

Epistle *to the Bonitians*



THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BONITA SPRINGS | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016

MESSIAH

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

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,

Welcome back to Florida to those of you who spent your summers elsewhere; and to those who won't be returning to our area until the winter months: we're eager to see you, and in the words of Tom Bodett, "We'll leave the light on for you."

One of the exciting results of the work done during this past summer is the complete renovation and updating of the "Great Room," located at the far northeast corner of our building (what was originally the front part of the old sanctuary). Thanks to a most generous gift from a private donor, we have been able to bring this room up to the quality and standards of the rest of our facilities. The large assembly room looks beautiful and will be an attractive area for Great Banquets, Sunday morning classes, and committee and group meetings throughout the week. The former stage has now been efficiently redeveloped into offices, storage space, and dedicated work and meeting areas. If you haven't yet seen the renovation work in the Great Room, please take a look. My deepest thanks to Dave Nichols and the Planning Committee he chaired, and also to the family that anonymously donated the funds to enhance God's house in this practical way.

Summer 2016 was also a time when we were able to do roof and air conditioning repairs, renovate some restrooms, purchase new chancel furniture, and complete re-carpeting and reupholstering in the Sanctuary.

As renovations took place in some areas of our church home, bulldozers and pavers have been busy in our grass-covered parking lot to the south of the sanctuary. This area had become overgrown and unsafe over the years. Tree roots warped the asphalt driveways and walkways, fire ants and weeds had spread through the grass, and overgrown branches caused dark patches at night that blocked the light posts. This major project of reconfiguring and repaving is now nearly complete and will not only result in a safer and better-lit parking area, but also net us 32 additional spaces.

Because the parking lot project was delayed by several weeks in June and July due to final design changes and permitting hurdles, its completion was pushed back to November. Thus we made the decision to accelerate the start of our seasonal schedule for worship services. In past years we have made the change to three Sunday morning services in



Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt

January; this year, due to the limited parking, we made the switch in mid-October. Our worship times from now until the first Sunday of May will be 7:30, 9:00 and 11:00 AM. The only exception to that schedule will be Christmas Day—which lands on a Sunday this year. On Christmas we will hold one service at 10 AM, and it will be casual and "come as you are." We are hoping that everyone will be able to attend one of our three Christmas Eve services (5 PM for families with young children, 7:30 and 10 PM). Don't forget that we also offer a contemporary praise service every Saturday evening from 5:30 to 6:30 PM in CenterPoint.

As you read this letter, our nation will be within a few days of a very critical national election. Throughout the summer and fall we have held open forums once a month to talk together about how to be faithful followers of Christ in our political lives and in the voting booth. We will also be holding a Concert of Prayer at our church on Election Eve (Monday, November 7) at 7 PM in the Sanctuary, to join together as believers in lifting up to the Lord our nation and its future. If you are in Southwest Florida the day before the election we invite you to join us. And wherever you are, I am sure that you are as motivated as I am to pray for God's guidance and blessing on America.

Wishing you and your family a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Doug Pratt

מָשִׁיחַ Messiah

The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ translated “māšîah” or messiah is “*Khristos*” or *Christ*, which means “anointed.”

Each of us journeys to Bethlehem in our own way. We listen to the age-old Biblical prophecies foretelling the birth of a Messiah—the Christ, the Anointed One—who is both God and man, divine and human.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. The light will shine on those living in the land of dark shadows
Isaiah 9:2 (NLV)

Advent symbolizes a time of waiting in darkness for the coming of the light. The prophet Isaiah saw a broken world, waiting in obscurity... but his mind’s eye also saw the birth of Salvation! Yes, God placed us in this land of dark shadows and suffering, but not without Hope.

The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).
Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

Our spirits are renewed with the coming of this royal and mysterious baby king who is “God with us.” We sing the beloved hymns of Advent as a family of believers. Let us also search our hearts, meditate and pray for the world to realize true peace—now attainable—through the Christ Child, Jesus our Messiah!



And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.
Isaiah 52:15 (NLT)

Sunday, November 13

Communion Sunday

The selected anthem is a beautiful setting of the classic hymn *Rock of Ages*. Our Drama Ministry presents a short play about Alban, the first Christian martyred in Britain for spreading the Gospel and refusing to renounce his faith. Worship will include the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Sunday, November 20

Missions Sunday

The anthem is *Giver of Every Perfect Gift* (Lee). Our mission guest is Robert Blincoe, President of Frontiers USA—the largest mission to Islam in the world. Bob, an ordained Presbyterian minister, lived in the middle East with his family for seven years. (See page 13.)

Sunday, November 27

First Sunday of Advent

As Advent begins, we are called to ponder the Messianic prophecies in our hearts. We light the Candle of Love and look toward Bethlehem. The Motet Choir sings *Holy Radiant Light* by Gretchaninoff, a masterwork rich in harmonies from the golden age of Russian liturgical music.

Sunday, December 4

Christmas “Messiah”

The Chancel Choir accompanied by orchestra presents the Christmas portion of Handel’s “Messiah” at both the 9 and 11 AM services. Based on the prophecies of Isaiah and the Gospel scene of the annunciation to the shepherds, the music is emotional and uplifting. Worship also features the artwork of world-renowned calligrapher Timothy R. Botts, whose preference for illustrating Scripture through full-color expressive renderings has been inspiring art lovers for decades. On the second Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Peace.

Sunday, December 11

Third Sunday of Advent

The featured anthem is *Springs in the Desert* (Jennings) based on Isaiah 35. The Drama Ministry presents “The Best Christmas Party Ever,” set in a present day nursing home. When Christmas party plans go awry, the heartwarming Christian message still shines through. We light the Candle of Joy.

Sunday, December 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent

We light the Candle of Salvation and contemplate the divine mystery, our story of redemption and grace. The Angelus Bell Choir plays *We Three Kings of Orient Are*.

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day

We will hold one service at 10 AM with special music from the Chancel Choir. Childcare available for children 6 months-3 years.

Advent Devotional



“The Wondrous Love of Christ”

Available online beginning November 27

This year our CE Ministry is offering a new daily Advent devotional called “The Wondrous Love of Christ.” It will be available on our website beginning the first Sunday of Advent. You can get each day’s devotion on your computer, tablet or phone by simply going to our homepage at fpcbonita.org and clicking on the **Advent Devotional** banner. If you would like to download or print the entire devotional at one time, you can do this as well by clicking on the appropriate link.

We encourage members and friends to make their own Advent wreath at home and take time each day during Advent to read the devotion. In these simple ways, we can grow in our walk with the Lord during this Christmas season.

Special Services

Wednesday, November 23

Thanksgiving Eve Service

7 PM • Sanctuary

We gather the night before this American holiday to honor God with hearts full of gratitude. The Contemporary Ensemble will lead the music.

Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

5 PM, 7:30 PM & 10 PM • Sanctuary

Spend Christmas Eve with your church family! Our 5 PM service is tailored for families and includes a special message for the children; childcare available for ages 6 months-3 years. The 7:30 PM service features the Chancel Choir; the 10 PM service features our Section Leaders.

What is Gratitude?

The Latin root of the word “gratitude” is “grata” or “gratia”—a given gift—from which also comes “grace,” which means a gift freely given.

Cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien says, “Gratitude is essentially the recognition of the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Angeles Arrien, Ph.D. “What is Gratitude?” gratefulness.org). In other words, it is the acknowledgment of the positive things that come our way, not asked for or earned. In her book *Living in Gratitude*, Arrien calls its expression “essential to humankind’s sustainability and survival” and “the glue that consistently holds society and relationships together.”

Both the Old and New Testaments cite gratitude as central among virtues, so it is not only a social virtue but also a theological one. The whole life of Jesus showed forth gratitude. The Apostle Paul instructs us to “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2, NIV).

“Philosophies and theologies have long viewed gratitude as central to the human-divine relationship,” says Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., the world’s leading scientific expert on gratitude. After studying over 1,000 people, age 8 to 80, he found that those who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits including resistance to stress, higher sense of self-worth, stronger immune system, and more optimism and compassion (“Why Gratitude Is Good,” Nov. 16, 2010, greatergood.berkeley.edu). Emmons says, “Gratitude is... an attitude toward life that is a source of human strength in enhancing one’s personal and relational well-being.”

When we are feeling grateful, we are focusing on the good — realizing that these blessings are truly personal gifts from our Creator. It seems the more we ponder and feel thankful for the richness of our lives, the more we are immersed in a joyful spirit.

Roman philosopher Cicero argued, “Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others” (“Cicero Pro Plancio,” 54 BC). A grateful disposition tends to engender generosity, compassion, humility, joy, integrity, trust and wisdom. Being aware and thankful for our blessings “awakens another way of being in the world, one that nurtures the heart and helps to create a life of meaning and purpose,” Angeles Arrien says.

Gratitude is often an inherent emotional response, but it is also a choice. When we “choose” to be grateful, it becomes an attitude or mindset which has not only emotional health benefits, but also deepens our connection to God as we recognize His role as Giver of all blessings.

In Their Own Words

Here are some poignant responses from church members and friends when asked, “What are you most grateful for?”

Forever Grateful

by Kay Peters

Although I seldom turned on the television, I seemed to be guided on this particular Sunday evening. “60 Minutes” was featuring a segment on the connection of x-rays to cancer. A surgeon was discussing the high incidence of cancer among young adults who, as infants, received x-ray treatments on their thyroid.

I was immediately shocked and then horrified. My husband tried to console me; he was sure this did not pertain to our children, Janet and Gary. I quickly located their medical records and, as I feared, there—in black and white before me—were the dates of each of those x-ray treatments. Back then, radiation was standard protocol for treating problems like ear infections and tonsillitis in children.

The surgeon being interviewed stressed the importance of these “radiation babies” to seek out a physician immediately. At that time, both Janet and Gary were in college and, providentially, this was a Sunday evening when we usually spoke with them. The conversations were difficult but I was comforted when they said they understood the importance of seeing a doctor as soon as possible.

I quickly realized the miracle of hearing this lifesaving message and gave thanks to God for making me turn on the television at that exact moment. We discovered that Janet had no signs of a problem, but Gary needed surgery to remove a portion of his thyroid. He has been well ever since. We are all forever grateful!

His Presence

by Jill Heinold

I am eternally grateful that God chose to include me in His family. To think that, out of the billions who have lived over all the centuries, He has chosen me to be one of His children. This thought brings me to my knees in thankfulness. To live here on this earth with the Lord as my Savior and to know that He is with me throughout every day and night is an amazing blessing. I pray that my life will always reflect His presence in me.

My Mother’s Faith

by Janet Tunstall

The one thing that I am most grateful for is my mother and the faith that she shared with me.

Our family moved frequently and I would attend a new school each time we moved. Being the “new kid” in class meant I was stared at and fear would choke me. But at those times, I would hear my mother’s voice: “Janet, you are never alone. God is always with you.”

Fourteen months ago my husband died and the word “ALONE” took on a whole new meaning; however, my mother’s words are still with me. I have grown spiritually during these past 14 months and, when I pray, I address “the Holy Father, His son Jesus (my best friend) and His Holy Spirit (my GPS).” By praying to the Holy Trinity, individually, I am never alone. They are my co-pilots and surround me wherever I am. We are inseparable.

I am grateful for my mother’s faith and it will be with me forever.

Family... Friends... God

by Nancy Bolognese

Personally, I am grateful for my family and friends. They are always there for me through good and bad times. They lift me up and give me words of wisdom.

Spiritually, I am grateful for God’s love and patience. Through trials and tribulations, God has never failed me. He loves me and is patient with me through everything.

God’s Goodness

Anonymous

I am grateful to all the men and women of First Church who have dedicated their time on this earth to humbly serving God and others. Each one—including members of the church staff, Deacons and Elders (past and present), ministry leaders and Pastors—is a beacon of hope and an example of how God works through our humanness and, little by little, transforms all things for good.

Sundays

Our current schedule of three services includes First Light at 7:30 AM followed by full services at 9 AM and 11 AM. Our 9 AM worship features the Chancel Choir and remote video/audio feed in CenterPoint. While sharing in the concurrent service experience through the wonders of technology, this alternate location offers a less formal setting with various seating options.

Adult Bible studies are held from 10:10 to 10:50 AM in the Chapel and Great Room. During the 11 AM service, age-appropriate Sunday school classes are held in the Family Ministries Center for children age 6 months through 5th grade. Childcare for children ages 6 months to 3 years is available during the 9 AM service and adult Bible studies.

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



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 Chapel

Every Sunday following the 11 AM service, First Church offers a Time of Prayer & Communion (except on Sundays when the sacrament is shared during worship). Those who desire are invited to come to Price Chapel, where one of our ministers will be present to offer the sacrament of Holy Communion. Prayer teams are available for intercessory prayer and anointing with oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus in John 14:26. In your hour of need, accept His invitation... and come pray with us.

FAM Christmas Recital

December 4 • 3 PM • McClure Hall

First Academy of Music invites church members to join FAM parents and friends in celebrating both the Christmas season and student progress. This annual end-of-semester recital will be followed by a festive reception with holiday goodies.

Congregational Meeting

December 4 • 12 PM • Sanctuary

Our year-end congregational meeting will be held following worship. Items of business will include the election of new Elders and Deacons (who will serve 3-year terms beginning in January) and the approval of any changes in the “terms of call” of the pastors.

Tuesday

Service of Installation

November 15 • 7 PM • Sanctuary

Peace River Presbytery will conduct a Service of Installation for Rev. Brad Rogers, who was called as our Associate Pastor on June 26. A reception will follow in McClure Hall. (See page 15.)

