



# *First Press*

**PROVIDING RELIEF IN NEPAL**

**JULY 2015 ISSUE • FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

# DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?!

BY REV. DR. RONALD SCATES • INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR



Steve Blow is an award-winning writer for The Dallas Morning News and a good friend. He wrote a column a couple of years ago that generated a great deal of controversy. It claimed that the majority of Christians have given up belief in a literal hell and the necessity of faith in Christ, and seems to recommend that the rest of us change our rhetoric and commitments accordingly.

I responded to Steve's column and he used my response in his next column, which I thought might be helpful to all of us here at FPC as the winds of culture continues to challenge Biblical Christianity.

## “God Plus One Person Equals A Majority”

I genuinely like Dallas Morning News columnist Steve Blow. Recently, Anne and I had the delightful privilege of sitting with him at a dinner. I believe that Steve—like myself—is genuinely embarrassed by certain public expressions of the Christian faith. That's obvious when you read his column in last Sunday's DMN entitled “Fear Of Hell Shifts With The Times”. But just because most people today no longer fear hell, doesn't mean that hell is not a reality.

My mentor at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, VA—Dr. John Leith—would often say, “Bad theology always hurts people.” I guarantee. Any time you and I develop our theology based on majority votes from the surrounding culture—rather than by what God has revealed in His Word—inevitably we wind up with bad theology. Steve says that because a majority of Christians today neither believe hell is a reality, nor that Jesus is the only way to salvation. We need to stop being hypocrites, get with the times, and abandon these doctrines that are more relic than reality—or act in ways that he believes are less than Christian.

I hear him. Occasionally, I feel the tempting tug myself. The problem is: politically correct theology is rarely good theology. Why? John Calvin nailed it when he said, “The human heart is a factory of idols.” You and I can always come up with a god of our own fashion that is much more palatable than the One True Living God. We'd all prefer a god that is a cross between Big Bird, Santa Claus, and everyone's grandfather rather than the angular, undomesticated, God of perfect holiness and justice that we encounter in Holy Scripture. The God Who is also wildly—even prodigally—loving and gracious. Lion and Lamb. That's good theology. We prefer only what we do not fear: lamb.

“Aslan a man!”, said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you, he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea...” “Ooh!”, said Susan, “I'd thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “That you will, dearie, and no mistake”, said Mrs. Beaver, “if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly.” “Then he isn't safe?”, said Lucy. “Safe?”, said Mr. Beaver. “Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he's not safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.” (CS Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.)

How you and I approach the Bible is key to forging a good theology. Is the Bible a spiritual cafeteria where we go through the line picking and choosing only what looks tasty and palatable to us? Or is the Bible a banquet to which we have been graciously invited, where the Author/Host sets before us a fare of His own choosing? At a banquet, guests don't try to change the menu. That would be bad etiquette. In the realm of faith, it equates to bad theology. Hebrew words usually have dual meanings. The Hebrew word for “faith” also means “tension”. Good theology preserves the tension between John 3:16 and 2 Samuel 6:5-9. Both are true. Authentic faith doesn't discard either. It holds them together in tension.

Do I believe hell exists? Yes. Do I fear hell? No. I hold both those beliefs for the exact same reason that I believe that Jesus is the only way to eternal life: because He says so. And He says that if I am in Christ, hell is not my eternal destiny. In the gospels, Jesus talks more about the reality of hell than He does about heaven. It is Jesus Himself that makes the claim (as much a minority claim in the 1st as in the 21st century) that He alone is the way to the Father and away from an eternity in hell (John 14:6). Good theology always takes Jesus at His Word rather than extends a wet finger to the prevailing winds of culture.

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## PATRIOTIC DAY PICNIC

On Sunday, July 5 the FPC Sanctuary Choir and our partners, the FPC KEYS, are inviting y'all to join the church family for a Patriotic Picnic.

The Sanctuary Choir will provide the fried chicken—a staple of picnics everywhere. Our KEYS Ministry will supply ice cream and “fixin’s.” YOU are invited to bring a dish feeding 6-8 people to add to the table (whatever is a picnic favorite at your house): salads, vegetables, fruit, casseroles. KEYS is expecting a wide array of cakes, cookies, pies—and whatever YOU bring that goes with ice cream sundaes!

The picnic will begin after the 11:00 AM worship services. Food will be served in the Tower and on the Patio. There will be seating in Westminster Hall, thanks to great assistance from contemporary service worshippers and housekeeping staff. We're hoping everyone will stay and meet fellow church members and guests. Our promise: Good food, good fellowship, good conversations.

The Sanctuary Choir began this event several years ago to get to know the unfamiliar faces, since most of them are in the choir loft during worship services. Over 200 people attended that year and over 300 the next. Three years ago, KEYS suggested that they would like to share their July Ice Cream Social with the congregation. Everyone agreed that ice cream was a major part of a picnic, and thus was born the partnership between the Sanctuary Choir and KEYS. Last year, 600 pieces of chicken, 150 “picnic dishes” brought by congregation members, and over 75 sumptuous desserts (mostly “homemade”) were all gone at the end of the day. FPC would be pleased to increase those numbers in 2015!

Bring your food contributions—hot OR cold—to Mauze Lobby or the Narthex beginning at 9:00 AM on Sunday, July 5. Look for the Choir and KEYS Members (wearing special name tags).

SEE YOU AT THE FPC ALL-CHURCH PICNIC!

JULY 5 • AFTER 11:00 AM SERVICES

## SING WITH THE SANCTUARY CHOIR IN JULY

The Sanctuary Choir would like to make you aware of a special summer opportunity to sing with us in July. And the good news is you can do so on Sunday mornings. No Wednesday night rehearsals. Come when you can, enjoy fellowship and singing, and contribute to worshipping God through music.

