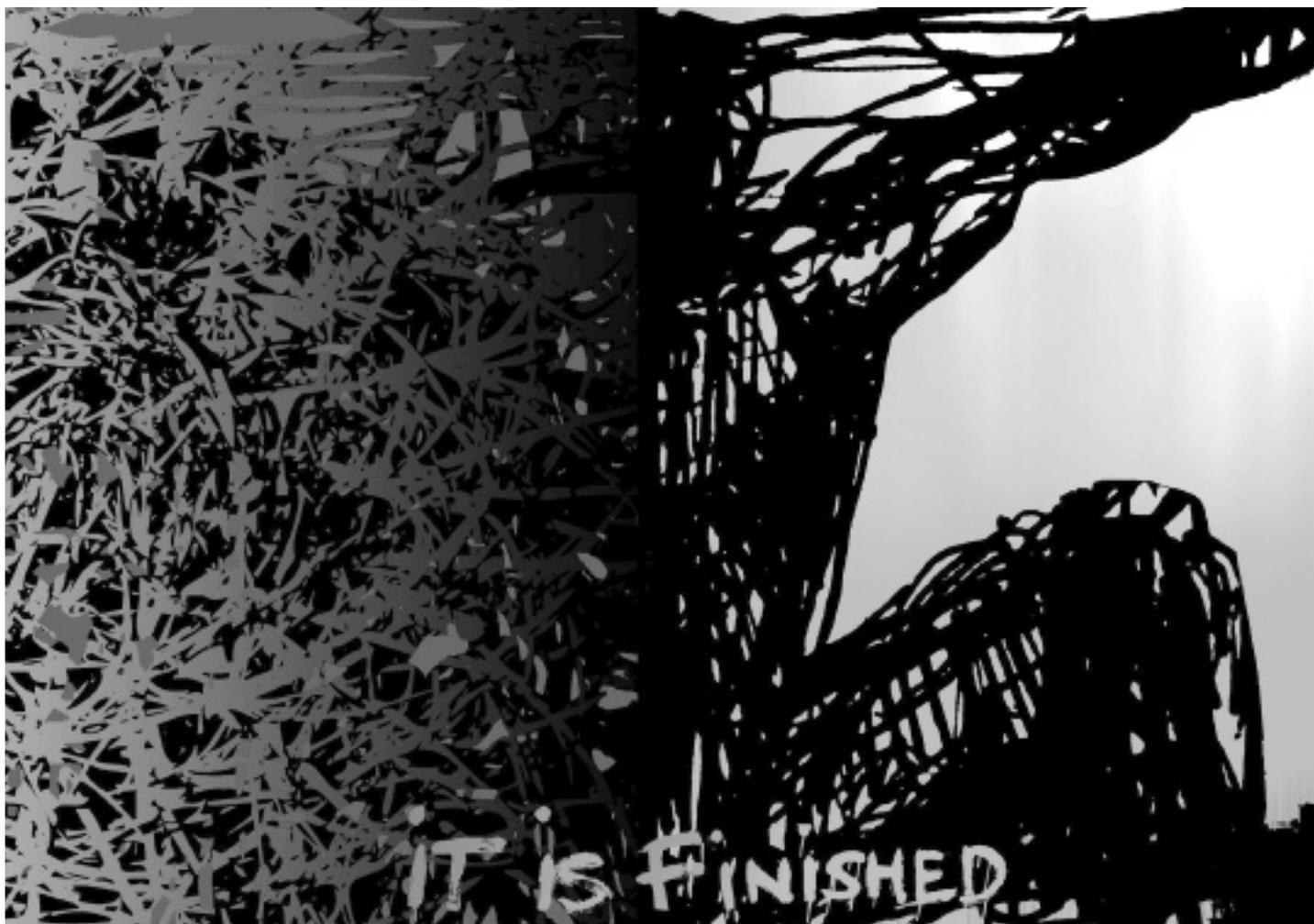


Epistle *to the Bonitians*



THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BONITA SPRINGS | MARCH-APRIL 2017



For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. - 2 Timothy 1:7

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 | fpcbonita.org

Doug's Desk

Dear Members and Friends of First Church,

“I t’s good enough” is the mortal enemy of excellence. I suspect that every human endeavor (a business, a non-profit, a government, even a church) has to deal with that subtle constant temptation to settle for “good enough.”

In the 1950s and 1960s the industries of Japan were still struggling to recover from the devastation of their defeat in the Second World War. The products they manufactured were usually of cheap and inferior quality. But they were not content. In 1950 a Japanese trade association invited an American management consultant named Edward Deming to come to Tokyo to advise them. He taught the Japanese a disciplined approach that came to be known as “continual improvement” (“kaizen” in their language). Before long, the relentless effort to never settle for “good enough,” but to always try to make their products better, led to world-class results and even market dominance in many areas.

Meanwhile, the post-war industries of America slipped into complacency (notably the auto makers, but others as well). Since sales and profits were high, engineers and managers felt little need to keep improving their products. Their products were “good enough” for the American public, they thought—until higher-quality Japanese products started to arrive on our shores.

This parable from business history teaches us that every organization, including First Church, needs to regularly renew their dedication to “continual improvement.” This was the topic of discussion at our first Session meeting of 2017: how can the elders and staff and ministry leaders of our congregation make sure that we never become complacent and settle for what is just adequate when we can make it better?

In 2016 we spent significant time and resources resurfacing, improving and enlarging our parking area. The results have been very beneficial: more spaces, better traffic flow, better nighttime lighting, and the elimination of dangerous roots and potholes. We also recently renovated and beautified the Great Room, making it much more efficient and usable. We are exploring ways to enhance our churchwide communication—including an upcoming redesign and freshening of our website and a possible move into social media.



Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt

But the “continual improvement” process will never end until the Lord returns. And we need your help. If you see some things that we could improve to better enhance the experience at First Church, we want to know. And if you have witnessed at other churches an idea that might be applicable to us, please share it. (Keep in mind, of course, that not every idea works equally well in every setting; people have told me about things that are done at their “church up north” but, because our ministry context is much different in Southwest Florida, those practices would not necessarily translate for us.)

The Apostle Paul motivates us towards “continual improvement” out of love and devotion to Christ in Philippians 3. “This one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal.”

Yours in Christ’s Service,
Pastor Doug Pratt

Christian Education

On 2 Timothy 1:7

by Pastor Brad Rogers

The Scriptures remain clear on fear.

One verse says, “There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear...” (1 John 4:18). Still another says, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). And maybe most memorably, Psalm 23 says, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

Perhaps the Scriptures have this theme so pervasively interwoven because God knows that we live in a broken and troubled world with so many issues that could leave us crippled by fear. In the midst of the dark valleys of this world, these verses serve to remind us that faith has a radical answer to fear: if God is with us, there is nothing to fear. God’s presence empowers us to overcome any challenges we might face.

Our memory verse for March is taken from a letter written from the dark valley of prison by the Apostle Paul to his young protégé, Timothy. He wanted to encourage Timothy to not let reports of his imprisonment and suffering debilitate him with fear. Paul used an evocative image, reminding him to “fan into flame the gift of God,” which is the Holy Spirit — God’s spiritual presence with us. And then he says, “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV).

March Memory Verse

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

– 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

I am reminded of what Martin Luther King Jr. once said in his book, *Strength to Love* (1977):

This faith transforms the whirlwind of despair into a warm and reviving breeze of hope. The words of a motto which a generation ago were commonly found on the wall in the homes of devout persons need to be etched on our hearts: “Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. There was no one there.”

As we commit 2 Timothy 1:7 to memory, as we etch it upon our hearts, we are reminding ourselves that faith in Christ will vanquish fear. Throughout March, let us use this verse to fan into flame the gift of the Holy Spirit and receive God’s power, love and self-discipline.

On the cover...

Wolfgang Tonne’s “From the Grave to the Sky III” was part of the Scribes of Hope II traveling exhibit recently featured in our Art Gallery. Because of its stark representation of Christ on the cross, this piece was chosen for our Lenten cover to emphasize the text of 2 Timothy 1:7. Obviously inspired by Jesus’ final words, the artist “wanted to express in contemporary terms pain and frustration as well as hope.” Tonne, as part of his art process “starts with a ... figure in motion or in meditation, and draws in scars to indicate a personal history of suffering and hopefully healing” (from *Scribes of Hope II* exhibit book). The power of Jesus’ spirit on the cross reminds us of His great love—even as He takes His final breath—for He breathes His Spirit into us and, along with it, the power to vanquish fear and death.





Lenten Devotional: *A Love That Never Dies*

The CE Ministry invites members and friends to walk with Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem and, from there, to Calvary. This beautiful devotional is actually a prayer journal where you can write down your thoughts each day. Its 56 pages guide the reader through the 40 days of Lent, allowing a unique and individual journey of reflection, repentance and renewal.