Wednesdays

Family Night

Through November 16 • 6-7:30 PM
Family Ministries Center

See page 18 for more information.

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.

Special Mission Guest on November 19

Robert Blincoe, President of Frontiers USA

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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016

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his book, *Messiah*.



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.

Andy Andrews

Monday, November 14, 2016 | 7:00 PM

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



ANDREWS

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!

- **CARPOOL.** 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.

Christian Education

God Gave Us His Word

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

God's Word speaks to us of good things, of kept promises, of the Messiah's ever-present hope of grace and salvation. The power of His Word brings us out of our own peril as His grace extends deep down into our depths, like a great light piercing through the darkness.

Giving God's Word a place in our everyday lives is an invaluable way to grow in faith and obedience. One of the most helpful ways to "hide" the Word of God in our hearts is by committing key verses to memory.

The year of our Lord 2016 has been dedicated to memorizing Scripture. Pastor Doug Pratt and the CE Ministry chose 12 Bible verses, one for each month, and have been encouraging us to learn and memorize each one, word for word. These verses have been embedded in our worship and church life with the expectation that they will also become embedded in our hearts and minds.

We hope all of you have been participating in this congregation-wide effort and have been taking God's Word into your hearts, day by day and month by month.

January – Isaiah 40:31

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

February – Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

March – Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

April – Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

May – Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

June – Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

July – Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

August – Psalm 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

September – Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

October – 2 Chronicles 7:14

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

November – Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

December – John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."



Sunday Mornings



Parables of Jesus

D.I.G. • Through November 20 • 10:10-10:50 AM • Price Chapel

Jesus taught complex truths about the Kingdom of God through simple illustrations called “parables.” Our pastoral staff is leading this series. Join us for these upcoming classes:

November 6: The Parable of the Lost Sons with Pastor Brad Rogers

November 13: The Parable of the Yeast with Pastor Brad Rogers

November 20: The Parable of the Dishonest Manager with Pastor Steven Grant

Because of Bethlehem

D.I.G. • November 27–December 18

Max Lucado loves Christmas! In this new DVD series he takes us through the Advent season by unpacking the enduring promises of Christmas. Because of Bethlehem, God knows what it’s like to be human. Jesus understands how we feel; He has faced everything we face. Because of Bethlehem, we can begin to know God’s love for us. The Messiah entered our world to show His love and save us from ourselves. Come see how Christmas begins what Easter celebrates. Led by our pastoral staff, each class will include a time of discussion.



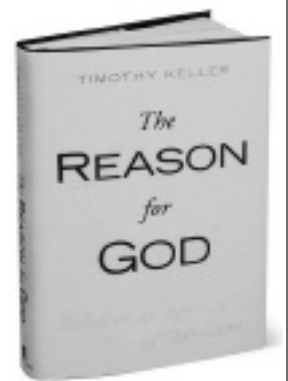
The Reason for God

Sundays through December 18 • 10:10-10:50 AM
Great Room

Led by Dr. Al Barrow

The Reason for God by Dr. Tim Keller uses literature, philosophy, anthropology, pop culture and intellectual reasoning to explain how the belief in a Christian God is, in fact, sound and rational.

Publishers Weekly calls it “an intellectually compelling case for God.” This *New York Times* bestseller defends the faith and offers Christians a solid platform on which to stand in this age of skepticism.

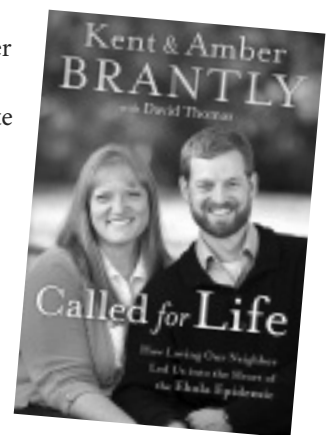


Called for Life Book Discussion

Sunday, November 6 • 12 PM • Sanctuary

We hope you took up the challenge this summer to read *Called for Life* by Dr. Kent and Amber Brantly about their experience into the heart of the Ebola epidemic. A medical missionary with Samaritan’s Purse, Kent contracted the disease in 2014 while treating patients in war-torn Liberia. The book, which gives an in-depth account of the Brantleys’ personal battle with Ebola, came out the following year.

Both Kent and Amber hope it challenges readers to better love their neighbors, break down stereotypes and initiate dialogue. We invite you to join Pastor Doug Pratt in this discussion of *Called for Life*.



Concert of Prayer

Monday, November 7 • 7 PM • Sanctuary

You who answer prayer, to you all people will come.

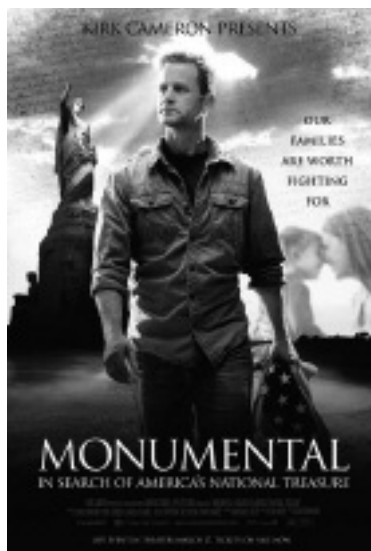
Psalm 65:2 (NIV)

All are invited to gather on Election Eve for our second Concert of Prayer, to come together as a congregation to lift our prayers to God for our nation, our leaders and our community. 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. We will hear Scripture, sing songs of praise and pray together in ways that God says will matter and make a difference. The CE Ministry has chosen to hold three Concerts of Prayer annually, for our congregation to come together to specifically pray for the things that are before us throughout each year of ministry we share together.

Pastor's Study "Monumental"

Monday, November 21 • 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. It's particularly fitting to see just before Thanksgiving.



Membership

Membership Classes

Saturday, November 5 • 9-11 AM

Sunday, November 6 • 5:30-7:30 PM

Saturday, January 21 • 9-11 AM

Sunday, January 22 • 5:30-7:30 PM

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 stop by Visitor kiosk in the Narthex on Sunday morning.

The Great Banquet

Recharge your spirit

Want a 3-day retreat from the world?
Need to concentrate on your spiritual journey?
Crave time for worship, prayer and meaningful discussion?
Yearn to feel God's grace?

If your answer is "yes," God may be drawing you toward accepting His invitation to The Great Banquet.

A banquet is being prepared... for you!

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

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

We welcome your R.S.V.P.

Contact Community Lay Leaders:

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

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

Concerts at First Church

2016-17 Fine Arts Series

This season's Fine Arts line-up is an eclectic mix of pops, 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.

Southwest Florida Symphony "The Holidays in Paradise"

December 13, 2016 • 7:30 PM | Tickets: \$30

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

Paul Tanner

November 18, 2016 • 7:30 PM only

Billy Dean & Dawn "Christmas Show"

December 16, 2016 • 3 & 7:30 PM

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 fpcbbonita.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.)