Beginning Sunday, July 12, and continuing through July 26, you're invited—really encouraged—to meet at 9:00 AM in the choir loft for rehearsal of the morning anthem and responses. The music is familiar and if you've done choral singing before now, then you'll know some of the anthems and many of the responses.

Many of our regular Sanctuary Choir members will be singing, and each will welcome your voice into their section. Whether you're a soprano, an alto, a tenor, or a bass—or are able to sing more than one part—this is a great opportunity to experience singing with our choir.

Interested or in need of additional information? Contact Tom Dooling at TomD@fpcsat.org.

SUNDAYS • JULY 12-26 • 9:00 AM • CHOIR LOFT

## “LEARN@LUNCH” AT HEB CENTRAL MARKET

Join KEYS for their annual private event at HEB. Mary Martini, Director of the School, will provide the menu at a later date. Only 30 people can be accommodated for this special event, so make your reservation early by calling Pat McCleary at 210-271-2726. Cost is only \$25/person

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 • 12:00 PM

## CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

See page 18 for a full schedule.

## SPECIAL CONCERT CACTUS PEAR YOUNG ARTISTS AT FPC BY KAY KUTCHINS

Seven talented area high school and home-schooled musicians will perform in a free concert on July 19.

Ranging in age from 13-17, this year's Cactus Pear Young Artists include three violinists—Emily Bustos from MacArthur HS, Dora Cheng from Churchill HS, and Brian Kang from Garcia Middle School. Bailey Boyen is a violist from Health Careers HS, and Audrey Jellett Adrian from Peterson Middle School in Kerrville and Logan Robison from O'Connor HS are cellists. Rounding out the group is Gretchen Noble, a pianist from Marshall HS.

The students auditioned in April and were selected for full scholarship fellowships in Cactus Pear Music Festival's 12th annual Young Artist Program. They will participate in an intensive summer music experience with nationally known musicians who are performing with the 19th Cactus Pear Music Festival July 6-19. Each student will have individual lessons, coaching and mentoring sessions, and ensemble chamber music rehearsals. During the two-week period, they also will perform at various venues in San Antonio and at festival cities. The goal is that they have an opportunity to share their love of music with the communities in which they live.

FPC has hosted CPMF musicians and young artists for rehearsals during prior seasons; and Young Artist students have performed prelude, offertory, and postlude music during traditional worship services. We hope you'll take this opportunity to attend, bring children, grandchildren, neighbors and others who are interested in music and in youth.

CPMF concerts will be held locally at Coker United Methodist Church, in New Braunfels at the McKenna Event Center, in Boerne at the First United Methodist Church, and in Kerrville at First Presbyterian Church. Special Festival guest artists are members of the Brazilian Guitar Quartet who will perform in Boerne on July 12.

SUNDAY, JULY 19 • 3:00 PM • FPC SANCTUARY

## BLOOD DRIVE

Come give to the South Texas Blood and Tissue center. Contact Alyssa Payne at alyssp@fpcsat.org.

JULY 26 • 9:30-12:30 PM • GENEVA ROOM

## LITERATURE CIRCLE BOOKS FOR 2015-2016

September 8, 2015

“Go Set a Watchman” by Harper Lee

October 13, 2015

“Oklahoma” by Rogers and Hammerstein

November 13, 2015

“The Train to Crystal City” by Jan Jarboe Russell  
(A joint meeting with the KEYS at 11:00 AM)

December 8, 2015

“Underground Musicians” by Carol Repposa

January 12, 2016

“The Ranch That Was Us” by Becky Crouch Patterson

February 9, 2016

“Life on the Mississippi” by Mark Twain

March 8, 2016

“Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches” by S.C. Gwynne

April 12, 2016

“Under the Wide and Starry Sky” by Nancy Honan

May 10, 2016

“The Boys in the Boat” by Daniel James Brown

1:00 PM • MCCULLOUGH ROOM

## MO RANCH ALL-CHURCH RETREAT

Sign up at: [www.fpcsanantonio.org/church-retreat](http://www.fpcsanantonio.org/church-retreat).

AUGUST 7-9 • MO-RANCH CONFERENCE CENTER



# RELIEF FOR NEPAL

## THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING RELIEF IN NEPAL!



### THE PROBLEM

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on April 25, 2015. More than 8,000 people were killed, and 1.8 million were left without housing. With monsoon rains (including hail) already starting, families worry that the thin tents and tarps they now call home won't protect them from the deluge. The rain could hamper relief transport and may trigger landslides and dangerous floods.

### HOW YOU HELPED

Your donation, which helped Food for the Hungry contribute to a global response through Integral Alliance, has aided more than 55,000 people with items including food, shelter materials (tarps and ropes), personal hygiene kits and water purification kits. You sent an expert FH staff member to Nepal to lead Integral Alliance's response, and coordinate with myriad local churches and organizations. FH is now sending a shelter expert to support families in construction of homes capable of withstanding both monsoons and earthquakes.

### PLEASE PRAY FOR NEPAL

- Pray for shelter that can withstand the upcoming monsoon rains.
- Pray for the very small minority of Christians in Nepal, that they can find unity and glorify Christ as they reach out to those in need.
- Pray for ongoing responses in these areas:
  - Food distributions
  - Helping people find a way to make a living
  - Health care
  - Water for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning
  - Sanitation projects
  - Protecting children and giving them safe places to play and learn

### WE DID THIS TOGETHER

Sapna, a 15-year-old from rural Nepal, lives in a region where 90 percent of the homes were destroyed or too damaged to occupy. Sapna was on the first floor of her house when the quake hit. She escaped but her young cousins, who were playing on the second floor, died when the house collapsed. When relief workers arrived with supplies that you helped provide, some of Sapna's 20 extended family members were sleeping outside because there wasn't enough space in their single tent.