The theme Bible verse for this publication is Jeremiah 31:3: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." For each day of Lent, an idea is presented along with a verse from Scripture. The text adds perspective on what was happening in Jesus' ministry as well as in society at that time. Questions posed to the reader help us personalize our Lenten journey and focus on the depth of His love and sacrifice. As we consider them in our hearts, journaling is encouraged as a way to clarify and define our own thoughts. An insightful closing prayer is begun and the reader is prompted to finish with their own words. Recommended reading is listed that includes (after the first week) segments from St. Matthew's Passion. This account records the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion and the suffering He endured for us.

A Love That Never Dies can be purchased in our Book-Center. Join your brothers and sisters in Christ on a true Lenten journey of the heart.

Concert of Prayer

Monday, March 6 • 7 PM • Sanctuary

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

1 John 5:14 (NIV)

All are invited to join us in gathering as a congregation for a time of prayer, singing and worship that will cover a number of relevant matters. We will pray for our new President, our Congress and our nation. We will pray for our congregation and God's Church. We will pray for our missionaries, our community and more. Prayer makes a difference. So come on out and join us.

The secular world and possibly some people you know seem to believe that prayer is pointless. But Concerts of Prayer go all the way back to our spiritual roots in Scotland and have been an important part of ministry in our nation over the years.

Author, prophecy expert and commentator Paul McGuire says, "America is now facing the greatest crisis in its history" (*newswith-views.com*, October 11, 2016). He also states:

The churches are the primary institution the Creator, who is referred to in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, has instituted to protect our nation and its people from walking down the pathways of destruction. The Church is not merely a human institution, but a spiritual institution which is referred to in the Bible as the Church of Jesus Christ and the Body of Christ....

The American people are precisely where George Washington was when he fell to his knees. If we will turn from our illusion that there is no God and that we do not need Him, there is the real hope that, just like George Washington, we will discover both His power and reality in our time of need. (from paulmcguire.us/nwv101116.html)

Youth for Christ International (YFCI) offers a beautiful definition of a Concert of Prayer on their website:

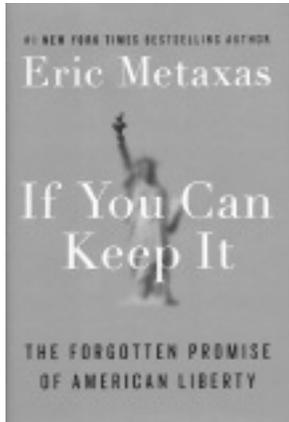
The title "Concert of Prayer" has been used by Christians for more than 300 years. It describes the idea of a united gathering for extraordinary prayer. Participants bring their relationships with God like musicians bring their instruments to a musical concert. The Holy Spirit becomes the conductor in this setting. He provides the spiritual "score" and "tempo." (from epay.yfci.org/daniel/prayer-triplets/what-is-a-prayer-concert/)

Please join us, the Body of Christ, to pray "in concert" and in faith for our world, our nation and our Church.

Summer Reading Challenge

If You Can Keep It by Eric Metaxas

Each year, Pastor Doug Pratt and the CE Ministry select a book for members and friends to read and contemplate over the summer months then, in the fall, participate in a



discussion with Pastor Doug. We invite you to pick up your copy of *If You Can Keep It* from the FPC BookCenter and take up the challenge.

Ever wonder how our founding fathers would grade how America is living up to their original intentions and lofty vision? *New York Times* bestselling author (and former Bonita Christian Forum speaker) Eric Metaxas definitely has. He offers a critical analysis in his 2016 book chosen for our Summer Read:

If You Can Keep It is at once a thrilling review of America's uniqueness, and a sobering reminder that America's greatness cannot continue unless we truly understand what our founding fathers meant for us to be. The book includes a stirring call-to-action for every American to understand the ideals behind the "noble experiment in ordered liberty" that is America. It also paints a vivid picture of the tremendous fragility of that experiment and explains why that fragility has been dangerously forgotten—and in doing so it lays out our own responsibility to live those ideals and carry on those freedoms. Metaxas believes America is not a nation bounded by ethnic identity or geography, but rather by a radical and unprecedented idea, based upon liberty and freedom. It's time to reconnect to that idea before America loses the very foundation for what made it exceptional in the first place. (from ericmetaxas.com/books.if-you-can-keep-it/)

For updates on Sunday morning CE classes and the Monday Pastor's Study, be sure to read our *First Things First* announcement booklet in the Sunday bulletin.

Why Lent?

by Pastor June Barrow

During Lent, we pay attention in a new way, so that we might see more clearly and value more highly what God has done for us.

We value power. The cross looks like weakness.

We value wisdom. The cross looks like foolishness.

We value winning. The cross looks like losing.

We value the good life. The cross looks like everything we would avoid.

And yet, in the cross of Christ lies the love, wisdom, and power of God. In the cross of Christ rests our hope of being close to God, of our home in heaven, of our dignity as loved sons and daughters.

For author Max Lucado, the cross of Christ is the singular event of history:

For if there is no cross of Christ, then there is no truth to Christ.... To remove the cross is to remove the hinge pin from the door of hope. The door of your hope. For if there is no cross there is no sacrifice for sin. If there is no sacrifice for sin, how will you face a sinless God? Will you cleanse your own sin? And if there is no cross of Christ, there is no resurrection of Christ. If there is no resurrection, how will you live again? Will you push back your own grave? Forgiveness of sin, deliverance from death, these are the claims of the cross. Let there be no mistake, the cross is not an event of history. It is the event of history. (from *He Chose the Nails*)

How can we understand this? How can we comprehend what God offers us in the cross of Christ?

Lent invites us, for 40 days, to sit up and pay attention.

Ask yourself:

How well do I know God?

What are my fears or wrong ideas about God?

For what am I truly thankful?

For what am I truly sorry?

What do I truly need?

How can I truly praise God for all He has done?

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, and continues until Resurrection Sunday, Easter, April 16. *A Love That Never Dies*, an appealing, easy-to-use Lent devotional, is available in our bookstore. During the forty days of Lent, many of us will follow this book day by day as we consider the great things God has done for us through the cross of Christ. Join us!

Lenten Worship

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

The 40 days of Lent and subsequent celebration of Christ's Resurrection represent a great journey—one where our heaviness of heart is transformed into the greatest of joy. We recognize our deliverance from the ashes, our rescue from sin and our redemption through grace.

In Isaiah 43:1, God says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." Jesus wipes us clean with the ransom of His blood upon the cross, giving His very life-breath so we could choose life in Him. He has called us by name... a new name (Isaiah 62:2).

As pilgrims on this earth, we know where our home is. We know Who our Savior is. Lent is a time to contemplate our journey and reflect upon Jesus — the unblemished, sacrificial lamb Who died for us over 2,000 years ago. Let us turn our hearts toward Him, in prayer and worship.

March 5 | Lenten Communion

During Lent, the Sacrament of Communion holds special meaning as we look toward the cross of Jesus' sacrifice. Late services feature music from the Chancel Choir and Angelus Bells.

March 26 | Choral Music Sunday

The 9 and 11 AM services feature our annual Lenten choral presentation with orchestra. The Chancel Choir presents the premiere of *In Principio* written by Jason Bahr. This piece was commissioned by First Church to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Jeff Faux as Director of Sacred Arts at FPC. Worship focuses on the hope found in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, with all music accompanied by orchestra.

April 9 | Palm Sunday

As Holy Week begins. We commemorate Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey—a humble triumph leading to His death and resurrection. Special music from the Chancel Choir and Angelus Bells is featured at 9 and 11 AM. The Drama Ministry presents "Jesus Teaches in the Temple." Children are invited to take part in the palm procession at the 11 AM Family Service.

April 13 | Maundy Thursday Service (7 PM)

During this solemn service, led by Pastor Allen Walworth, we remember Christ's final Passover meal shared with His followers the night before He was crucified. At this meal, He instituted a New Covenant, sealed with His own body and blood. The Passover became the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which we will share.

April 14 | Good Friday Service (12 Noon)

In honor of Christ's Passion, Pastor Steven Grant leads this powerful worship experience. The prayers, music, Scripture readings, symbolism and dramatic aspects are all intended to help worshippers identify with the events and characters of that day. Please read more about this service on the next page.

Resurrection Celebrations

April 15 | Saturday "CenterPoint Praise" (5:30 PM)

For those who wish to celebrate Easter in a casual atmosphere, "CenterPoint Praise" features the same message as Sunday with contemporary music led by Randy and Lori Thomas.

