



First Press **REMEMBERING ADVENT**

JANUARY 2016 ISSUE • FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?!

BY REV. DR. RONALD SCATES • INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR

So, here we are in a new year—and in a new denomination. So what?

Well, I guess, for one thing, it means that FPC is the newest oldest congregation in the Alamo City.

What about worship? Anything new there? A few tweaks: as I did in Dallas, I am going to start ending every service with an invitation to receive Christ, as we want Jesus not only to be visible, but accessible. And I may add something to the Benediction. But, basically, we'll continue with our present three robust services of worship where the timeless Gospel will be preached, prayed, and sung with passion—and the sacraments rightly administered—all undergirded by our excellent music program.

What about missions? We will continue to be a missions-driven congregation. The arrows have always pointed outward from FPC—with a healthy balance between local and global ministries and missionaries, as FPC does her part in helping to carry out The Great Commission and The Great Commandment. What about your part? Remember: You either are a missionary or you need one. I've asked the Missions Committee to send me strategically in 2016, so I'll be going with the mission team to Malawi in April. Think about coming with me.

What about staff? We've had some recent departures, so we'll see new faces in the new year. And some search committees are being put together to look for another pastor, youth director, and missions director. We desperately need a pastor or director to oversee Sunday school and small groups—from womb to tomb. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to the right folks at just the right time.

In ECO (our new denomination: the Evangelical Covenant Order Of Presbyterians), the emphases are on being a confessional church that knows what it believes, is true to Scripture as God's Word, is entrepreneurial in terms of thinking outside the box, and has a heart for planting other churches. With joy and excitement, your Session will be leading us into these emphases where "The Seven Last Words Of The Church" (we've never done it that way before) are no longer a part of our vocabulary.

Pray for your elders and deacons as they go on retreat toward the end of this month to wrestle with our new opportunities and challenges, and hopefully discern what Christ is calling this new/old congregation to be and do as a Kingdom outpost in center-city San Antonio. FPC turns 170 years old this year. Let's celebrate that by being Christ's gracious men and women, boys and girls, and making Jesus more and more visible to the least, the last, and the lost.

To God be the glory!!

Ron



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First Press is published monthly by the First Presbyterian Church San Antonio Communications Team. Deadline to submit content: the 10th of the previous month.

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ONC CONGREGATIONAL VOTE

Members of FPC will vote to approve the Officer Nominating Committee members for 2016 at a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 10. The work of this dedicated group is essential to the health and well-being of FPC.

Barbara Anne Stephens, Ruling Elder, served as Vice-Chair of the ONC in 2015 and is slated to serve as Chair of the committee in 2016. Ruling Elder Tres Buchek will be nominated to serve as Vice Chair in 2016, preparing him to Chair the ONC in 2017. They will be joined on the proposed slate by church members representing various constituencies of the congregation - Deacons, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Adult Education, Presbyterian Women and one at-large member.

You are encouraged to begin prayerfully considering those church members who are uniquely equipped by the Holy Spirit to be Elders and Deacons. The ONC has a herculean task to accomplish. They will be recommending eight Elders for the class of 2019, plus one Elder to fill an unexpired term; and, they will be recommending 17 Deacons for the class of 2019, plus three additional people to fill unexpired terms. The Congregational meeting to approve these recommendations is scheduled for April 3.

The ONC will begin accepting nominations January 11. Nominations will cease on February 14 at 5:00 PM.

Please make note of these important dates and watch for additional information on the church website, www.fpcsanantonio.org, and in the Mauze Lobby.

To God be the glory!

JANUARY 10

TUESDAY WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

All day, every day, an invisible war rages around you. A cunning, devilish enemy seeks to wreak havoc on everything that matters to you—your emotions, your mind, your family, your future. But his reign stops right here, right now. With you.

This Bible study, "The Armor of God" by Priscilla Shirer, is an action plan for putting on your armor and developing a personalized strategy to secure victory against the enemy. Join us for a Bible study that will bring to light the war around you and challenge you to suit up, stand firm, and secure victory in your life.