"We were not able to get any of our mattresses, blankets and clothes from under the rubble," said one family member. Sapna's family has no land, because they are low-caste Dalit. They have no land to cultivate or store food to eat. When the house collapsed, the family lost their tailor shop, their sole livelihood. "Our two machines are gone. They are broken and buried under the rubble. We tried to dig them out, but we couldn't. Now, we don't have food or money," said one family member.

Food for the Hungry is committed to walking with churches, leaders and families in overcoming all forms of poverty by living in healthy relationship with God and His creation. As a trusted partner in ending poverty, you are valued and appreciated. We thank God for you!

The four households living in Sapna's family compound received tarps, ropes, jerry cans for carrying water, buckets, soap and water purification solution from Food for the Hungry's operating partner. Please continue to pray for protection from the cold and rain, and food to see them through until they can start their business again.





YPM

While down in Mexico the team will work with Yucatan Peninsula Missions (YPM), an organization supported by FPC that ministers to the people in the Yucatan year round. YPM sends teams in hopes of glorifying God through service, fellowship, witness, and worship. There are at least 4 purposes to each mission trip:  
1. To observe God in other cultures. 2. To create Christian friendships in other cultures.  
3. To serve and bless those in the local community 4. To experience God in your own life.  
YPM also hopes to build relationships between trip participants, YPM staff, and the local Mexican people that come from near and far to experience much needed care as well as hear the good news of Jesus Christ!



## MEXICO CONSTRUCTION TRIP

First Presbyterian is excited to announce a new mission trip, in partnership with Grace Presbyterian Church in Houston this coming October. We will partner with Yucatan Peninsula Ministries, with whom we have worked with three decades with our spring medical mission trip. The main focus will be working with our hands through construction as we make Jesus visible to the local community.

We are looking for 6-8 men or women that are physically fit and not afraid of a little hard work. No construction experience is necessary. Come join the first ever Mexico Construction Crew and lay the foundation for a future tradition at FPC.

### TRIP DETAILS

We will be staying at the YPM (Yucatan Peninsula Mission) Base in Leona Vicario, Quintana Roo, Mexico. We will fly from San Antonio to Cancun where we will be picked up by William and Erly Cen and driven in buses about 45 km. to the Base. The Base is relatively new, and it is pretty and clean. Accommodations will be dorm-style, with 4-6 people to a room in either beds or hammocks. Hammocks are included in the cost of the trip, so if you've ever thought you would like to try sleeping in a hammock, now's your chance!

We will arrive on Wednesday, work Thursday, Friday and Saturday; on Sunday we will worship in an area church, then visit Puerto Morelos for lunch, relaxing and shopping, then leave on Monday. A typical day would look like breakfast in the morning as a team, work project during the late morning and afternoon with a break for lunch and back to the Base around 5pm. Dinner will be at 6:30pm followed by team devotionals and worship. As with any trip, changes will happen so stay flexible and have fun!

### WORK PROJECT CASA AITANA/FUNDACION AITANA

The construction project we will be working on is a respite house near Cancun called Casa Aitana. Casa Aitana is a respite facility for children with cancer and their families. This foundation provides a safe, comfortable place for the children to play with other cancer warriors and their brothers and sisters. The foundation also provides help with transportation and accommodations for the child's family depending on their treatment needs.

To help Casa Aitana continue growing and meeting the needs of the children and families, our FPC & Grace Construction Crew will work with local carpenters who will provide the necessary materials to add a couple of rooms to the house, as they're outgrowing their space. We are also hoping that other members of both congregations will be able to get involved by donating toys, soft stuffed animals, blankets, comfortable pajamas or similar type items that would be useful to these cancer patients and their families

### TRIP INFO

Dates: October 28 - November 2, 2015

Cost: \$500 (Scholarships are available)

Save your spot: Application and \$200 non-refundable deposit due July 31

Want more info? Contact Alyssa Payne at [AlyssaP@fpcsat.org](mailto:AlyssaP@fpcsat.org) | 210.226.0215 ext 242  
First Presbyterian Church, Attn: Alyssa Payne  
404 N. Alamo, San Antonio, TX 78205



## FLOODING IN WIMBERLEY AND SAN MARCOS

Memorial Day weekend brought devastating flooding to our neighbors in Wimberley and San Marcos. The waters rose to record levels and decimated the banks of the river. It uprooted trees that had been around for centuries and left unimaginable debris scattered throughout both towns. But the worst damage came when the floods took the lives and livelihoods of many of our brothers and sisters in the Hill Country area, leaving some of the residents with no idea where to turn.

First Presbyterian Church continues to be a missional church that reaches out in the midst of devastation to offer hope and encouragement to those that need it. We reached out to the Presbyterian churches in both Wimberley and San Marcos, and learned that several families in each church had lost everything. We were able to act quickly and give \$10,000 in relief money to help some of those families that lost everything in the floods. We then challenged the congregation to raise another \$15,000 in relief money, and within two weeks we had almost met that goal! The generosity at FPC constantly amazes me!

I was charged to hand deliver our two checks to each church the week after the flooding and meet with the pastors to offer our friendship and support. Reverend Clint Regen from Wimberley, and co-pastors Josh and Amy Sutherlun of San Marcos were appreciative not only of our financial gift, but also our pledge to come alongside them for the long term.