April 16 | Easter Sunday (7:30, 9 & 11 AM)

We celebrate Christ's Resurrection with three traditional worship services, all with special music. The 9 and 11 AM services feature the Chancel Choir with Haydn's *God of Life* and the Motet Choir with *Sanctus* from Duruflé's *Requiem*, accompanied by professional orchestra. The Drama Ministry presents "Emmaus." And you don't want to miss the stirring *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel's "Messiah."

April 16 | Children's Resurrection Services 9 & 11 AM • Family Ministries Center

Children ages 6 months through third grade are invited to attend their own Easter services—designed especially for them. Each service includes a journey through Holy Week, and time for games and crafts meant to help clarify the true meaning of Easter.

Children in 4th grade and older are invited to attend worship with their parents in the Sanctuary or CenterPoint. Easter activity bags will be available at the Children's Desk.

Good Friday Service

Q: What do these symbols have in common — a lock & key, a rock, a wash basin and large nails?

A: Each are used in our Good Friday Service to commemorate Christ's Passion.

Pastor Steven Grant leads this annual service that has become a tradition here at First Church. Although comparatively brief, it dramatically exhibits the realities of the first Good Friday, 2,000 years ago.

The service itself is an eclectic mix of prayers, music, Scripture, symbolism and dramatic readings. Each is intended to tell a meaningful account of Good Friday while helping you identify with the events and characters from that day. The service ends with the singing of *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* We hope you will be able to answer with an emphatic "Yes!"

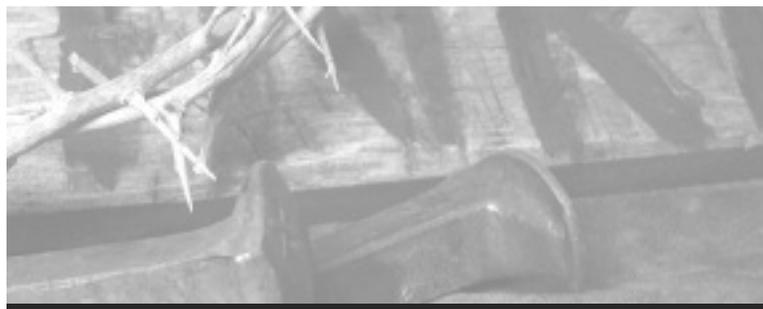
During the course of the service, candles are extinguished to represent "dying moments" and mimic how the sun was obscured that afternoon. Five characters will speak to you, each with their humanity laid bare. How will you identify with them?

You will notice that after the description of the crucifixion there is no character to speak to you. That is because that character should be YOU—you who should have been on that cross instead of Jesus. He took your sins upon Himself.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

When Jesus died, the veil that prevented anyone from entering the Holy of Holies in the Temple was torn in two. Jesus had accomplished His mission. Through His sacrifice on the Cross, our debt has been paid and our sins forgiven. Our Father can now look at us as if we never sinned, because of Jesus.

The veil is draped over the cross and the Christ candle is extinguished. We leave the Sanctuary in silence as we imagine Jesus being placed in the tomb. We have two choices: to go away in deep despair or to go forward, anticipating the coming of Resurrection morning. Today is Good Friday, but Easter is coming!



IN THE FIRST PERSON

"Lovin' Lunches"

by Dave & Lynne Stauffer

Three years ago Lynne's son, Mike Moisio, wife Stephanie and daughters Maggie (age 6) and Gabby (age 3) decided to try a significant family project for Lent. Rather than taking away something from their daily lives, they decided to give



back during the season of Lent by feeding the homeless as a family.

Thursday evenings the Moisios prepared 24 "Lovin' Lunches" to be distributed on Fridays. These lunches would include two sandwiches, crackers, bottled water and a treat for 24 individuals. Mike would drop them off mid-morning at the downtown Cleveland Bath House for the homeless. This went on every week before Easter.

After Good Friday the first year, Mike told the girls they had done a very good thing during Lent and their project was over. Can you imagine his surprise when both Maggie and Gabby asked, "What are the homeless going to eat now on Fridays?" They were two little girls who were very concerned.

That was three Easters ago. The Moisio family has been making lunches for 24 homeless non-stop for the last three years. When the girls are off from school, they go with Dad on Fridays to hand out their "Lovin' Lunches," along with a lot of smiles.

Mike and Stephanie's friends now contribute to the "Lovin' Lunches" project with donated food, clothing and even financial aid. Last year church member Donzy Brinkert personally paid to ship three boxes of winter clothes from our First Thrift Shop to the Moisio family to hand out at the Cleveland Bath House. This past Christmas, Mike, Steph and the girls raised enough money to replace the tiny TV in the Bath House dayroom with a brand new 50" flat screen. Everyone was thrilled!

We are very proud of the wonderful lesson Mike and Stephanie have taught their young daughters with the "Lovin' Lunches" Lenten project... and how Maggie (now 9) and Gabby (now 6) wholeheartedly wanted to continue the project year-round.

Every Thursday night continues to be "Lovin' Lunches" night. The family still makes the sandwiches and packs the lunches with love. On Friday when they drop them off, there is much happiness on both sides — from both the givers and the receivers.

Sacred Arts

Post-worship Recitals

Our post-worship recital series is a great way to avoid the parking lot traffic and enjoy some great music. After the 11 AM service, grab a quick cup of coffee, then return to the Sanctuary for some music.

Franklin & Marshall College Chamber Singers

Sunday, March 12

In addition to offering music during worship, the Franklin and Marshall College Chamber Singers will present a short recital afterward. The Chamber Singers is a highly select vocal ensemble made up of approximately 20 singers, chosen by audition. Each possesses strong vocal and musicianship skills, allowing the group to perform at a consistently high musical level. Their repertoire ranges from music of the Medieval period to premieres of new music. Director Dr. William Wright is quite accomplished as well, having performed as a pianist or conductor in 27 countries. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting from The University of North Carolina (Greensboro).



Pianist Charles Goehring

Sunday, March 19

Charles Goehring will present a piano concert featuring Broadway, pop, jazz, hymns and classical music. Former Director of Music at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Chuck now consults with churches in music ministry and searches. He was Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church, Naples until 1996 and now attends FPC when vacationing in Southwest Florida. Chuck has also served as interim director of music and guest organist at several churches in Indianapolis. His wife, Joy, is an ordained Presbyterian pastor and a Chaplain at Riley Children's Hospital. After retirement from St. Luke's in 2006, Chuck became artistic and founding director of VOCE, a professional vocal ensemble of 24 singers in Indianapolis.



New Horizons Band Concert

Friday, March 3 • 7 PM • Sanctuary

Free concert, no tickets required

Come hear the FPC New Horizons Band under the baton of their new director, Dr. Daniel R. Davis. Traditional marches, Broadway show tunes, big band music and much more will be included in their repertoire.

Dan earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education and Master's degrees in Saxophone Performance and Woodwind Pedagogy from Ohio University. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Wind Conducting from the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Davis has a total of 28 years teaching elementary through college students while serving as band, choral and orchestra directors in Ohio, Maryland and Florida. He retired from the public school arena in 2016, after completing 11 years at Caloosa Middle School in Cape Coral, FL. Dan's hobbies include singing in community choral ensembles, composing and arranging music, and performing on soprano, alto and tenor saxophones.





Concert Series

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.

The Annie Moses Band

March 10, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

The Ditchfield Family Singers

March 24, 2017 • 3 & 7:30 PM

Fine Arts Series

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. Financial assistance is available to qualifying students aged 18 years and younger enrolled in private lessons at the school. For more details, call the music office at 239-992-3410 ext. 232 or visit firstacademyofmusic.org.

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

Jason Bahr's "Symphony No. 2"

"This work was written in response to the Iraq War, using poetry from Walt Whitman and Wilfred Owen. I feel most of the American public was insulated from this war. Unless you served or had a loved one in the war zone, most of us were oblivious to the carnage created by bullets and bombs that made no distinction between combatants and innocents. I wrote this work as a reminder of the devastating cost of war." – Jason Bahr

Jason's symphony includes five movements: (1) describes a war zone and its indiscriminate nature using Whitman's *Beat! Beat! Drums!*; (2) portrays the mindless war machine using Whitman's *An Army Corps on the March*; (3) shifts focus away from violence to loss of life using Whitman's *A Sight in Camp*; (4) defines a soldier's sacrifice as not sweet, but gruesome and terrifying, using Owen's *Dulce et Decorum est*; (5) features the Youth Choir as the voices of the future with new emphasis on hope, love and heaven using portions of Whitman's *The Mystic Trumpeter*.

A Generous Life and Beyond

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, the Apostle Paul describes how God promises to bless those who live generously:

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

The Endowment Fund of First Presbyterian Church is a partnership between this church and its members and friends, based on the concept of mutual stewardship. It is aligned with and supports the mission and vision of First Church. We invite you to get out of "neutral" and get ready for a change to... A Generous Life and Beyond. There is transforming power in a "generous life."