Experience Compassion and Justice in the DR

Come join us March 22-27, 2017 as we visit two First Church supported mission organizations—Compassion International and International Justice Mission in the Dominican Republic (DR).

Compassion International

Compassion wants to connect sponsors/partners in the developed world with children in the developing world. This often happens through photos, letters and prayers but, sometimes, it can happen in person. If you currently sponsor a child in the DR, you can meet your sponsored child and see the “Compassion difference.”

On a Compassion trip, you experience another culture first-hand. And it will change your life... because focus is on the one-to-one relationship of sponsor and child. Part of that deep connection is the prospect of traveling on a world-class, safe and guided visit. Compassion plans every detail to ensure your health and safety; their trained staff guarantees an incredible experience. Your stay is authentic and immersive, bringing you into the villages, neighborhoods and backyards of children living in extreme poverty.

When you are on a Compassion trip, you will...

- Explore a rich and diverse culture full of new foods, sounds and experiences.
- Visit the homes of children and families whose lives have been transformed through sponsorship.
- Meet the staff members who make a daily difference in the lives of children.
- Be immersed in the lives of these Compassion children; you will play games, share meals and give hugs!
- Be challenged to open your heart and mind to your role as a Christian, as sponsor/advocate and partner with Compassion.



International Justice Mission (IJM)

The DR is a global tourist destination known for its sandy beaches and natural beauty—but it is also a hotspot for traffickers and sex tourists. They exploit boys and girls in the commercial sex industry without fear of consequences. These victims desperately need rescue and restoration, and a transformational system to protect them from future exploitation and abuse. Authorities are willing to act, but need more resources to implement the laws that will free children and restrain traffickers.

With the support of First Church, IJM launched a new field office based in Santo Domingo in 2013. On this trip, we will see first-hand the life-changing work the IJM staff is doing through the love of God.

For more trip details or to sign up, please contact Director of Missions Trusha Barner at 239-992-3233 or tbarner@fpcbonita.org. Spaces are limited; sign-up deadline is December 2.



Members of First Church gather at Compassion International headquarters in Santo Domingo in the DR (above).

A home visit: Compassion trips to the DR arrange for teams to visit the homes of children in the sponsorship program. These members of FPC saw first-hand the community where these children live and discovered what sponsorship means to this family.



Serving as the Hands and Feet of Christ

When a natural disaster strikes, Samaritan's Purse (SP) is ready to respond at a moment's notice. The area is surveyed, sites are chosen, Rapid Response Team members are called upon and supply trucks are mobilized. Relief teams are on site within hours as churches in the disaster zone are contacted to serve as "Lighthouse Churches" (home base) for volunteers and emergency equipment.

One of these devoted volunteers is church member Paul Spinka.

"When Katrina hit in 2005," Paul said, "simply writing a check just wasn't enough." He and two friends loaded up his car with supplies and headed for Mississippi. Over the next four years, Paul led teams there from our church and others. He witnessed Samaritan's Purse respond to disasters first-hand.

"I saw that their main objective was to tell people about Jesus Christ and salvation," Paul said. "That's what I love about Samaritan's Purse; they have a statement of faith and they stick by it."

Paul was trained for national disaster relief at the Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove in Asheville, NC. He serves on their Site Management Team as either a Site Assessor or Team Leader.

"When I lead a team of volunteers," he said, "I tell them that we will be praying a lot today. If anyone has a problem with that, all I can suggest is that they pray about it."



While in West Virginia, Paul was surprised to see his grandson's high school football teammate — now a member of the New Orleans Saints volunteering for SP with his teammates.



A homeowner is presented with a Bible signed by her Samaritan's Purse volunteer team.

Paul's most recent deployments were all due to devastating floods. In April, he spent three weeks in Houston, TX; in July, two weeks in White Sulphur Springs, WV; in September, two weeks in Lafayette, LA.

Paul served as Team Leader in West Virginia. The team began each day with group prayer before breakfast, following which they departed their church base for that day's home site.

"New volunteers are always told, 'Never let the homeowner stand alone.' Our most important job," Paul said, "is to minister to those who are hurting so they can begin to pick up the pieces. This is our priority. One of the first things we do is ask to pray with the homeowner."

The team's focus is to provide immediate relief and, more often than not, this includes listening to the homeowner, offering spiritual comfort and demonstrating God's compassion. "Cleaning out the home is secondary," Paul said. He referred to the words of Franklin Graham, President/CEO of Samaritan's Purse: "We do not take advantage of the people in the storm. We take advantage of the storm to reach the people with the love of Christ."

When Paul arrived in south-central Louisiana, over 40,000 homes were flooded from unprecedented August rainfall. SP was based in three locations; Paul was a Site Assessor for Lafayette Parish. His job was to fill out a work order for each home, listing whatever needed to be done.

"Part of the assessment is listening to the homeowner's story and detecting if a chaplain is needed," Paul said. "Hopefully the work to be done is within our capabilities." As of September 21, the three sites had over 2,100 work orders requesting help for flood cleanup.

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Service of Installation

A “Service of Installation” is a very special event in the life of a church as well as its presbytery. And, in this regard, First Church has great reason to celebrate!

November 15 marks the installation of Rev. Brad Rogers, who was called to serve our church as Associate Pastor on June 26. Peace River Presbytery oversees this event and is conducting this service as a completion of the call process.

According to the Book of Order, “Installation is an act of the presbytery establishing the pastoral relationship” and it “occurs in the context of worship” (*G-2.0805 Installation Service*). Furthermore, the service “focuses upon Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church and... includes the proclamation of the Word” with “the substantial participation of the presbytery” (*W-4.4002 Setting of the Service*).

Dr. Doug Pratt, as the newly elected moderator of Peace River Presbytery, will participate in the service in that capacity. Other participants include: Rev. Steven Grant (FPC Bonita), Elder Dave Nichols (FPC Bonita, Chair of the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee who recommended Pastor Brad), Rev. Tyler Domske (Pastor at Wexford Community Presbyterian Church in Wexford, PA, and Brad’s friend from seminary) who will share the message, Rev. John McWilliams (Peace River Presbytery) and Elder Lil Rea (former moderator of Peace River Presbytery).

“The installation service is not unlike our Sunday morning service of worship,” said Pastor Brad. “There will be Scripture readings, a sermon and hymns. I will be asked some installation questions by the moderator (Pastor

Doug). Then, the congregation will be asked some questions by Elder Dave Nichols.”

The installation questions for the congregation involve a verbal agreement: 1) accepting Brad as our associate pastor as chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ; 2) agreeing to pray for and encourage Brad, to respect his decisions and follow as he guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church; 3) promising to compensate Brad fairly and provide for his welfare, to stand by him in trouble and share his joys; and 4) vowing to listen to the word he preaches, welcome his pastoral care, and honor his authority as he seeks to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord.