Thankfully both towns had received many volunteers to help with the immediate rescue and recovery. But we all know that as these floods exit the news cycle, often times such devastation

becomes “out of sight, out of mind,” and volunteers and financial support dwindle after the initial rush of help.

FPC recognizes that these communities may need help for years to come. We have offered our friendship to these two churches, and plan to work with them in the long-term recovery efforts, which may include raising more money for Texas families who have lost everything, and sending teams to help with rebuilding efforts.

As the professional recovery groups are now completing their work in the area, and moving on to other projects, FPC has pledged to bring volunteers to serve as needed, for as long as needed. We hope to send our first team as soon as August, so please be looking for more information on that. If you would like to be a part of these efforts, or have other ideas about how to help our neighbors in these towns, please contact me and let me know at [alyssap@fpcsat.org](mailto:alyssap@fpcsat.org).

Thank you for continuing to be a church that shines light in the darkness, offers friendship to the downtrodden, and makes Jesus visible not only in our own city, but in the neighboring cities of Wimberley and San Marcos!

## FRIDAY SINGERS | BY VIRGINIA LEONARD

Neither rain, nor more rain, kept the Friday Singers from visiting over 45 nursing homes, retirement communities, rehab centers and Alzheimer day care centers from September through May this season. Donning blue shirts embossed with the Friday Singers logo, combined with khaki slacks, inclement weather or not, each participant boarded his or her individual vehicle, consulted a MapQuest map or called OnStar and headed for a destination somewhere in San Antonio. This group has been following a similar schedule since June, 1999.

The program always begins with a prayer. This year's theme took “Clifford, the big red dog” on a vacation from New York City as far as Managua Nicaragua, using “oldie but goodie” songs that were familiar to the audiences and ending with America the Beautiful. After the group songs there were some special solos or duets. The Singers then went into the audience, passing out song sheets for them to join in singing some old hymns including Jesus Loves Me, Amazing Grace, and Battle Hymn of the Republic. Returning to appointed places in front of the audience, the Singers closed the program with May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You and So Long It's Been Good to Know You.

Invariably, those who are able, come to shake hands and ask, “When can you come back?” This is God at work through us as we pray to be His ambassadors to those away from their familiar homes. We always want to leave our listeners with a smile on their face and a song in their heart. If for only a short time, we have brightened the day for someone who may be lonely or discouraged, then we have achieved our goal.

There is fun involved as we become close to each other, singing together on Friday mornings through good and inclement weather, making sure our driving directions are correct and searching for hard to find parking places. We find time during the year to have a couple of “get together” parties, where we enjoy the various dishes brought by the participants, catch up on each other's lives and reminisce about our past performances.

We are taking a break in June and July. Rehearsals begin on August 7 for the 2015-16 year. A new program will have a different theme, but the hymns will remain the same. New members are welcomed. There are no try-outs, just come to enjoy singing together and carrying the love of Christ to others. You are invited to call Charlotte Hains at 710-7173 for more information.



**WELCOME  
TO SUMMER**

## HERE'S WHAT LIES AHEAD:

### SUNDAY, JULY 5 • ALL CHURCH PICNIC AND SOCIAL

KEYS is teaming up with the Sanctuary Choir to once again host the church picnic that will follow worship services. Don't forget to bring your favorite dish! Volunteers are needed to help receive food, assist with ice cream, and we'll help the Sanctuary Choir in "hosting" other church members. Don't forget to wear your red, white and blue! Call Pat McCleary at 210-271-2726 to volunteer.

### MONDAY, JULY 6 • HARDBERGER PARK WALK

Start your morning off with a visit to Hardberger Park—

"the best place in the heart of San Antonio to see and feel the wild." This 311-acre former dairy farm is one of the few remaining undeveloped parcels in San Antonio, an oasis surrounded by subdivisions, freeways and shopping centers. We'll start off in the Urban Ecology Center with a film of the park. Learn facts and details regarding the geology, the savanna, and native plants on a guided walk with Susan Campbell, Education Coordinator.

The tour is scheduled from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Bring a lunch and you may eat either outside on a picnic table or inside if temperature is high. Donation is \$2.00 per person.

Make your reservation by calling Pat McCleary at 210-271-2726. Don't delay as our limit is 20 people. We will enter the West Entrance located at 8400 NW Military Drive and meet at the Urban Ecology Center.

### FRIDAY, JULY 17 • 11:30 AM • JULY BIRTHDAYS

Celebrate July Birthdays with us at La Fonda in their new location at 8633 Crownhill Blvd located between Broadway and Nacogdoches. Cost is \$12/person except for our birthday honorees who receive a complementary meal. Thanks to luncheon chairpersons—Ginger & Bud Davenport. Reservations, money and menu selections must be made no later than Monday, July 13, by calling Phyllis Griffin at 210-226-0215.

### FRIDAY, JULY 31 • 11:30 AM • "THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL" MOVIE AND HAMBURGER LUNCH

Come and enjoy one of Maurilio's hamburger lunches (\$8) with all the fixings before enjoying an afternoon movie up in Covenant Hall. As everyone enjoyed "The First Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," we decided to show the sequel. There is no charge for the movie that will start at 1:00 PM—popcorn and snacks included. This is a great way to spend a hot afternoon!

### JULY 10, 24, AND 31 • 9:30 AM • KEEP MOVING FITNESS • SECOND FLOOR STUDENT CENTER

Join us at "KEEP MOVING" at 9:30 AM for a cup coffee before the class starts at 9:45 AM. You'll enjoy the fellowship of others while also improving your health. We are hearing more news about the importance of exercise, and "Keep Moving" is a no-cost program that addresses this issue.