Many of us were impressed and touched by the four Gordon-Conwell Seminary students interning with us this past January. They showed heartfelt interest in learning how our church functions, about our various ministries, mission commitments and community outreach, and our biblical approach to all that we do. Recently our Session, for the first time, approved that some of the income (not principal) generated by the Endowment Fund could be used to help pay for the students' expenses. Because of this, your generosity can have a tri-fold purpose — to sustain their hope for a future of serving God in the pastoral ministry, to help equip future Christian leaders in the Church, and to live generously.

Scripture teaches that generosity reflects the heart of God, and God blesses those who give on His behalf. Givers receive the joy of seeing the harvest and the knowledge they played a small part in sowing the seed.

The First Tartan Society is our way to recognize Future and Planned Giving to our Endowment Fund. Together there is more we can do. Join us.

Contact the church office (239-992-3233) for more information about how you can work with your legal or financial advisors and create a way to allow "your giving to outlast your living." His blessing follows.

Sundays

Sunday worship includes three morning services: 7:30 (FirstLight), 9 and 11 AM.

At 7:30 AM, FirstLight is our “early bird” service. Held in the Sanctuary, it includes all the basic worship elements of music, message and Scripture—having the same preacher and message as the later services—but only 35-40 minutes in length.

Full services with choir are offered at 9 and 11 AM in the Sanctuary and, by video feed, in CenterPoint. This alternate location offers a more casual atmosphere with various seating options, and coffee and cookies available.

Our adult education classes are held from 10:10 to 10:50 AM between services. Childcare is provided for the youngest children (6 months to 3 years) during both the 9 AM service and adult CE classes. The Children’s Choir meets at 10 AM. Age-appropriate Sunday school (Neon Kids) classes are held during the 11 AM service for children age 6 months through 5th grade.

“First Stop”—our fellowship time—takes place in McClure Hall following each worship service. Join us for coffee and refreshments, visit with friends, and take advantage of the informational kiosks for various church ministries.

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. One of our ministers will be present to welcome individuals who wish to take Communion and receive healing prayer offered by our prayer teams.

March 5

Lenten Communion

March 12

Compassion Sunday
Franklin & Marshall College Chamber Singers, guests in worship and post-worship concert

March 19

Jennifer Shaw, musical guest
Family Worship (11 AM)
Post-worship concert:
Pianist Charles Goehring

March 26

Choral Music Sunday

April 9

Palm Sunday
Drama Ministry
Family Worship (11AM)

April 16

Easter Sunday (7:30, 9 & 11AM)

Special Services

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

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, April 9 • 12 Noon • Sanctuary

A meeting of the congregation is called for April 9 immediately following the 11 AM worship service. The agenda will include the presentation of the Annual Report for 2016, the election of a Nominating Committee for 2017, and any other business required.

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. On March 18, our musical guest will be Jennifer Shaw.

Epistle *to the Bonitians*

MARCH-APRIL 2017

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

Contributing Writers:

Jason Bahr
Trusha Barner
Rev. June Barrow
Nancy Bolognese
Connie Duquin
Jeff Faux
Rev. Steven Grant
Lauren Hargis
Carl Johansen
Bill Jones
Stevie Joslin
Rev. John McWilliams
Dave Nichols
Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt
Nelson Robbins
Rev. Brad Rogers

Dave & Lynne Stauffer
Donna Tenfelde
Donabeth Urick
Chuck Wolfe

Contributing Photographers:

Compassion/Canada
Pastor Miguel Estrada
Dave Nichols
Grant Skaggs

Cover graphic

“From the Grave to the Sky III”
by Wolfgang Tonne (Scribes of Hope II traveling exhibit)

A Day (Weeks) in the Life of FPC

Four graduate students from Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Boston spent most of January as pastoral interns at First Church. They had the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the life of the church. During their time in Southwest Florida, the two women stayed in the home of Elder Stevie Joslin, and the two men stayed with Elder Chuck and Geri Wolfe.



Gordon-Conwell Seminary students (from left to right) Ben Crelin, Kara LeTourneau, Esther Kim and Hunter Gossett.



Above: Stevie with Kara and Esther. Right: Geri and Chuck with Ben and Hunter.



The *Epistle* asked the hosts their thoughts on our church-sponsored Student Mentorship Program.

What did it mean to you to host seminary students who are preparing for ministry?

Chuck Wolfe: Wow, what a treat to host the Gordon Conwell students in our home. We felt as if we added two sons to the family! How inspiring to learn of their aspirations and hear about the plans the Lord has for their future. Each day we were reminded of the incredible intelligence, talent and also humility they possessed and demonstrated. Nothing rejuvenates quite like being in the presence, and feeling the exuberance, of youth. We were clearly the beneficiaries!

Stevie Joslin: Opening my home and my heart to these outstanding young people who have been called into ministry was a blessing. What an encouragement it is to know the next generation of Christian leaders is so faithful to God's truths. The students were so authentic with me in our discussions. I was definitely energized by them and had so much fun.

Why do you think this is a program for First Church to support?

CW: Let there be no doubt, the future of Christ's Church is in incredible hands. What a privilege to serve that end by investing in these young leaders of the Church. Our staff and congregation gave them what books and lectures cannot; we provided them with a unique experience. The students were so impressed by the excellence of our church's operation, and they were overwhelmed by the love of our congregation.

SJ: Being a flagship church, it is a wonderful opportunity we have to expose the interns to our many facets of ministry. They read and study theology in their course work and, while here, were able to experience and apply the skills they are learning. A large church model with our demographics showcases that older people never retire from doing God's work. They witnessed that First Church is dedicated to carrying out the mission of the church. The mentoring by our professional staff is a priceless investment into the lives of these young people.

“Who is Like You, Lord?”

*Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord
and delight in his salvation.*

*My whole being will exclaim, “Who is like you, Lord?
You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,
the poor and needy from those who rob them.”*

Psalm 35:9-10 (NIV)

Recently one of the radio stations I listen to was promoting child sponsorship through Compassion International. They told the story of Jonathan, a young man from the Dominican Republic, who grew up in the ghetto surrounded by gangs, drugs and with a single mother and very little contact with his dad. When Jonathan was 15, his dad told him, “Jonathan, you were a mistake for me.” These words left Jonathan devastated, causing him to almost end his own life.

As I listened to this story on the radio I could only think, “Who is like You, Lord”? You see, I have had the privilege of meeting and spending time with Jonathan. He is now a 26-year-old married man, who has sat with the president of the Dominican Republic, worked with the United Nations and has dedicated his life to serving others. Only the Lord could make this kind of transformation.

Jamie was 27 when she decided to sponsor a child through Compassion. She started writing small notes of encouragement to Jonathan from her home in Michigan. One Thanksgiving she wrote Jonathan saying, “I want you to know how thankful I am for you.” Jonathan thought, “Nobody thinks of me, but Jamie from Michigan thought of me and is thankful for me.” Through this and Compassion’s continual sharing of the Word of God with Jonathan, he was able to realize that he was not a mistake, and that he was loved. He began to understand the Bible and even the



Jonathan

photo compliments of Compassion Canada (blog, compassion.ca/blog/page/11/)

verse that says, “Honor your father and mother.” As hard as it was for him, Jonathan chose to speak love into the life of many who had not shown him love and, today, he and his father have a great relationship. “Who is like You, Lord?”

In a few weeks, I will be traveling to the Dominican Republic with a group from First Church, and will be able to see Jonathan again. The Lord, through Compassion, is rescuing the poor and needy. Their child sponsorship has been proven to change lives, and I have seen it first hand through Jonathan. As we prepare for Compassion Sunday (March 12), will you pray about sponsoring a child through Compassion International?

You tell a child they matter when you sponsor a child through Compassion. Jamie from Michigan had no idea at the time that the Lord was using her to speak life into Jonathan in the Dominican Republic. Who knows what difference you can make in the life of a child? “Who is like You, Lord?”

Trusha Barner
Director of Missions



The Body of Christ Working Together

Recently one of First Church's supported mission organizations, Misión Peniel, let us know that one of their neighbors in Immokalee needed a wheelchair. Alicia was born with polio and does not have the use of her legs. She had a wheelchair, but it was literally falling apart and it was getting harder for others to push her in it. The need was made known to First Thrift Shop and, shortly thereafter, Misión Peniel received a donation of a beautiful red motorized wheelchair. Alicia is overjoyed and grateful for this wonderful gift. Thanks, everyone!



Above: Pastor Doug, Dave Stauffer, Ned Moser, Gary Norbo, Grant Skaggs in wheelchair.

Left: Alicia in her new wheelchair with Pastor Miguel from Misión Peniel.