All members and friends of First Church are invited to attend Pastor Brad’s Installation Service on Tuesday, November 15, at 7 PM in the Sanctuary. A reception for Brad and his wife, Lauren, will be held afterward in McClure Hall.

This is a great opportunity for seasonal residents who may not have formally met our new Associate Pastor. Brad and his family arrived in Bonita Springs in mid-July, so our year-round members may already be acquainted. First Church held a “meet and greet” on July 31 and, since then, Pastor Brad has hit the ground running—participating in worship, teaching D.I.G. and parents classes, focusing on our Family Ministries, assisting with pastoral care, getting familiar with all our ministries and church leaders and, of course, settling into his new home with his family.



Brad's Blessings

Dear Members and Friends of First Church,

A couple of weeks ago, I woke up on a Monday morning and gave thanks to God for the blessing of being truly excited to begin a new work week, and I was reminded of what “the Teacher” writes in the book of Ecclesiastes:

“...there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work...”
– Ecclesiastes 3:22, NIV

I've been serving at First Church for nearly three months and have enjoyed every minute of it. The focus of my work at First Church has been on Family Ministries, which is inclusive of Neon Kids (children's ministry), Student Ministries (middle school and high school ministries) and our Wonder Years Preschool.

The vision of Family Ministries is simple: we strive for excellence in our programs so that we can effectively reach families with the transforming love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that parents play the most significant role in the spiritual development of their children. With this conviction at the heart of Family Ministries, God has opened the door for a parenting group that meets on Wednesday evenings concurrent with our midweek programming. Each week, around 15 parents gather with me and we discuss how the Grace of God influences our family life using Dr. Tim Kimmel's curriculum, “Grace Based Parenting.”

Additionally, Children's Ministry Coordinator Lauren Hargis and I collaborated to host the “Take it Home” event on October 2. This experience was designed to inspire kids to engage with the Bible and offer parents practical ideas for bringing faith into their homes. On the following Sunday, October 9, the parents presented Bibles with handwritten messages to their children in worship.

Wonder Years Preschool is growing and strong. This year, we have over 80 children enrolled—including two of my three kids—and they are enjoying the program immensely. On September 18, I was privileged to lead Teacher Dedication Sunday as we consecrated to God's service the work of our Wonder Years Preschool teachers, Neon Kids Sunday school teachers and Student Ministry Leaders. I have also been blessed to lead devotions at a Preschool staff meeting and help with the Operation Christmas Child mission project, which is presently taking place.



Rev. Brad Rogers

Another large area of focus has been on the Student Ministries of First Church. A few weeks after I arrived, our Student Ministry Coordinator accepted a position with Florida Baptist Children's Homes, which created an opening for God's Spirit to work in new ways for our ministry to middle and high school students. While the church discerns God's leading for the future staff position, Tom Bunt (a member of our facilities staff) has accepted the call to serve as Interim Student Ministry Leader. If you happen to see Tom around the church, please thank him for his exceptional ministry to our students. Looking more long-term, a faithful and dynamic team has been assembled to discern the future leader who will become our Student Ministry Coordinator. The team is meeting to prayerfully seek a candidate to support and build existing ministries, who is willing to connect with parents and reach out to the community, is abundantly spiritually mature, and is joyfully willing to share the Word with the youth of our church family for multiple years in the future.

I consider it a blessing and a privilege to serve God through First Church and I am finding great joy in the work.

Yours in Christ,
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.



Gratitude: The Key to Protecting Our Hearts

by Dr. Al Barrow

In Proverbs 4:23, we read, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” The “heart” in Scripture is the very center of a person or, as the proverb says, everything we think and do “flows” out of it. When we become a follower of Christ, He gives us a new heart. The prophet Ezekiel, when foretelling of Christ and what He would do, wrote, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

So how do we guard our hearts? Well, first of all, we are to guard them from the corrosive effects of sin which we encounter daily in the world around us. Our culture is not “heart friendly” but rather, through its images, words and music, frequently sends a message that there is no God — and if there is, He is indifferent to us, so every desire and wish we have is legitimate and needs immediate fulfillment.

Secondly, and even more important, we are to guard our hearts by what comes out of them. In I Thessalonians 5:16-18 we read, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”; and in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The choice is clear: we can choose either to despair and curse God because of our circumstances or give Him thanks in spite of and in our circumstances. And the result? Amazingly, as the passage from Philippians states, “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Too good to be true? Not so. Recent psychological research focusing on the effects of gratitude has made some remarkable discoveries.

Robert Emmons, Ph.D., a Christian psychologist and professor at the University of California at Davis, has studied the effects of gratitude on emotional functioning for years. In his book, *Gratitude Works!*, he concludes that “Gratitude is one of the strongest links to mental health and satisfaction with life of any personality trait—more so than even optimism, hope, or compassion.”

Dr. Emmons cites research showing, among other findings, that increased gratitude is effective at bolstering confidence and generosity, increasing the ability to cope with stress, lessening depression, and creating greater humility and the experience of a greater connection to God, to name a few.

It would seem, then, that gratitude toward God and others has remarkable spiritual and emotional effects. So what to do about it? Here are a few suggestions:

- Keep a gratitude journal listing three things daily for which you are grateful to God;
- Write a letter to God for all the things you have been thankful for in your life starting as far back as you can remember;
- Write a letter to one person who you never thanked but for whom you are ever grateful, telling them all the ways they contributed to your life for the better.

And finally, remember, that the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ will guard your heart and mind when you lift every concern to Him in prayer and with thanksgiving for all He has done and will do.

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.

Family Night Programs

Wednesdays through November 16

6-7:30 PM • Family Ministries Center

Children 3 years through 5th grade are invited to participate in age-appropriate Bible lessons, crafts and games. Older students can attend their ongoing Illumination study and fellowship, while parents meet for their own class led by Pastor Brad. Childcare is provided for children 6 months–2 years of age.

Family Worship

Sunday, November 27 • 11 AM in the Sanctuary

Each month a Sunday service is held especially for families and features a special message for the children.

Saturday, December 24 • 5 PM in the Sanctuary

Join with us on Christmas Eve for this special service for families. Childcare available for children ages 6 months to 3 years.

Neon Kids Christmas Project for Seniors

Kids Night Out: Friday, December 2 • 5-8 PM • Family Ministries Center

Children attending the “Deck the Halls” Kids Night Out will be involved in this special Christmas outreach project. Our Neon Kids will be making centerpieces and Christmas cards for local seniors at assisted living facilities. Kids can also participate in no-bake cookie making, Christmas games and crafts, and singing Christmas carols. This is a perfect evening for parents to do some secret Christmas shopping! Limited spots available, so reserve early.