### KEYS GAME DAYS

Come enjoy fellowship and fun – don't forget to bring a lunch!

- BRIDGE • FRIDAY, JULY 10 AND JULY 24 • 11:00 AM – 2:30 PM  
Please contact Katy BeDunnah at 210-994-5998
- MAH JONGG • JULY 10 AND JULY 24 • 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Please contact Nancy Black at 210-493-1609

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 • 12:00 PM • "LEARN@LUNCH" AT HEB CENTRAL MARKET  
See the save the date section on page 4.
- OCTOBER 1, 2015 • TRIP TO THE MARBURGER FARM ANTIQUES SHOW  
The Marburger Farm Antiques Show is near Round Top on Hwy 237 east of LaGrange between Warrenton and Round Top. It is a very large, very popular event as it features more than 300 dealers from across the U.S. More information will be in the August newsletter, so mark your calendar. The Holloways will be our escorts.



# KEYS

## JULY NEWSLETTER

BY PAT MCCLEARY, DIRECTOR  
OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

While the KEYS speaker and luncheon programs are on summer break, we are still gathering for many events. The KEYS Leadership Committee is busy planning fall events and trips. Our regular Friday speaker programs ended with a Memorial Day program complete with the color guard performed by Sons of the American Revolution and Col. Steven Schaick presenting "Heroes: Past, Present and Future." A big thank you to Bud Davenport for his planning of this special patriotic program that honored our military personnel, past and present.

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# 1924



## HISTORY CORNER | BILL COGBURN

In 1924, First Presbyterian Church completed its \$250,000 building project just in time to host the sixty-fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It was an opportunity for First Pres to proudly show off their newly enlarged sanctuary and new education building.

Since the population center of Presbyterianism was at least 1,000 miles to the east of San Antonio, it was considered an honor to have the distinguished gathering at our church way out on the edge of civilization. Even in the 1920's, San Antonio was still considered by many, particularly the eastern states, as a frontier outpost.

Eighty-nine Presbyterian congregations from all over the U.S. sent over 300 delegates to this General Assembly, most of them arriving by train from New Orleans on opening day, Thursday, May 15, 1924. The May 19, 1924 San Antonio Express reported that four major propositions would be taking up a major part of the Assembly's attention:

- Charges of unorthodox biblical criticism or modernism being taught in the foreign mission field.
- Withdrawal from the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.
- Withdrawal from the Council of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the U.S.
- Eligibility of women to serve on executive committees of the assembly.

These propositions, outlined by Dr. Thornton Whaling of Louisville, moderator of the assembly, would be solved to the satisfaction of all "without too much fireworks", he predicted.

Newspaper reporters suggested that a schism might arise over a few issues, specifically the role of women on executive committees, evolution and "unorthodox" teachings in a Chinese seminary.

The "taint of modernism" allegedly had begun to infect the foreign mission field according to an overture from the Presbytery of Central Mississippi. General Assembly warned that support would be withdrawn from all Chinese seminaries which did not recognize the Bible as divinely inspired and the only inspired rule of faith and practice of the deity of Christ." With no dissenting vote and little debate, "the vote on the Nanking Seminary matter came with such unanimity that the assembly rose almost spontaneously to sing the doxology when the vote was announced".

Champions of women in the Assembly, expected to have a difficult fight retaining the provision enacted the year before which permitted women to serve on the important executive committees. This issue was predicted to create the liveliest debate of the session; however the vote endorsing the right of women to serve on the four major committees passed with little fanfare.

As the General Assembly came to a close on Thursday May 22nd, the next morning's May 23, 1924 San Antonio Express reported that "as a result of decisions made at the 64th General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church continues to stand on all the fundamental doctrines to which it has clung to through several generations of church history. Amidst the storm of modernism, which some commissioners declared was breaking over the word today, the assembly, by unanimous vote, announced to the world that it stands where it has always stood—on the literal interpretation of the Bible as pronounced in its ancient confession of faith."

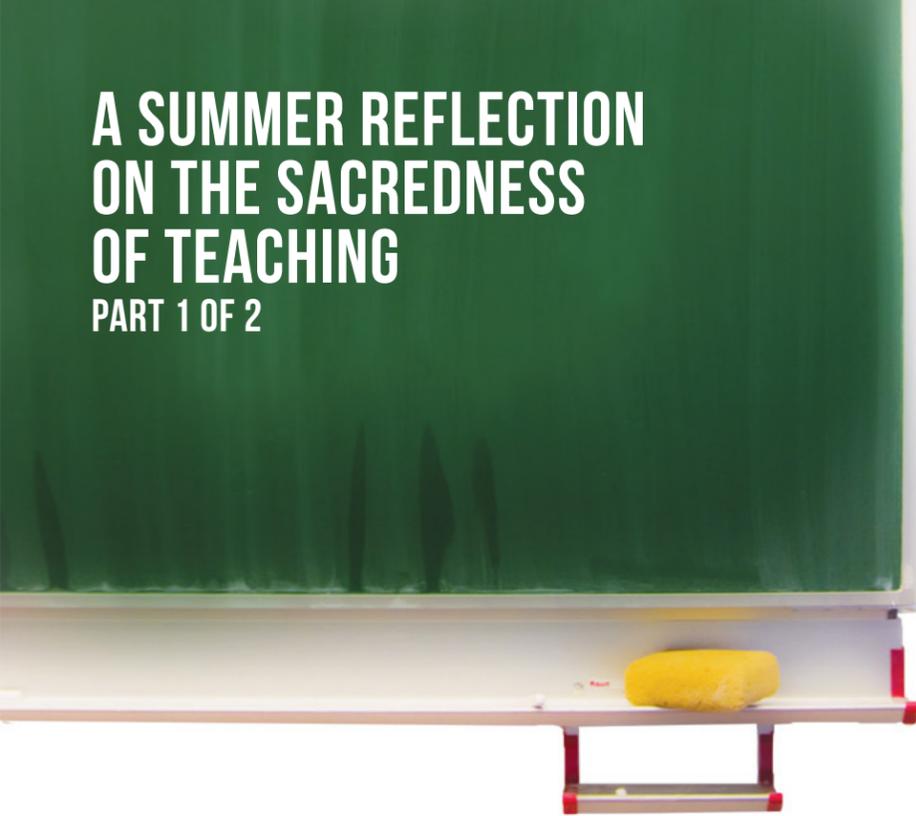
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**PHOTO:** The fifty-cent luncheon hosted by First Pres at the 1924, sixty-fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (US).