Participants will meet on Tuesday mornings from 9:30-11:30 AM in Covenant Hall (3rd floor). Meetings will begin on January 12, 2016, and will continue until February 23. Workbook is available in preparation for weekly small group meetings and video sessions. Suggested donation for workbook is \$13. Child care is available by reservation. Women of all ages are encouraged to attend. If you have questions or want to register, call Judy Kruger at (210) 857-0122.

JANUARY 12-FEBRUARY 23 • 9:30-11:30 AM

YOUTH SPAGHETTI LUNCHEON

The FPC Youth will be hosting their annual Spaghetti Luncheon and Talent Show on Sunday, February 21 at noon in Westminster Hall. This luncheon is a fundraiser for the youth mission trips—middle school Urban Plunge working here in San Antonio with local agencies and the high school trip to Haiti this summer. Admission is free and a love offering/donation is collected at the tables to fund our trip.

Contact Karen Marvel Shute at 210-421-4464/kmarvelshute@gmail.com or Linda Delano at 614-208-3600/ldelano@sbcglobal.net. Check with Colton Willis at coltonw@fpcsat.org or Wendy Garcia at wendygarcia@satx.rr.com for more details.

FEBRUARY 21

LITERATURE CIRCLE

Traveling highway U.S. 87 from Comfort to Fredericksburg, one can imagine the caliche roads, endless hills of mesquite, cedar and oak trees, and hundreds of angora goats grazing the land in the late 1950s. Thus the story by author, Becky Crouch Patterson, when she reviews her book, "The Ranch that Was Us," for the First Presbyterian Church Literature Circle on Tuesday, January 12, at 1:00 PM in the McCullough Room.

The daughter of Hill Country legend, Hondo Crouch, and her indomitable mother, Shatzie, Becky grew up on her grandfather's ranch. He was known as the "goat king of Texas." The book features illustrations throughout by the gifted artistic author.

You won't want to miss hearing this story of perseverance and remembrance--the history of our beloved Hill Country.

JANUARY 12 • 1:00 PM

SPRING FLING TASTE OF THE ORIENT

On April 2, 2016, First Presbyterian Church will be hosting the third annual fundraiser for the Children's Center at the home of Sarah and Will Quirk at 110 Lynwood Ave, 78212. This promises to be a fun evening of food, wine, music, and fellowship—all for a great cause! The evening is open to all church members, school families, and their guests. One hundred percent of the proceeds benefit the Children's Center. Come out for dinner, drinks, music, silent auction, large item raffle, and Children's Center Parent Only Raffle. Awesome classroom projects will be available from each classroom for bids! So save the date and watch for more details to follow!

APRIL 2

THE RICK CAVENDER BAND

Rick Cavender and his band return for another memorable performance. We've packed the house on his last visits so don't delay in making your reservation and inviting friends. The ever-popular Rick Cavender, known for his musical abilities, giving to the community and his television presentations on behalf of the Cavender Auto Family of dealerships, returns with his band to offer tunes from "The Stars of Texas," i.e. George Strait, Roy Orbison, Marty Robbins and other country stars. Your check is your reservation and should be made payable to First Presbyterian Church with a "Rick Cavender" notation on the memo line and mailed to Pat McCleary at the church. \$15 per person includes the performance and lunch.

Please make your reservation by Monday, February 1. There are no refunds after that date.

Call 210-226-0215 to contact Phyllis Griffin or Pat McCleary at 210-271-2716 if you need more information. So, put on your boot-scootin' gear and come on down!

FEBRUARY 5 • 10:45 AM

KEYS ADULTS PRESENTS "SOUTHERN CHARM"

Join KEYS for a fall trip, featuring Charleston, Savannah and Jekyll Island.

We will be traveling with Collette and there will be an informal informational meeting on Tuesday, February 9 at 1:00 PM to answer questions. The presentation will be done by Mike Sprute, District Manager.