THRIFT SHOP MINISTRY

“Second Chances”



In January, First Thrift held their Annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast. Turnout was the largest ever, with over 95 volunteers eager to enjoy a delicious catered breakfast. But they were totally surprised to get a Broadway Palm-style show to boot!

Last year, a group of about 60 First Thrift workers attended the thrift shop musical, *Second Chances*, at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre in Fort Myers. “Yes, there really was a thrift shop musical,” mused First Thrift co-manager Dave Stauffer. “Once I found out, we had to go! It was so well done. We all had the best time!”

Dave explained that, via the internet, he was able to track down the play's producer. He and Lynne invited the cast to the breakfast “When they accepted the invitation, we were blown away!” said First Thrift Manager Lynne Stauffer. “It was a real thrill having them with us in McClure Hall.” Six members of the *Second Chances* cast wowed the audience with two songs from the musical, then they had a Q & A session. Then Pastor Doug Pratt addressed the volunteers and graciously thanked them for their service.

First Thrift embraces the mission of First Church: to welcome and nurture our community, help people grow as disciples of Christ, and present a positive witness in today's world. While it is obvious that First Thrift welcomes and ministers to the local community, its income also helps our church offset expenses—enabling our ministries to grow and spread God's love.

Remember: First Thrift Shop...

- Open Monday through Saturday, 10 AM – 3 PM
- Accepts donations of gently used clothing, housewares, home décor, small appliance and furniture

Call 239-992-0285

Steven's Study

Dear Friends,

October 31, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's making public what we have come to know as his 95 Theses. After thoroughly studying theology and Scripture, he recognized doctrinal contradictions in the teachings of the church. Luther's courageous act of speaking out is usually held up to be the bold act that sparked the Protestant Reformation. There were others who preceded Luther, and many since, who also worked for reformation, but Luther is justifiably identified as the main character in the story of the Reformation.

It should be kept in mind that Luther did not set out to start a new church or even initiate a separatist movement with his name on it. He merely wanted to help reform the church he loved. Unfortunately, the church leaders made the mistake of debating Luther in public for many to hear. Luther was not only a consummate biblical scholar and theologian, he was also a master of debate. Sending anyone to debate him would today be like scheduling a winless football team in last place to play the New England Patriots! Nevertheless, such public debates occurred, and with the advent of the printing press—which put Luther's writings and even the Bible itself in the hands of many people—the whole concept of religious freedom gained momentum.

As we celebrate this anniversary year, we will have the opportunity to participate in some Adult Education programs that explore the Protestant Reformation in-depth. As with the Kirkin' o' the Tartan observance, it is well for us to remember steadfast brothers and sisters in the faith who lived and served before us, handing down to us the faith we hold dear. Many did this at great risk to themselves. It has been said that the church was built on the blood of the martyrs. The fact that we know what the Gospel is, and that we can attend worship and fellowship events at the church of our choice, is something we must never take for granted. To think that many households have a copy of the Bible which is very rarely (if ever) read, is a phenomenon that would be hard to fathom by those who had their lives taken from them simply because they worked to make the Bible available to the "common" person. Now we can walk into a store and purchase a Bible or order one online as easily as we buy a pair of shoes. But there are places in the world today where believers cherish the few pages of Scripture they can get, and even that could be a capital offense.

Fortunately in our current era, relationships between we



Rev. Steven Grant

Protestants and our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters are more amicably Christian. In fact, we have Roman Catholic friends attending our church just as some FPC members have occasion to visit St. Leo's and other Catholic churches. One of the glories of the American Revolution and the subsequent Bill of Rights is the recognition of a person's right to the free exercise of religion. As brothers and sisters in Christ (regardless of denomination and differences of opinion concerning details), mutual respect and love across denominational lines is more representative of the universal nature of the "holy catholic church" in which we all proclaim to affirm as we recite the Apostles' Creed.

Nevertheless, Protestants should have a clear understanding of the basic principles that emerged from the Reformation. We can sum them up in what we might call the "Six Protestant Principles," which include what we often refer to as the five "alones." They are:

- **Sola Scriptura** – Scripture alone: Our authority for faith and practice comes from God's Word as revealed in the Bible.
- **Solus Christus** – Christ alone: Jesus Christ is the only means by which we can be saved.
- **Sola Gratia** – Grace alone: We cannot earn our salvation; it is entirely due to the grace of Almighty God.
- **Sola Fide** – Faith alone: what justifies us to receive the benefits of Christ's atoning work is that we put our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- **Soli Deo Gloria** – Glory to God alone: everything is for His glory, not our own.
- **Priesthood of all believers** – As we are in no need of an intermediary other than Christ, we all pray for each other, proclaim God's Word to one another, minister to each other, hold one another accountable, and be the fellowship of the church with each other.

I look forward to rediscovering Reformation history with you as we observe the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's courageous work. I pray that the tremendous story of Protestant Reformation will be not only an interesting historical journey but also an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Bible, to draw closer to Jesus, and to live a more meaningful Christian life.

Pastor Steven Grant

The American Miracle

Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic

by Pastor Steven Grant

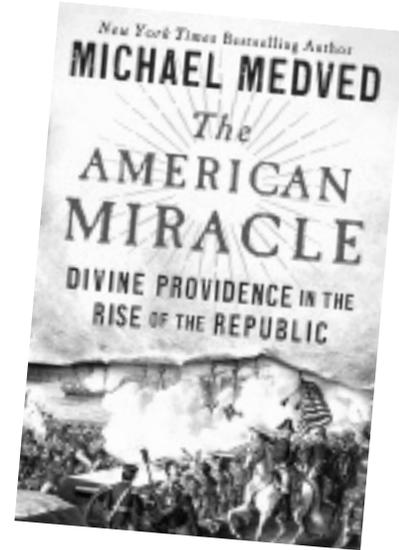
New York Times bestselling author and radio personality Michael Medved has written a fascinating book called *The American Miracle: Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic*. Medved explores the topic of American exceptionalism by exploring the question of whether America has been simply lucky or divinely blessed. He shows how prominent persons who participated in significant events in our nation's history accounted for those events by giving credit to God's Providence. We find this statement printed on the book's dust jacket:

The history of the United States displays an uncanny pattern: At moments of crisis, when the odds against success seem overwhelming and disaster looks imminent, fate intervenes to provide deliverance and progress. Historians may categorize these incidents as happy accidents, callous crimes, or the produce of brilliant leadership, but the most notable leaders of the past four hundred years have identified this good fortune as something else — a reflection of divine providence. (Also found online: "Is America Lucky or Blessed?" CBN News, cbn.com/cbnnews, December 15, 2016)

Medved has done his homework and proves to be a good historian. His selection of pivotal events in American history offers a compelling narrative that reveals the hand of God at work. If one or two of these events stood alone, one might be inclined to ascribe the label of "fortunate coincidence." But given their number, the extraordinary circumstances that surround them, and the tremendous implications and consequences that resulted from them, the reader is compelled to consider a quite different possibility.

Medved's examples include the Mayflower being blown off course, the "unseen ally" of the American Revolution, George Washington's seeming indestructibility, the circumstances and events involved with the Constitutional Congress, the Louisiana Purchase, Jackson's victory at New Orleans, the story of the State of Texas, the Gold Rush, crucial battles of the Civil War, and the life and presidency of Abraham Lincoln.

Medved's assertion that the United States is a "favored land" is not meant to inspire national arrogance or a self-proclaimed superiority over others. However the American story, warts and all, is exceptional and, as the reader contemplates the improbability of certain historic events, the phrase "The truth is stranger than fiction" comes to mind.



American exceptionalism is obvious when we think about how this nation developed from its earliest settlements to the superpower it has become. Considering America's impact on the world, one cannot help but entertain the notion of God's intent given the Bible's repeated assertion that God is Sovereign over all. There is a saying regarding marriage on a plaque that I have in my home which reads, "There are many wonderful love stories but I like ours the best!" To adapt this to the subject at hand I would also say, "There are many wonderful stories about nations, but I like ours the best!"

To see the hand of God at work in the American story may still be an elusive mystery to skeptics and to a cynical world that seeks to deny Him in all other matters of life, as well. But if you read Medved's book, you will gain a greater perspective on the possibility of our God who, as we discover in the revelations of Holy Scripture, is intimately involved with His creation. Would it not be possible that God has been and will continue to be active in the shaping of America for His purpose?

It has been said regarding matters of faith, "For those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who do not believe, no explanation is possible." I recommend this book to you for further understanding of our bold declaration, "God Bless America!" Truly He has and I pray always will.

Brad's Blessings

"...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

Philippians 3:12

At First Church, Family Ministry is organized around the vision of the church partnering with parents, who carry the primary role of nurturing the spiritual lives of their children. There may be no more emphatic demonstration of our family ministry model than a child's journey from Baptism to Confirmation.