Children's Christmas Program

Thursday, December 15 • 6 PM • Sanctuary • Tickets: \$1

This year Wonder Years Preschool, Neon Kids and Illumination Student Ministry will come together to present a wonderful evening Christmas program, sharing the story of Jesus' birth. Dressed as townspeople of Bethlehem, angels, animals and stars, the children will sing some of the great hymns and new songs of the season. After the program, we will gather in McClure Hall to share birthday cake



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

for Baby Jesus. Tickets are just \$1 and available for purchase at the Children's Desk on Sunday mornings through December 11. All children are encouraged to participate; please see Preschool Administrator Nancy Bolognese or Children's Ministry Coordinator Lauren Hargis for more details.

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@fpconita.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.

Questions?

Contact Children's Ministry Coordinator Lauren Hargis
at lhargis@fpconita.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

Giving Thanks

The Children's Ministry always works to instill a sense of gratitude in those under our care. When a child feels thankful, it helps them recognize that someone did something nice for them when they didn't have to. Cultivating a sense of gratitude goes a long way in helping children relate to others and feel a sense of belonging.

With the Thanksgiving holiday approaching, our Children's Ministry staff posed a question to some of our youngest students in Wonder Years Preschool. They were asked: What are you thankful for? Here is what they said:

I am thankful for my family. – Lucy

The whole entire earth – Skyler

For doing stuff that other people need you to do. – Anna

I am thankful for Quentin. – Quentin

Playing and having ice cream. – Michael

I am thankful for sunshine and everything in the whole world. – Zachary

Playing with Kennedy, my friend at school. – Kate

My playroom. – Ashton

My toys. – McKenzie

I am thankful for music and dancing. – Brianna

Some of our Neon Kids also had something to say...

Mommy and daddy. – Amelia (age 4)

All my pets – Anna (age 4)

Mommy, I love God. – Brianna (age 5)

My Christian family and all of the things God has given me, like my compassion for friends at school and my ability to do a flip. – Emerson (5th grade)

Loving family, Christian family, faithful God. Talents that God gave me like good at singing. Great friends. Born in a safe place. Food. My church. My salvation. These are the things I am grateful for. – Lily (4th grade)

THRIFT SHOP MINISTRY

Volunteer Spotlight

by Dave Stauffer

One of the highlights of working at First Thrift is getting to know all our team members. **Dottie Reynolds**, who has been working with us for the past three years, loves giving of her time and is a true volunteer in the best sense of the word. She never fails to say, "I love being a Thrift Shop cashier!" and always stresses that she is available for more



hours. "I have to keep busy, you know. Just give me a call" ...which we often do. And she never fails to step in to help.

Dottie grew up in the small community of Newburgh, NY, raised a devout Catholic. She married a career U.S. Navy man, which meant he was gone most of the time, leaving Dottie to raise their six children while they lived in New York, Maine, California and Japan. Eventually their marriage ended in divorce and Dottie started back to work to support her children.

Soon Dottie met Dr. Bill Reynolds, a physics professor at State University of New York at Albany and they were married in 1980. The couple fell in love with Bonita Springs while visiting Bill's mother, and moved here in 1983. They began attending First Church and have remained active members for 33 years.

In 1984, Dottie and her friend Marie McPherson—also a member of First Church—began volunteering with Meals on Wheels. This soon evolved into more of a life's work for them both, as they spent the next 25 years jointly coordinating Meals on Wheels for the Bonita area.

You may have seen Dottie on a Sunday morning, handing out goodie bags to members she knows to be celebrating a birthday or anniversary. We call this her Bread Ministry; each bag includes a mini-loaf of her famous homemade star fruit bread.

At First Thrift Shop, we love having Dottie as a member of our team. She keeps busy, all while being a blessing to others.

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

Men's Ministry Fellowship

Changing Men's Hearts One at a Time



The Network Effect

by Bill Jones, Vice Chair

Have you heard of the Network Effect, sometimes also known as Metcalfe's Law? Theodore Vail, the first post-patent president of Bell Telephone, used this idea. Robert Metcalfe, one of the inventors of the internet, popularized it. It states that the value of a communications network is proportional to the square of the number of users. In other words, if only two people have telephones, those phones are not nearly as valuable as when there are millions of people who have phones. Of course, the same thing applies to the internet, which is the reason that it has become so valuable in our lives.

The network of the Baby Jesus started pretty small with a few shepherds and three wise men. Later He would add a dozen disciples, then hundreds of followers and eventually millions of believers. It is a network that is still growing and one I have gratefully joined. The pilgrims were fortunate to be able to network with some Native Americans, which allowed their colony to survive where many others did not.

The Men's Ministry is another great network to plug into, and one that I greatly appreciate and enjoy. A number

"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.

of years ago, a small group of friends started a small network by meeting to study Scripture and share what was going on in their lives. Today that network has grown to the point that, during season, over 250 men come to our MMF meeting on Thursday mornings. If that many men are plugging in at 7:30 in the morning, you can be sure that the network has something of great value!

I see the Men's Ministry as having three objectives, which are encompassed in its Mission Statement. The first is spiritual growth, and Dr. Doug Pratt is our leader in this area. I have personally learned not only how Scripture applies to my life, but also how to apply it on my own when I read the Bible. Pastor Doug's "Seven Dimensions of Life – On the Back Nine of Life" series which he offered last year, provided some great insights for me. Dr. Al Barrow, who often speaks on Thursday mornings, uses his strong faith and his background as a psychologist to help me better understand

both myself and the world. We sometimes host outside speakers who share their testimony and are always inspiring.

The second objective is fellowship and encouragement. I have made wonderful acquaintances and some strong friendships through our Thursday gatherings that always start with fellowship and visiting. Recently, I even connected with someone who can help me restore a model sailboat I inherited from my grandfather. MMF golf tournaments, dinners, sports and movie events are always a lot of fun.

The final objective is outreach. The Men's Ministry officially supports the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). They occasionally visit us on a Thursday morning during season and bring some student members with them. What a humbling experience to see these young people and hear, in their own words, how FCA is supporting them in their walk with Christ.

A network increases in value as there are more participants. Will you help us with ours? All men are welcome to join us on Thursday mornings.

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).

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.

As another season approaches, we are excited to share our topics, speakers and schedule for 2016-2017. The Preparedness Ministry works year-round planning meaningful seminars that offer positive witness toward life's challenges. We trust that our carefully chosen subjects will inform and help prepare participants for life's ever changing issues.

Each seminar is free and open to church members as well as the community. No reservations are required. Our speaker's presentation is 45-60 minutes followed by time for questions. Our plan is to record each seminar and have it available upon request. We invite you to join us for our first event on November 17.

Finance & Investments

Thursday, November 17 • 2-3:30 PM • CenterPoint

Are you a stock market rookie with little or no knowledge about stocks, NASDAQ, Dow Jones or NYSE? The sheer size and nature of equity markets intimidates many would-be investors. But you don't have to be an expert on all aspects of the market; a little focused information can help. Ken Biederman, retired Business School Dean and Professor of Finance, will offer a variety of data about the stock markets, including some history and background on how and why they are measured. Learn some easy and common investment strategies, as well as how news media and politics influence the financial markets.