Brochures are available from Pat McCleary or in the Mauze Lobby.

MEETING FEBRUARY 9 • TRIP SEPTEMBER 11-17



The Advent Festival was full of happy, smiling families on Sunday, November 29. We saw the love of Christ in so many ways, from the dedication of those who volunteered, to the smiles on the faces of kids and families, to the beautiful voices and music lifted up in praise of His Holy Name!

We had crafts galore for individuals to enjoy including a hand print wreath banner, manger blocks, bell ornaments, reindeer food, the traditional Family Advent Wreath, and many more! People also had the opportunity to participate in cookie decorating, gingerbread house construction, pictures by the manger, and putting together Bags of Grace (food and toiletry bags for our homeless friends).

This was a joyous event that kicked off the Advent season with a bang! The first candle of the Advent Wreath was lit as we as a family of faith celebrated the start of Advent. The Children's Choir charmed us all as they sang a beautiful Christmas song. We hope that everyone left with a sense of wonder as we wait in hopeful anticipation for the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas.

We invite you to check out the Gingerbread House displayed in the Mauze Lobby as well as the picture ornaments made by kids and families that are hanging on the Christmas tree in the McCullough Room. The Children's Ministry Committee and Staff extend a big THANK YOU to all who volunteered to make the Advent Festival such a wonderful event.



ADVENT FESTIVAL 2016



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT



The children of FPC put on an incredible Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 6 at the 11:00 AM worship service. Our 8th grade Confirmation students read the Christmas story from scripture while the preschool and elementary children filled the chancel as mice, sheep, shepherds, angles, stars, doves, Magi and the Holy Family.

The Christmas Pageant was a worshipful experience for all involved, and the children were proud to share the story of the birth of Christ with the congregation. Every year, the Christmas Pageant serves as a great reminder about what this Advent season is all about and how we as the family of faith at FPC can hopefully anticipate the coming of Christ!

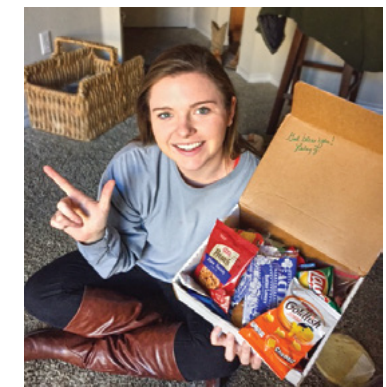
CARE PACKAGES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS



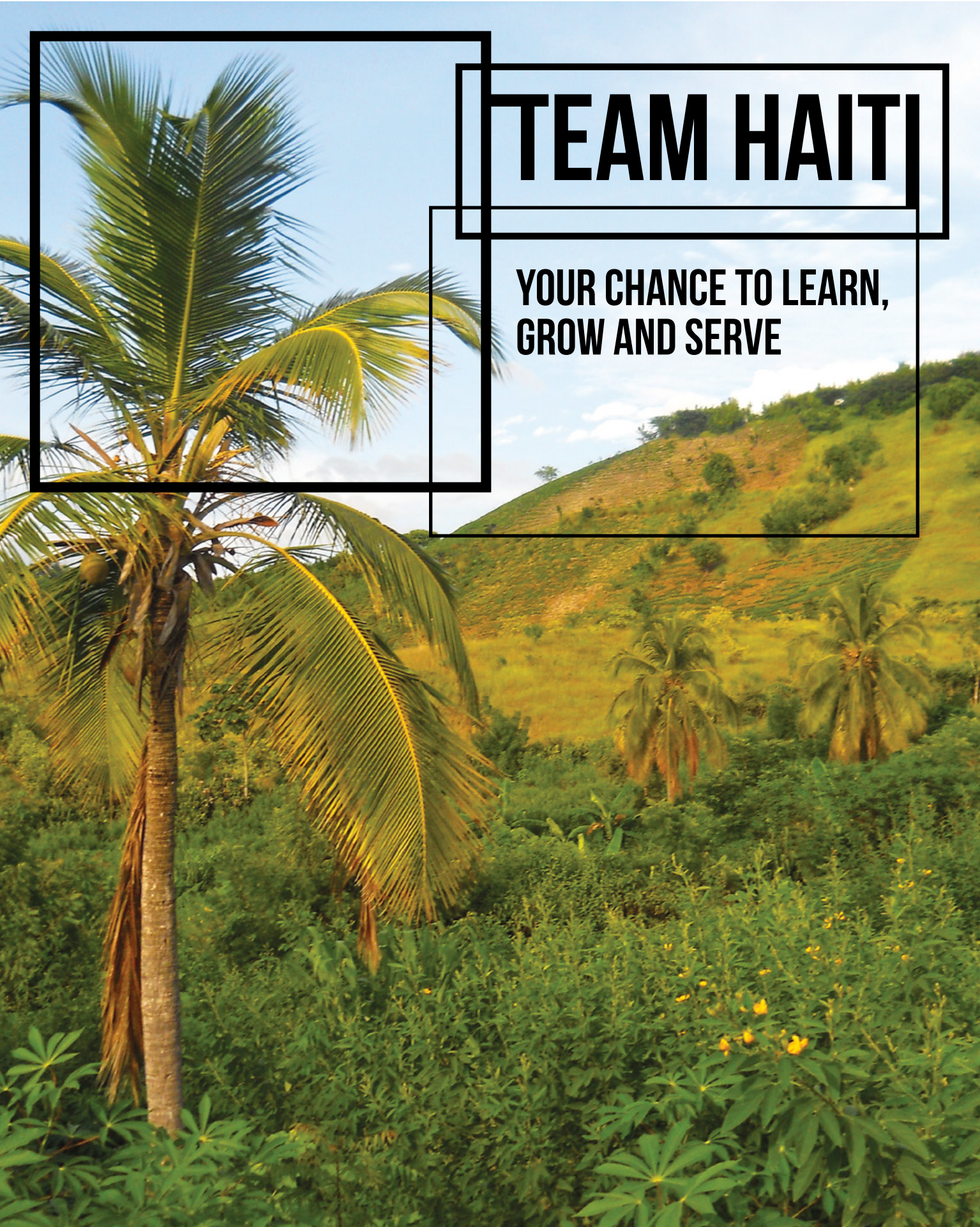
On November 16, your University Ministry here at FPC sent out over 75 care packages to college students, grad school students, and even a few boarding school students across the country and the world. These boxes contained everything from granola bars to Kleenex to gum, but the highlight of course were the homemade goodies that many of you provided! Students were able to enjoy homemade fudge, cookies, lemon bars, and so many other treats that were baked with love and prayers from our wonderful FPC members. We also had a great group come and help pack these boxes, which made quick work of the job, turning an afternoon project into a quick 90-minute blast of a task.

These packages are sent out twice a year to our college students, and we're blown away every time with how God uses these to minister to them at exactly the right time. One particular student responded that she was having a particularly rough day and this box of treats was used by the Lord to show her how much He loves her. What an amazing blessing!

Needless to say, there are many, many things that have to happen to pull this off, and so thanks to all of you who did anything to make Jesus visible to our college students, whether you packed, baked, gathered, prayed, or whatever. And many thanks to Lynn Thompson, our fearless Care Package chair, for pulling this all together! If you have a college-age student, and want to make sure that he or she receives a box like this in the upcoming semesters, please make sure that we have their most current address. You can send it to Lindsay Selli (lindsays@fpcsat.org) and we'll make sure that they get on the list! Merry Christmas from your University and Young Adult Ministry!



Bunkie Shed's daughter, Shelby, got her package at Texas Tech and loved it!



TEAM HAITI

**YOUR CHANCE TO LEARN,
GROW AND SERVE**

Are you interested in serving on an international mission trip?!