**SOURCE:** San Antonio Express May 19–24, 1924; First Pres Archives, Donald Everett's Adobe Walls to Stone Edifice; photo by Harvey Patteson.

# A SUMMER REFLECTION ON THE SACREDNESS OF TEACHING

PART 1 OF 2



Teaching is a serious and sacred calling, and especially so when it comes to the teaching of children, youth and young adults! Teachers have always had an enormous influence on human culture and the future direction of young lives. Teachers who see faith as an integral part of developing a meaningful and productive life remain on the front line of impacting both our culture and the lives of our children. In past years, the complex interplay of faith and reason in teaching was both accepted and encouraged. Despite the perceived restrictions on sharing faith in the public arena today, opportunities for teachers to reveal Christ directly or by example—or by adhering to Texas law that permits students to testify about faith in class—remain plentiful. And to be able to shape the character of students, and share their understanding of that truth while teaching, teachers need our prayers—as do all those involved in shaping the lives of children and young persons! Let us explain.

A few years ago on Youth Sunday, a teen member of First Pres shared a wonderful testimony about where and how she began to really know God and Jesus, and who helped her consider each as a father and friend. It happened one day after her earthly father had died. After classes she was sitting on the steps of the public school where she attended. Tears of sadness and loneliness filled her eyes. One of her teachers came out to check on her, and her introduction to a life of faith came during their conversation. The teacher described how her own relationship with God in Christ began to transform her life. This teacher's caring heart and personal witness made a huge difference in the teen's life—not just that day but for years to come!

As evidenced amply in God's Word, the call of teaching comes directly from the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy exhorts parents to teach their children God's commands, providence and love. In Psalm 34 the psalmist writes. "Come, O Children...I will teach you the fear of the Lord" which, the author of Proverbs 2 notes, "is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 22:5 points to the lasting impact of teaching when it says to "Train children in the right way, and when old they will not stray." Proverbs 13:15 observes the eternal stakes: "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death."

Our Lord Jesus addressed the teaching of children with utmost seriousness. In Matthew 18 he reminded his disciples that "whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." Jesus was encouraging his disciples—then and now—to aid and not hinder a child's belief in him. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus clearly instructed his followers—then and now—to disciple others wherever they go.

The apostle Paul reiterates that instruction to us with many examples. In 2 Timothy 1:13 he urged Timothy to "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." In Titus 2:7 he advised Titus to be a "model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity and dignity" so as to glorify God. And, in Colossians 3:16, Paul encouraged his readers to let the "message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish...with all wisdom." With special clarity, the writer of James reminds his readers of the seriousness of the call of teaching when he declares that "we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."

Two of the beautiful stain glass windows of the FPC sanctuary give witness to the significance of teaching, and a third emphasizes the priority of attentively receiving discipleship. When we worship

we are literally surrounded by messages about the importance of teaching and learning.

Teaching is a very special calling. All our teachers and educators throughout the San Antonio area, whether in public, parochial or private or home school settings, and parents, as the first and primary educators of children, need our commissioning and supportive prayers for their work so that they may reflect the wisdom, kindness, compassion and love of God in all their student contacts.

First Pres is partnering this summer with Hill Country Institute (HCI) and other ministries in the city to encourage reflection on the sacred work of teachers, and foster a movement of ongoing prayer for teachers. The HCI outreach will be kicked off by sponsorship of two shows of Hill Country Institute Live on KSLR radio, airing on Saturday mornings at 11:00 AM. Each show will feature interviews of Christians who are leading educators of children reflecting on how their faith affects their work and the students they serve. They will also reflect on the significance of prayer to the challenges and blessings of teaching. FPC's Prayer Ministry is coordinating First Pres support and participation in these shows.

*Part 2 of this article, to appear in the August FPC Newsletter, will provide more detail on how you and our congregation can be part of meeting this call for prayer. Be watching for it!*

## A SUGGESTED PRAYER FOR TEACHERS

O God, almighty, unyielding, and abounding in steadfast love and mercy: I bring you a question with which so many of us struggle. What is the meaning of life? What is its purpose? What is it all about?

Some among us are young. For what vocation, what business or profession, they wonder, should they prepare? How should that choice be made?

Some young adults are making career decisions or marriage decisions. Some who are in mid-life are beginning to feel that any direction ahead will lead downward in position, prestige, accomplishment. Others, having accumulated many years, are asking what they have achieved, whether life has been worth the cost, and if there is any life or purpose at all beyond death. What is the meaning of life? What is its purpose? What is it all about?