Season Schedule

Life Line Screening

January 13 • 8 AM to 6 PM • Centerpoint, Art Gallery
Preventative health screenings from Life Line* are easy, painless, affordable, convenient and non-invasive. Use of ultrasound and EKG offers lab-accurate results and can detect early risk for cardiovascular and heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

* Pre-registration is required. To schedule an appointment, call 1-888-654-6540 or visit lifelinescreening.com/community-partners.

Women & Finance

January 17 • 7 PM • McClure Hall

Financial Advisor Marsha McDonald addresses the special needs women face before and during retirement, principals of investing and how to maintain a secure financial future.

Planning for Retirement

January 19 • 2-3:30PM • CenterPoint

Financial Advisor Marsha McDonald tackles strategies for increasing income and reducing risk in planning retirement investments as well as leaving a legacy and solutions for Long Term Care.

Blue Zones Project

February 23 • 2-3:30PM • CenterPoint

Learn about this community-wide well-being improvement initiative to help make healthy choices easier for everyone in Southwest Florida.

Funeral Options

March 23 • 2-3:30PM • CenterPoint

Bill Shikany, owner of Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home, discusses options when it comes to funeral decisions, including service arrangements and cremation.

Would you like a past seminar repeated or a certain subject presented? Contact Connie Duquin (239-287-7649; cjduquin@comcast.net).

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.



Gratitude

by Donna Tenfelde

The question was asked: What is the “one” thing you are most grateful for? To attempt an answer was not easy. So I took “one” word—GRATITUDE—which pretty much covers it all.

First, I am grateful that He is my God—my Heavenly Father, my Savior, my Comforter. God has blessed me with a wonderful family. He has put me here at FPC among so many spiritual and faithful people to learn about the Lord's presence in my life. He has answered so many prayers, even when I don't understand the “why,” the “how” or His timetable.

So, according to Merriam-Webster, I am or should be forever “in the state of being grateful: thankfulness” for the many blessings in my life.... and I am!

- G** **God**, Heavenly Father, I am grateful that I am one of Your daughters. Romans 8:16
- R** **Redemption...** “In Him we have redemption...” Ephesians 1:7
- A** **Anxious...** “Do not be anxious about anything...” Philippians 4:6
- T** **Thanksgiving...** that God's perfect love will see us through. 1 John 4:18
- I** **Inadequacies...** God is with us despite ours. Genesis 50:25
- T** **Thankful** for the blessing of my family. Psalm 128:2
- U** **Understanding...** “His understanding has no limit.” Psalm 147:5
- D** **Delight** “...in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4
- E** **Eternal Life...** what we have to look forward to. Revelation 21:4

Upcoming Events

Missions Brunch featuring Café of Life

Wednesday, November 16 • 9:30 AM • McClure Hall

Women are invited to attend this delicious brunch and also learn about the work of the Bonita Springs Café of Life. Board Chairman Marietta Bala will speak and you will meet some of the Women's Connection volunteers who cook and serve meals monthly at the Café. Find out why Café guests look forward to the second Friday of every month!

Tickets (\$15) may be purchased at the Women's kiosk on Sunday mornings or contact Donna Tenfelde by November 9.



Women's Connection Annual Christmas Luncheon

Wednesday, December 14 • McClure Hall

Doors open at 10:30 AM • Lunch served at 12 noon

“The Chosen Baby”

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.
Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)



Join us as we celebrate Christ's coming with our featured speaker, Jeanne Pratt, who will offer one woman's perspective on what it means to be adopted into God's family. The wife of our Senior Pastor, Jeanne was responsible for reviving the Women's Ministry when they arrived at First Church in 2004. She has been instrumental in building this ministry—on the foundation of Bible-based studies and Christian fellowship—and continues to be involved and committed to its mission of “reaching upward, reaching inward and reaching outward.”

Tickets (\$25) may be purchased at the Women's kiosk on Sunday beginning November 20.

Celebrating the Work of Café of Life

During the summer of 2015, Women's Connection (WC) "adopted" the Café of Life as a way to live out the mission of First Church. Since then, we have organized a team of volunteers to help at the Café on a designated Friday every month. There is always plenty to do: round up casserole cooks and salad makers, deliver and set up the food, serve the midday meal and hand out donated "take home" food.

According to the Café's website, in 2015 over 2,000 volunteers contributed 14,564 hours. They not only cook and serve meals, pick up groceries from partner stores and restaurants, and tend the pantry, but also find creative ways to contribute. Café volunteers have been known to give haircuts, donate toys and provide ice cream socials. Like WC, local businesses and gated communities volunteer teams to serve midday meals.

The Café offers both practical and spiritual support and, very often, is a transforming agent in the lives of those who are served. The Café is a United Way Partner Agency and, through partnerships with other nonprofits, can provide medical services, financial assistance and support from area churches.

The Café's permanent serving location is at Leitner Neighborhood Park. Board Chairman and FPC church member Marietta Bala says this site has brought many positive changes. Those who attend the brunch on November 16 will hear about the Café's new community outreach programs that are identifying pockets of need, and helping restore hope to the homebound, migrant workers, new mothers, abused women and local families. Until then, visit cafeoflife.org.



Part of the Women's Ministry Cooking & Serving Crew

An Open Invitation to Get Connected

Get connected! ALL women of First Church are invited to grow deeper in their relationship with God and their sisters in Christ by getting involved in one of our ongoing Bible studies or prayer groups. Please join us!

Mana for Monday

Mondays through Nov. 21 • 2-3:30 PM • Price Hall Parlor
Heaven – It's Not What You Think (DVD) with Chip Ingram

Working Women's Fellowship

Tuesdays through Dec. 6 • 7 PM • Lightner Conference Room
"The Early Minor Prophets" from *The Amazing Collection*

Wednesday in the Word

Wednesdays through Dec. 7 • 9:30 AM • McClure Hall
"You Are Blessed: A Journey through the Beatitudes"
led by Pastor June Barrow.

Wednesday Prayer Group

1st & 3rd Wednesdays • 11 AM • Price Hall Parlor
We invite any and all prayer warriors to join us as we pray for the needs of our church, community, country and world.

Moore on Thursday

Thursdays through Nov. 17 • 10:30 AM • Price Hall Chapel
Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy by Beth Moore

For more information about any aspect of Women's Connection, please contact Women's Ministry Coordinator Donna Tenfelde (239-992-3233 ext. 293 or dtenfelde@fpcbonita.org). Be sure to check the weekly *First Things First* announcement booklet in December to find out new studies being offered starting in January.

First Missions *continued*

Deployment updates not only include tabulations of total work orders, the number of volunteers and volunteer hours but also the number of “salvations.” Paul said that this is the most important part.

“The most rewarding thing is the opportunity to evangelize,” he said. “Chaplains trained to deal with disaster situations are on the worksite with us. As committed Christians, SP volunteers are able to serve in the vital role of meeting the physical and spiritual needs of Americans in despair.”