In our tradition, during the Sacrament of Baptism, three promises are made to the child, each by separate sources. The first and most important promise is made by God whose faithful promises are sealed onto the child. The image of the seal derives its origin from the wax stamps made by family crests that were used to seal envelopes in history past. By receiving the seal of God's promises, we are made members of the family of God. The second promise during baptism is made by the parents of the child. They promise to provide nurture and guidance within the community of faith until the time that a child is able to make his or her own faith commitment. In other words, the parents promise to take on the primary role of faith formation within their children's lives. Finally, the church promises to surround the child with love, prayer, support and encouragement, and to partner with parents in the process of this faith formation.

Confirmation, then, is the time when a young person "confirms" the faith they have seen modeled by their parents at home and nurtured by the partnering church. The goal of confirmation is to help children take hold of their faith, personally. The name "confirmation" is derived from the act of "confirming" the promises of God, which were sealed upon their lives during baptism, by the profession of faith. We believe that Christ takes hold of a child during their baptism, but that they must take hold of their faith by publicly stating that Jesus is their personal Savior following confirmation.



Rev. Brad Rogers

This March and April, First Church will begin a confirmation class for 8th-12th grade students. The program will begin with a Confirmation Retreat through Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center, March 31-April 2. Then, the pastoral staff at First Church will be leading a 6-week confirmation class from April 19 to May 24.

The process of faith formation is guided by the Holy Spirit, accomplished primarily through faithful parenting, and supported by the work of the church. It is the model by which our Family Ministry is organized. Please join our prayers that God will empower these ministries so that our students will take hold of the faith for which Christ has taken hold of them.

Blessings,
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.



The Still Point

by Pastor June Barrow

An older woman had, for a lifetime, tackled every responsibility with will-power and striving. Growing into her mature years, she longed to grow closer to God, to grow in faith. She talked with a pastor about her determination to try, try, try—to work harder at prayer. Instead her pastor advised her to spend fifteen minutes each day in her room, speaking no words at all, but simply knitting in God’s presence while enjoying His peace.

The woman knitted. *I am doing nothing*, she thought. In time however, she began to enter the silence created by her knitting. Then she said, “I perceived that this silence was not simply an absence of noise, that the silence had substance. It was not absence of something but presence of something.” At the heart of all the silence there was He who is all stillness, all peace, all poise. He is the still-point in the spinning world. (This story is adapted from Anthony Bloom.)

How does fruit ripen? It rests on its tree branch, receiving—just receiving—the warmth of the sun, the blessing of the rains, and the nourishment that comes through its roots. The fruit is ripened; it does not ripen itself.

Imagine that your own personal maturing as a son or daughter of God is a ripening in the warm light of God’s Word, in the living waters of Jesus Christ, through the deep roots of God’s great love on our behalf. “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light,” Jesus says to us (Matthew 11:30).

A Day Away is a half-day committed to learning more about prayer and the deepening of our spiritual lives. There are protected periods of time for solitude, stillness, silence and private prayer.

All are invited—men and women, members and friends.

A Day Away
“The Still Point”

The Prayer of Rest and Peace
Friday, March 31 • 10 AM to 2 PM
CenterPoint

Led by Pastor June Barrow

Cost: \$10 for lunch

Register by contacting SDC Ministry Assistant Diane Temple at dtemple@fpconita.org. You may also call the Center between 9 AM and 1 PM, Monday through Friday, at 239-221-8250.

“Day Away” offers perspective

I attended one of Pastor June’s “Day Away” retreats last year and found it to be enlightening as well as lightening — as in “load-lightening.” Listening to June’s gentle storytelling and reflecting upon the truth within the words of Scripture—so many verses dealing with rest, comfort and God’s caring—combined for a relaxing time of truly “resting in God’s Word.” I fully enjoyed the devoted quiet times, which I spent in one of the comfy chairs in the Art Gallery, surrounded by beauty. Sharing this time, as well as an excellent lunch, with a small group of women was nice, too. If you want to remember the importance of stillness in this crazy world... if you want to find healing in contemplating God’s Word... slow down for half a day, and come enjoy a small banquet of peace and quiet. You just may discover a new perspective!

– Anonymous Day Away Lover

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.

Something for Everyone on Family Night

Wednesdays, March 8 – April 5 • 6-7:30 PM • Family Ministries Center
 Something for everyone! Lil'K (for age 3–6) and KIDMO (for 1st–5th graders) offer exciting discoveries about God. Illumination for middle & high school students meet for activities, discussion and fellowship. The Parents Group also meets for their own study (see next page). Childcare is provided for children 6 months to 2 years of age. See *First Things First* for more details.

Shop the Family Book Fair for Easter Giving

Sunday, March 12 through Easter Sunday, April 16 • FPC BookCenter
 We hope you will visit the BookCenter beginning March 12 to purchase featured titles and gifts during our Annual Family Book Fair. Proceeds will support FPC Family Ministries. Browse our extended children's section filled with Christian resources and Easter ideas for children through adolescence, as well as for parents.

Parents: Take a Break on Kids Night Out

Friday, March 31 & April 28 • 5-8 PM • Family Ministries Center
 This monthly child-centered event is designed to provide a safe, Christian, caring and fun environment for children ages 1 to 11. Open to families of First Church and Wonder Years, theme-based activities, games and crafts are planned for each age group, as well as a pizza dinner. See *First Things First* in the Sunday bulletin closer to event dates for reservation details.

"Take It Home" Event Focuses on Family Devotions

Sunday, April 2 • 11 AM • Price Hall Chapel
 This annual event is for preschoolers and their parents. This year we are encouraging families to gather together for devotional prayer as a meaningful step to deepen their relationship with God and with each other. Each family in attendance will receive *Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions for Kids* by Sarah Young. Please RSVP to Lauren Hargis.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Kids: Join Us on Easter!

Easter Sunday, April 16 • 9 & 11 AM
 Family Ministries Center

Children ages 6 months through 3rd grade are invited to attend their own Resurrection Service, designed especially for them! Before the service begins, please check your children in at the Children's Check-In Desk located at the entrance of the Family Ministries Center. Each service will include a journey through Holy Week and time for games and crafts, all meant to help us understand the celebration of Easter. Children in 4th grade and older are invited to attend worship with their parents in the Sanctuary or Center-Point. Easter activity bags will be available at the Children's Check-In Desk.



Questions?

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

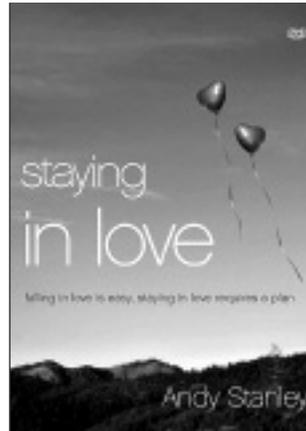
"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 5:16

“Staying in Love”

DVD study by Andy Stanley

Pastor Brad Rogers will offer this small group DVD study for parents in four Wednesday sessions starting March 15: *Staying in Love*. Falling in love is easy, but staying there? Is it even possible? Pastor Andy Stanley, one of the leading communicators in Christianity today and author of over 20 books, says, “Absolutely!” Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus gave us the foundation for enduring love and, in our first session, Stanley reveals the simple, yet powerful, principle. (Hint: John 13:34.) Stanley describes that desire for someone special with which to experience ultimate intimacy as “the thumbprint of God on your soul.” (*Staying in Love*, Part 2/4: Remodeling [video], [youtube.com/watch?v=6jRknrJsPIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jRknrJsPIU))



Parents' Study

March 15 – April 5
6-7:30 PM • Lightner Conference Room

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 3:23

Falling in love comes naturally, but staying in love requires a plan. If we contemplate how we consistently treat our most beloved possessions, we can learn the keys to successful life-long relationships. Come discover the secrets from Scripture that can help us to “stay in love.”

Walking with Jesus at Wonder Years

The students learn about Christ's Passion, death and resurrection in a variety of ways at Wonder Years. Our bulletin boards are decorated with crosses, scenes of Easter and the tombstone rolled away, and Jesus ascending into heaven. In Chapel Time, taught by Ms. Lauren and myself, we start the Lenten journey by using palms to initiate discussion about Palm Sunday and why Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Several books are highlighted throughout Lent as the children learn about why Jesus died for us and what His resurrection truly means: *Humphrey's First Palm Sunday* by Carol Heyer, *The Sparkle Egg (A Symbol of the True Promise of Easter)* by Jill Hardie, *The Miracle of Easter* by Jean M. Malone and *God Gave Us Easter* by Lisa Bergren. During Holy Week we use the “Resurrection Eggs” to tell the Easter story. Each day we open one or two of the eggs (which include a small object—donkey, coin, nail, etc.) and read about its meaning in connection to Christ's Passion.