So simply, O God, did Jesus put it; so simply did he live it, as simple as the direction: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself." Did you not say, too, O God, when you appeared among us in the flesh and body of Jesus: "Inasmuch as you fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and the prisoner, you did it to me."

The purpose of life you keep telling us through your Spirit has love at the heart of it, love given freely, without condition as you have given it to us. The purpose of life has giving at the heart of it, and serving, trusting ourselves to your care, believing where we cannot see. The purpose of life, as you have shown it to us in Jesus has laughter in it and tears, joy and painful losses, and growing in love and faith, finding life by losing it in service and giving, finding strength from you when all our strength has been spent.

My prayer now is part of life's purpose, gracious God. It is my prayer that hungry people everywhere will be fed, that lonely people will find friends, that the sick will be healed, the grieving comforted, the oppressed set free, the rejected outcast welcomed and affirmed, and despairing people encouraged and given new hope."

*A Prayer for "Church and Community" from "My Grace is Sufficient." Prayers of Hope and Encouragement entitled "What is the Meaning of Life" by Edwin Walthall. First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas, 1994. Rev. Ed Walthall was a local high school teacher and Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church.*

## PROPOSED STUDY COURSE ON THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS

This is a proposal to study the healing ministry of Jesus which will be offered as a pilot program for those interested. It will cover the twenty six healings that Jesus did as recorded in the gospels. The course will use a workbook developed by the Order of St. Luke the Physician (OSL) that will analyze each healing in detail. It will ask questions like, "who was the person in need," "what did Jesus do and say," "how was faith expressed," "what was the evidence that the person was healed," and "what was the reaction of the witnesses?"

The object of the course is to equip and enable persons to feel comfortable in praying for those who need and request healing prayers. Jesus sent his disciples out, twelve on one occasion and seventy-two another time to "preach the Gospel, to heal the sick and to set people free." One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of healing. In Acts 3, Peter heals the crippled beggar as he and John are on the way to the temple, and in Acts 14, Paul heals a crippled man who had never walked. In James 5:13-15 the Bible says, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray, is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven." Those are his instructions to us today as the Body of Christ.

The course will span fourteen to fifteen weeks; the first being introduction and registration, the second will be distribution of the workbooks, followed by studying two of the healings for the next thirteen weeks.

- It is a course developed by the International Order of St. Luke the Physician (OSL).
- It costs \$45 for registration and uses a workbook provided by the OSL.
- Each registrant becomes an associate member of OSL for the duration of the course.
- Each registrant receives copies of the Sharing Magazine every two months.
- Each participant is required to read three books on healing by the end of the course.
- Each participant agrees to do the assigned work, attend class, and participate in the discussions each week.

Anyone interested in taking the course should contact Chuck Beatty at 210-826-3386; email cbeatty3@satx.rr.com. After those interested have responded, then the most convenient day and time will be established for the class meeting.

## CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS DENOMINATIONAL ISSUES

July 12 | 8:30 AM | Geneva Room  
Speakers from CRC

July 26 | 9:30 AM | Covenant Hall  
Speaker Pending

August 9 | 11:00 AM | Covenant Hall  
Speaker Pending

August 23 | 12:15 PM | Westminster Hall  
Speaker Pending

August 23 | 2:15 PM | Youth Building  
For teenagers who are eligible to vote in congregational meetings. Speaker Pending

## JUNE 18 LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

Dear Members of FPC,

This past Monday, June 15, 2015, our Interim Senior Pastor, Ron Scates, received a letter from Mission Presbytery informing him that a member of presbytery has accused him of violating his ordination vows. The allegations are (1) Ron violated his promise to be governed by church polity and (2) he broke his promise to "further the peace, unity, and purity of the church." Mission Presbytery has appointed a committee to investigate these allegations and recommend action. If the investigating committee finds probable cause to support the accusations, it could bring disciplinary charges against Ron. Mission Presbytery would then conduct a trial under the PCUSA's disciplinary rules. In its letter, Mission Presbytery advised Ron that he has the right to remain silent during this process and that he has the right to counsel, but must bear the cost of his legal representation.

As you may know, as part of the suit to determine the rights of the church in its property, Judge John Gabriel signed an order restraining Mission Presbytery "and any persons or entities in active concert or participation with it" from taking any action that could affect the property rights of First Presbyterian Church, including "initiating any disciplinary action against the ministers of the church..." or otherwise "interfering with the normal duties and responsibilities of the officers, ministers, and employees of First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio." We believe Mission Presbytery's letter is facially in violation of this order.

The Trustees of the church previously appointed a team to oversee the declaratory judgment action. The team includes Clayton Hudnall, as Chairman of the FPC Trustees; Boxy Hornberger, as the representative of the FPC Foundation; Tripp Stuart, as Clerk of the Session; and Dirk DeKoch, as Chairman of the Church Relations Committee. In response to Mission Presbytery's actions, the litigation committee authorized the retention of Kent Krause, of the firm of Craddock, Davis & Krause, in Dallas, to act as co-counsel for First Presbyterian Church in the action against Mission Presbytery. Kent represented the Rev. Joe Rightmyer, former interim pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church, when Grace Presbytery brought similar accusations against him. Kent will defend Ron against these allegations. In addition, the litigation committee has asked Lloyd J. Lunceford, of the firm of Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips, L.L.P., Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to work with us in the declaratory judgment action and in defending Ron. Lloyd is the author of the book *A Guide to Church Property Law* and is one of the foremost authorities in the country on church property law issues and the polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Trustees of the church have set up a Property Protection Fund to help defray the legal expenses. We recommend that these funds also be used to defend Ron against any accusations asserted by this unnamed member of Mission Presbytery. If members would like to contribute to this fund, you can make a tax-deductible contribution payable to First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, with the notation "Property Protection Fund" on the check. Checks should be sent to the church to the attention of Janet Slayden. Any contributions should be in addition to the tithes and offerings for the operation of the church.