Volunteers come from all over the country, from all walks of life. “During the Lafayette deployment there were 41 states represented,” Paul said. “They came all the way from California, the Northeast, Nebraska and even one from Canada.” At home sites, they shovel out mud and muck, clear debris, remove furniture, appliances, carpeting, flooring, dry wall and insulation, and tarp roofs.

Imagine when a job is finally finished! The team, staff and neighbors all gather for a final prayer as the homeowner is presented with a Bible signed by all of the volunteers.

For more information on Samaritan’s Purse, visit samaritanaspurse.org.



Paul & Gail Spinka joined FPC as Affiliate Members in 1998, then as full members when they moved from Illinois to SW Florida in 2014. They have been married 52 years. When not working with Samaritan’s Purse, Paul volunteers locally with Habitat for Humanity.

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Our heartfelt Christian sympathy extends to:

Neil & Marilyn Noethlich on the death of Neil’s brother, Robert Noethlich, August 13 in Seattle; Lin & Jane Erdmann on the death of their son, Brad Erdmann, on August 22 in Indianapolis; the family and friends of longtime church member Barbara Culbertson, who died on August 25; staff member Peter Lewis on the death of his mother, Malone Moss, on August 28 in Virginia; Jean & Chuck Zboril on the death of Jean’s sister in Michigan; the family and friends of Donna Hetherington, who died on September 8; Lidia Boyer on the death of her husband, John Boyer, on August 30 while in Europe; Joan & Peter Griffin on the death of Joan’s mother, Lydia “Lee” Norman, on September 22 at the age of 101; Sydney Mellinger on the death of her husband, James Mellinger, September 27 at Bentley; Judy Hunter and family on the death of her husband, Willard (Wil) Hunter, September 18 in Spencerport, NY; Eddie Waxer on the death of his wife, Patricia (Patt) Waxer, October 4; Greg Lipsie on the death of his wife, Rebecca Lipsie, October 6; the family and friends of longtime member and Elder Emeritus Frank Provenzano, who died on October 11.

Please remember to pray for our loved ones in the military.

The list below represents those currently serving who are loved ones to members and friends of our church. Please pray for their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, and 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, Barret 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.

If you have a prayer request, you may call the church office (239-992-3233), Sherri Feeley (239-992-2726), or complete a Prayer Request card found at the Welcome Center and place it in the prayer box provided.

A Note to the Congregation

Dear Christian Friends,

Thank you for sharing your condolences and expressions of sympathy after the death of my mother, Malone Moss, on August 28. Your words of comfort and reminders to cherish her memory have helped me during this difficult time, and for that I am grateful.

Yours in Christ,

Peter Lewis, Associate Director of Sacred Arts

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

dpratt@fpcbonita.org
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ADMINISTRATION

Elsie Nesbitt Administrator
Ed Gonzalez Office Manager
Dave Reynolds Accountant

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dreynolds@fpcbonita.org

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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

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BOOKCENTER

Ed Schick Manager

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FACILITIES

Bill Gilmore Property Superintendent

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FAMILY MINISTRY

Nancy Bolognese Preschool Administrator
Lauren Hargis Children's Ministry Coordinator

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HOSPITALITY

Vivien Wain Manager

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MEDIA

Tommy Hillegass Media Specialist

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MEMBERSHIP

Rebecca Harley Membership and Volunteer Facilitator

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MISSIONS

Trusha Barner Director

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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

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jvanccleave@fpcbonita.org

PUBLICATIONS

Rita J. Flower-Opdycke Manager

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SACRED ARTS

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

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cbauer@fpcbonita.org
sfox@fpcbonita.org

THRIFT SHOP

Lynne Stauffer Manager

lstauffer@fpcbonita.org

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Donna Tenfelde Coordinator

dtenfelde@fpcbonita.org

2016 SESSION

Moderator
Rev. Dr. Douglas G. Pratt

Clerk of Session
Tom Grafton

ELDERS

Ron Brown
John Cardwell
Jim Croley
Tom Grafton
Judy Graham
Mike Greene
Mal Griffin
John Holdeman
Carl Johansen
Stevie Joslin
David Lyons
Mary Ann McCoy
Gary Norbo
Lin Rhode
Nelson Robbins
Paul Spinka
Jack Wallace
Sharon Weisenauer

2016 DEACONS

Moderator
Judi Van Cleave

Betty Cardwell
Leslie Durling
Jim Gelhaar
Barb Goff
Karen Hatten
Polly Grafton
Joan Havens-Kester
JoAnn Hochstetler
Bob Lorenz
Ann Luedke
Ron Maki
Jerry Meier
Wendi Owens
Norma Reynolds
Judy Teasdale
Judi Van Cleave
Linda Wallace
Margaret Winn

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
Event Office: (239) 992-3410 x250

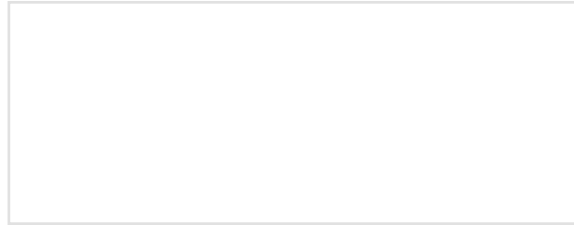
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DEACONS

2016 Manger Tree

The annual Manger Tree project, organized by our deacons, is a much-appreciated community outreach that makes it possible for local children to experience the joy of receiving a gift at Christmastime. Our congregation always seems anxious to participate, seeing the dire need in our own neighborhoods and being happy to sponsor a child and give generously.

This year we hope to sponsor well over 600 children at four after-school student organizations: New Horizons Super Kids at the Manna Christian RV Park in Bonita, New Horizons Super Kids and Super Teens at Rosemary Park, Pinewoods Elementary Kids Club in Estero and the Bonita Springs YMCA. With your help we can bring Christmas joy to all of these children!

Two Manger Trees will be set up on Saturdays and Sundays, November 19 through December 11, at the east end of the narthex as you enter the Art Gallery/Café. Those attending worship services can easily participate by selecting an ornament from one of the trees. Each ornament identifies a local child by name, specifying age, gender and his/her wish list. Sponsors must stop at one of the registration tables to register the child's name with a deacon. You will receive printed instructions and guidelines for purchasing and wrapping gifts. The price range for a child's gift should be from \$25 to \$35.



You may return your gifts to the Manger Tree location starting Saturday, November 26; the final deadline for drop-off is Sunday, December 11. Due to storage and distribution concerns, as well as maintaining equality in value of the gifts received by the children, bicycles are not accepted. Gifts will be sorted and delivered to each site on Tuesday, December 13.

Our deacons also ask sponsors to pray for the child and their family during the Christmas season.

Thank you for supporting the Manger Tree. If you have any question, please contact Deacon Norma Reynolds at 239-948-4774 or nreynolds242@comcast.net.