Nancy L. Bolognese
Preschool Administrator



Ms. Ivanys, Ms. Tami and Ms. Karla with Wonder Years students.

Men's Ministry Fellowship

Changing Men's Hearts One at a Time



Learning to Jump a Train

by Bill Jones, MMF Chair

Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place. – 2 Peter 1:19 (NLT)

My high school band director, Mr. Bame, had a favorite saying: "You can learn something from everyone; even a hobo can teach you how to jump a train." Although, so far at least, a hobo has not taught me to jump a train, his point is valid and remains with me. We constantly have different trains passing us during our lives. We need to learn how to jump from one to the other in order to learn all we can from each one.

Our church is blessed by an incredible staff led by Dr. Doug Pratt. Those of us who attend the Men's Ministry breakfasts have the opportunity and privilege to learn from Pastor Doug twice each week — on Thursday mornings and then during Sunday worship. Dr. Al Barrow and Dr. Allen Walworth also deliver messages with great insight and humor during our weekly breakfasts. Because of Al's unique experiences, he teaches us about ourselves from a different perspective. Allen's distinctive back-

MMF SCHEDULE

Fellowship Breakfast & Bible Study

Thursdays • 7:20 AM • McClure Hall

For more information, please contact Bill Jones (wjones1352@bellsouth.net; 239-596-9141).

"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.

ground and wonderful storytelling encourages us to see ourselves in the Bible stories.

Pastor Doug seeks to expand our spiritual growth by providing a variety of viewpoints and opinions, always managing to find fascinating speakers. This past January, Men's Ministry was one of the few places to hear our student interns from Gordon-Conwell Seminary speak about their faith journeys. Their testimonies were moving and inspiring. One of them shared how she overcame obstacles in a difficult home environment. Another explained how she was able to meet the challenge of helping refugees in the Middle East. Her story taught that we can change injustice if we get involved.

Charlie Weatherbie, a former football head coach for Navy, is the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Director for Southwest Florida. One Thursday morning, he brought with him four students who conveyed how the FCA program impacted them. One young man shared how his commitment to Christ at the FCA summer camp not only changed his life but that of his family as well; they all now attend church. This student is only one of nearly 200 kids who came to Christ at camp last summer. The Men's Ministry raised over \$10,000 for the FCA as an offering in January, making us team members with Charlie and these stu-

Men's Annual Spring Dinner

Tuesday, April 4

6 PM • McClure Hall

Dinner tickets may be purchased at the Men's Breakfast on Thursdays or at the Men's kiosk on Sundays

7 PM • Sanctuary

Michael Belk, guest speaker

Open to the community free of charge

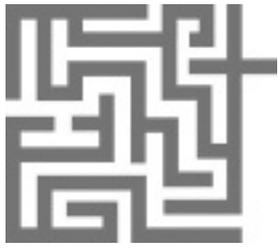
dents. We are making a difference in this world by reaching even more students.

Our own Dr. Jim Croley has spoken on Thursday mornings as well, teaching us about our brain and how we think. Who would have thought you could measure a person's spirituality or that people have tried to weigh the soul? As former MMF chair Scott Flaig says, "Are you kidding me?" Jim's book, *Believing is Seeing*, is being read and enjoyed by many in our congregation. At the Men's Ministry breakfast, we get to ask him questions about it.

Ismael Hernandez, founder of the Freedom and Virtue Institute in Fort Myers, is another one of our speakers. He is the author of the book, *Not Tragically Colored*, and teaches by fostering an understanding of present-day struggles in local neighborhoods few of us have seen or experienced.

I encourage you to attend our MMF breakfast and take advantage of the opportunities provided to jump one of the trains going by. In the process, you will enjoy a scrumptious start to the day... including much "food for thought!" Join us on Thursday mornings. And bring a friend!

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.

Funeral Options

Thursday, March 23 • 2-3:30 PM • CenterPoint
Bill Shikany, owner of Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home Bonita, will discuss various funeral options. Details about cremation vs. burial, memorial/celebration of life and other funeral decisions will be presented with appropriate costs. If you or your loved ones have questions or concerns about any of these options, this is your chance to learn what you need to know to honor your loved ones or to plan your own service!

Navigating the FPC Website

Sunday, April 2 • 12 PM • CenterPoint
(following the 11 AM worship service)

Do you have questions about our church website? Can you access information about each week's events? Do you know how to give online or at the kiosks in the Narthex? Come learn "everything you always wanted to know" about navigating the FPC Website and using our giving kiosks. Bring your questions along with your smart phones, iPads and laptop computers to use during this interactive seminar. Discover how Gil Urick designed our website to be user-friendly. Church members will be available to help you wander through the FPC website.

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



2016-2017

Bonita Christian Forum



Leslie Wickman

Monday, March 20, 2017 | 7:00 PM

Leslie Wickman, Ph.D. is a former Lockheed corporate astronaut, rocket scientist, engineer on NASA's Hubble Space Telescope and International Space Station programs, and author of *God of the Big Bang*.



WICKMAN

All events begin at 7:00 PM

Doors open at 6:15 PM

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.

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!

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.



Tell a Woman

by Donna Tenfelde

And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. – Luke 23:55 (KJV)

When we think of Easter in a more secular way, we are tempted to let its true significance slip our minds (a little like Christmas). We entertain thoughts of Easter bunnies, Easter egg hunts, Easter bonnets and a Sunday that sees most churches filled to capacity.

After reading a devotional titled “And the Women Also” by Julia Bettencourt (juliabettencourt.com/dev/thewomenalsodev.html, posted April 5, 2011), I am reminded of the true meaning of Easter. The writer wonders how it must have been for Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women believers. They listened to Jesus’ teachings, believed His word and followed Him from Galilee.

These women stood at a distance (Luke 23:49) and watched all the events that led up to His crucifixion, His last words, His final breath. They were there. What deep emotions they must have experienced; such pain and sorrow.

They watched Jesus being taken down from the cross and wrapped in linen. They followed Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb and saw how Jesus’ body was laid in it. We can imagine how they hurried home to prepare the burial spices and perfumes; but it was the Sabbath and they had to rest. But as soon as they could, they rushed to the tomb.

What was their reaction upon finding it empty? They must have been stunned and a little afraid. What were they thinking when the two angels appeared, reminding them of Jesus’ words in Galilee, “on the third day I will rise again” (Luke 9:22). I would think it took a minute or two to comprehend all this; when they did, they knew they had to tell someone — after all they were women. How could they keep such a thing to themselves?

Julia describes the women as pondering (Luke 23:55), as being prepared (Luke 23:56) and being perplexed (Luke 24:4). But slowly they came to understand (Luke 24:5-7), remembering Jesus’ words (Luke 24:8) and were propelled into action. They could have used the words to the hymn (had it been written then), “Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!”

These women went through all kinds of emotions during Christ’s last days, especially because of all the time they spent with Him — sitting at His feet, listening to Him, following Him. Julia writes: “We need to sit at His feet. Perhaps take a new look at all those words in red in our Bibles and really take in all the love, wisdom, compassion, and grace that embodied the life of Christ on earth. I think it’s then that we can more appreciate that long road to Calvary that He made for us.”

In her conclusion, Julia asks us to remember that Christ’s resurrection is “the one thing that gives us hope. The one thing that makes our Christian life worth living.” She also states, “The depth of His love wasn’t meant to be kept hidden.”

I am reminded of an old (and possibly outdated) advertising term about the most effective way of getting the word out: Don’t Telephone, Don’t Telegraph, TELL A WOMAN! Even though we may not know exactly what to say and how to say it, we can spread His Word. WE CAN DO THIS! Just speak from your heart and tell someone today of Jesus’ love and sacrifice for each of us. Like the women at the tomb, “remember His words” (Luke 24:8)... and be not afraid to tell His story.

continued on next page

Women’s Connection has Bible studies Monday through Thursday. For information on our current studies, please refer to *First Things First* in the Sunday bulletin.

If you have any questions, contact Women’s Ministry Coordinator Donna Tenfelde (239-992-3233 ext. 293; dtenfelde@fpconita.org).

Jennifer Shaw

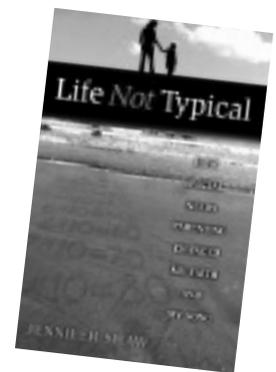
Knowing Jesus... “It changed everything”

Warm. Real. Funny. Intelligent. Engaging. These are some of the words people use to describe Jennifer Shaw. But her favorite? “Christ-follower, absolutely,” she says. With a love for people and a heart to serve God, Jennifer wants nothing more than to point people toward the One who has changed everything in her own life.