As the Interim Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Ron is employed by the Session of the Church. A meeting of the Session will be called to consider an appropriate response to Mission Presbytery's actions. Buddy Johnson, Chairman of the Personnel Committee, has been notified about Mission Presbytery's actions. Buddy and the Personnel Committee will consider the necessary steps to ensure the continuity of Ron's employment with the church. As counsel for First Presbyterian Church and Ron, Kent, Lloyd and I will take appropriate legal action so that the church can keep Ron as its Interim Senior Pastor and protect the interests of this church in its property.

The presbytery's retaliatory action is unnecessary and misdirected but not unanticipated. We remain confident in the church's position with respect to its property and that the action against Ron will be terminated in due course.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clayton Hudnall  
Chairman, FPC Trustees

Dr. Dirk DeKoch  
Chairman, Church Relations Committee

David West  
Counsel

**DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?! | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 | BY REV. RON SCATES** 

Of course, good theology is always lived-out with humility and grace and love. No Christian should ever want anyone to wind up in hell. On a Sunday afternoon, an elderly Scottish pastor met a young Scottish pastor out walking on the moors. “Ay, lad, wat’d ye preach on this mornin’?” “I preached on hell,” said the young man. “Ay, laddie, did ye do it with tears in your eyes?” Good theology.

Steve’s indictment of most Christians regarding our seeming lack of concern for the eternal welfare of others is spot-on, but it doesn’t mean that we quit our jobs and assume “rat terrier” personalities that attack people with the Gospel. Nor does it mean we abandon Biblical Reality. In 1 Peter 3:15, you and I are told how to best do evangelism: “...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” In other words, if we truly live out a good theology (living transparently/publicly with Christ as Lord of every facet of our lives), people will begin asking us what’s different about us. They’ll be coming to us. We merely tell them the gracious Truth about Jesus as Lord and Savior.

None of this is new. The quest for culturally popular gods is as old as sin. Back in 1937, theologian Richard Niebuhr was disturbed by a similar call for “faith by majority vote” that he saw brewing in the mainline church of that day. He characterized that bad theology thusly, “A god without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

When all is said and done, good theology is a “revealed” theology. It comes from outside of ourselves and is not something of our own making. Historically, the Church has always said that that source of revelation is God Himself, revealing Himself to us through His living Word—Jesus Christ—and His written Word—the Holy Scriptures. Good theology usually arises when you and I attend to, not contend with, the Bible.

**SESSION MEETING | JUNE 8**

The Session of First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio met Monday night, June 8th.

- The Session approved a new organizational plan for the church which was designed by a special task force of the Personnel Committee. The plan is built around Purpose rather than Function. It will allow Session members true responsibility for their committees and allow pastors more time to devote to pastoral duties. The plan will also guide us as we begin to define and refill our empty pastor positions.
- The Session heard an encouraging report from the Stewardship & Finance Committee that giving is up. The budget will eventually be re-worked to match the changes in Church organization, and will become a Mission-based budget.
- The Church Relations Committee will host several informational “Gatherings” which will provide in formation and discussion on two of the critical issues we are facing as a congregation: 1) Can we keep our property? and 2) Where might we go if we decide to leave the PC(USA) denomination? Look for announcements in the near future concerning the schedule for these important meetings.
- The Session, acting in concert with a request from the Global Missions Committee, approved \$50,000.00 to be added to \$10,000.00 already earmarked to build two sorely needed bakeries to serve the Yazidis in Iraq.

**MOMENTS TO HOLD CLOSE | GET READY | BY MANNY RODRIGUEZ**



Our son was about to have his birthday. He was kind enough to provide a list of items that he hoped to receive as birthday gifts. Primarily re requested an Xbox, a new iPhone, and a laptop. Unfortunately his school

grades are completely anemic—missing assignments in every class, failing test grades. Each report card period is a new exercise in anxiousness, when in reality these classes should be a breeze for him. So here I sit, should I provide these requested gifts to him? The answer is no, but perhaps not for the reason you think. This is not conditional, I’m not refusing these particular gifts because he has

poor grades and I don’t want to appear to reward him. I am not providing these gifts to him because he will be engrossed with them, ignoring his responsibilities even more and will be worse off. I will be enabling him, in other words as badly as I wish to give all of these things to him, and I do, it hurts me to deny him. The truth is he is not yet ready to receive (or handle) my gifts. Do you think that is currently happening in your life with your Heavenly Father? How many gifts do you think that maybe, just maybe He is aching to bestow upon you but unfortunately, we just are not spiritually ready?

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY | MAY 2015**

OPERATING FUND BUDGET	ACTUAL YTD	BUDGET YTD	OVER/(UNDER)
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>1,698,286</b>	<b>1,898,878</b>	<b>(200,592)</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>1,193,700</b>	<b>1,428,622</b>	<b>(234,922)</b>
<b>TOTAL BENEVOLENCES</b>	<b>241,941</b>	<b>253,404</b>	<b>(11,463)</b>
<b>FUND TFR FROM</b>			
<b>OPERATING RESERVE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NET INCOME/LOSS</b>	<b>262,644</b>	<b>216,851</b>	<b>45,793</b>

This is a “good news” report which deserves our continuing thanks and praise for the faithfulness of our congregation in sharing their gifts, and for the care and diligence of the entire church staff in managing expenditures. To God be the glory!





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