Both a special needs and adoptive mom, Jennifer is also a Telly Award-winning speaker, author, singer, songwriter and five-time Billboard Top 40 artist who never thought she'd be doing what she's doing now. “It honestly never occurred to me,” Jennifer said. “My background is entirely in classical music, and I was teaching at the university and singing with symphonies...I never could have foreseen how things would change.”

But everything did change. Through devastating and unexpected circumstances, Jennifer's picture-perfect life came to a screeching halt with a series of life-changing events that she describes as her refining fire. “It taught me who I was. No one wants to go through hard times, but those life experiences are what taught me what was important. It taught me that life really is all about Jesus—knowing Him and making Him known. His faithfulness to me took my breath away, and it changed everything.”

Bio excerpts courtesy of jennifershaw.com



Jennifer Shaw... At a Glance

- Master's Degree with honors in Vocal Performance from the prestigious Manhattan School of Music; performed at Carnegie Hall and the Crystal Cathedral; former Professor of Music at Cedarville University; music director/worship leader at her church for over 12 years.
- Works featured by Focus on the Family, Insight for Living, Joni and Friends, FamilyLife, Autism Speaks, the SPD Foundation, TBN, PBS, The Christian Voice and many others.
- National radio success, a #3 hit on the inspirational radio chart and a five-time Top 40 Billboard artist with her songs, produced by Lifeway Christian Resources.
- Her book *Life Not Typical* explores Sensory Processing Disorder from a parent's perspective and has been featured internationally on television and radio.
- Compassion International artist, performing for ministry events in Asia, Central America, Africa, Europe and North America.
- Her CDs and numerous music videos feature her signature crystal vocals, exceptional arrangements and heartfelt lyrics; all inspired by life lessons and personal passions.

Women's Mini Retreat with Jennifer Shaw

Wednesday, March 15 • 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM • McClure Hall
Tickets: \$15

Women's Connection invites you to experience an uplifting time of Bible study, music, lunch fellowship. Our speaker, Jennifer Shaw, has a special heart for women, and uses her music and stories to comfort, encourage and challenge us to a deeper relationship with God.

TOPIC: Out of the Boat: Peter's Journey and Ours

Jennifer walks with us on a journey through the life of Peter (the Rock). We will look at how God shaped and changed this very ordinary man to become the founder of His church, and then discover ways the Lord can mold us and transform us to be people He can use!

Membership

Membership Classes

Saturday, March 25 • 9-11 AM

Sunday, March 26 • 5:30-7:30 PM

Classes are held in McClure Hall

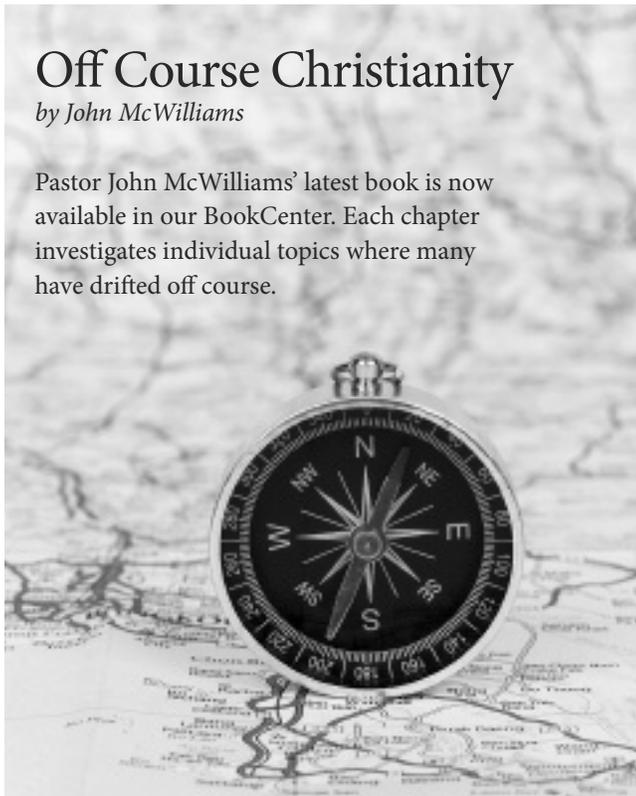
First Church extends an invitation to those interested in learning more about church membership. This class, led by Senior Pastor Doug Pratt, covers what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be Presbyterian, and what it means to be a member of First Church. You'll hear a little of our history 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; rharley@fpcbonita.org) 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.

Off Course Christianity

by John McWilliams

Pastor John McWilliams' latest book is now available in our BookCenter. Each chapter investigates individual topics where many have drifted off course.



In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Our heartfelt Christian sympathy extends to:

Lynda Condurelis on the death of her husband, Steve Condurelis, on January 8 at Joanne's House; Jean & David Barbour on the death of Jean's mother, Mildred Rintamaa, on January 9; David and Bobbi Cleland on the death of wife and mother Aubrey Cleland on January 12; Lisa, Eric and Alex Weesner on the death of Lisa's mother, Barbara McCune, on January 16, in Stuart, Florida; Dick Shallberg on the death of his wife, Aleen Mathews-Shallberg, on January 19 in Pittsburgh; Gil & Donabeth Urick on the death of Gil's mother, church member Lucy (Lou) Urick, on January 21 at Joanne's House; Ron & Norma Henney and Cheryl McDonald on the death of Ron and Cheryl's sister, Marjorie (Marge) Dominick, on January 22; Bertie Parker on the death of her husband, Johnnie E. Parker, on January 25; Jack & Pat Hazen on the death of Jack's brother, Albert Hazen, on January 27 in Boynton Beach, FL; Brett and Brittney Blevins on the death of wife and mother, Betsy Blevins, on February 22; and the family of E. Edward (Ted) Reagle, who died on February 22.

Please remember loved ones in the military

These individuals, loved ones to members and friends of our church, 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@fpcbonita.org
sgrant@fpcbonita.org
brogers@fpcbonita.org
jbarrow@fpcbonita.org
awalworth@fpcbonita.org

ADMINISTRATION

Elsie Nesbitt Administrator
Ed Gonzalez Office Manager
Dave Reynolds Accountant

enesbitt@fpcbonita.org
egonzalez@fpcbonita.org
dreynolds@fpcbonita.org

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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

abarrow@fpcbonita.org
mkarl@fpcbonita.org

BOOKCENTER

Ed Schick Manager

eschick@fpcbonita.org

FACILITIES

Bill Gilmore Property Superintendent

bgilmore@fpcbonita.org

FAMILY MINISTRY

Nancy Bolognese Preschool Administrator
Lauren Hargis Children's Ministry Coordinator

nbolognese@fpcbonita.org
lhargis@fpcbonita.org

HOSPITALITY

Vivien Wain Manager

vwain@fpcbonita.org

MEDIA

Tommy Hillegass Manager

thillegass@fpcbonita.org

MEMBERSHIP

Rebecca Harley Membership and Volunteer Facilitator

rharley@fpcbonita.org

MISSIONS

Trusha Barner Director

tbarner@fpcbonita.org

PARISH NURSE MINISTRY

Stephanie Stec RN & JoAnn Hochstetler RN Parish Nurses

parishnurse@fpcbonita.org

PASTORAL SUPPORT

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

durick@fpcbonita.org
jvancleave@fpcbonita.org

PUBLICATIONS

Rita J. Flower-Opdycke Manager

flower@fpcbonita.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@fpcbonita.org
plewis@fpcbonita.org
cbauer@fpcbonita.org
sofox@fpcbonita.org

THRIFT SHOP

Lynne Stauffer Manager

lstauffer@fpcbonita.org

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Donna Tenfelde Coordinator

dtenfelde@fpcbonita.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

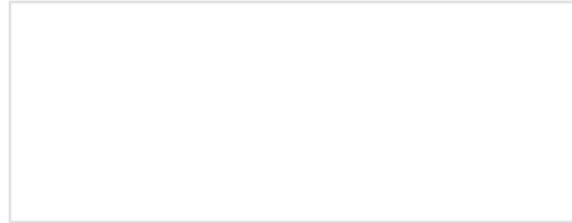
Ticket Office: (239) 992-3410 x250

fpcbonita.org



PO Box 2168
Bonita Springs, FL 34133

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



Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday

April 9 • 7:30, 9 & 11 AM

Drama Ministry, Family Worship (11AM)

Maundy Thursday Communion

April 13 • 7 PM

Good Friday Service

April 14 • 12 Noon

Resurrection Celebrations

CenterPoint Praise

April 15 • 5:30 PM

Easter Sunday

April 16 • 7:30, 9 & 11 AM

Children's Resurrection Services

April 16 • 9 & 11 AM

Family Ministries Center

Learn more about these services on page 6.