This coming summer, First Presbyterian will be taking a team to Haiti to serve and make Jesus visible. We will be staying and working in the small, coastal community of Petit Goave, Haiti.

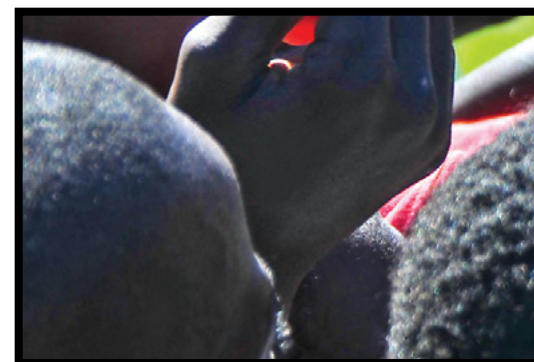
We will be serving through home repair and a Haitian kids club which gets up to 100 children. Depending on the number of attendees, we will split into different work groups and serve in a few different areas of Petit Goave. We will be working in the community and alongside of our Haitian brothers and sisters!

Short term mission trips offer a glimpse into the lives of other cultures and their day-to-day lives. Through this experience, our hope is to live life with the Haitian locals, if only for a week, and to create friendships and build bonds that last much, much longer.

Your total cost of the trip will be \$600 dollars. This is based off a three-tier approach of support. FPC will provide a portion, we will fundraise as a group, and each person will be responsible for \$600 dollars themselves. This price will include all expenses for the mission trip!

This is a unique opportunity to serve with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a different culture. If Haiti interests you, sign ups and registration are open until January 17. For more information regarding the trip, please visit the First Presbyterian Church website, www.fpcsanantonio.org/haiti-missions-trip.

Please pray and see if God is calling you to spend a week of your summer on this amazing journey!





Joyous Greetings in this New Year!

We praise our Lord for the many opportunities he has bestowed upon us to make Jesus visible throughout the Christmas Season.

Thirty HNS families experienced the love of Christmas as they were adopted by members of First Presbyterian, who generously and joyfully brought gifts and cheer into their homes. Thank you to Maggie Hardwick and Sue Cunningham for serving as our wonderful Chairmen, who lovingly placed each family. Also, thank you to our faithful church members, who welcomed these families into their hearts, following the words of Christ, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:40

Our annual Christmas parties at Morningside Manor and Chandler Home were festive and joyous occasions. Thank you to the faithful Chairmen Pat Johnson and Janet Wernli, as well as to the PW Circles, who provided delicious cookies and served as hostesses. The Friday Singers and the precious children from the FPC Children's Center brightened the day with Christmas Carols, and the Reverend Scott Simpson shared the beloved Christmas Story. Each resident was given cards from the children and the gift of a "Joy to the World" banner, provided by Sara Parish and the members of Circle 8.

On Christmas Eve, it was with great joy and gratitude that PW provided dinner for our pastors, the choir, and the staff. The beautiful Christmas Eve services at FPC are a blessing, not only for First Presbyterian, but for the entire San Antonio community. PW is pleased to honor those who provide the Christmas message on this Holy Night. A deep appreciation is extended to Karin Gabrielson for so very graciously hosting this Christmas Eve ministry.

Circle 20, under the faithful leadership of Bunkie Shed, has generously provided food for many occasions, including the Advent Festival, College Care Packages, Young Lives Dinners, Staff Appreciation Luncheons, and much more. Several members of PW helped the University Ministry Team fill to overflowing 78 care packages which were sent to our collegians. Many thanks to our PW members who, time after time, provide a loaves and fishes experience.

As we enter this New Year, we look forward to our winter PW "Ladies' Night Out". Please mark your calendars for Thursday, January 28, 2016, and join us at La Fonda on Main at 6:30. Additional details are provided in this issue of First Press.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

Happy New Year!



BIBLE CIRCLE 112

Monday, January 25 • 10:30 AM • FPC Geneva Rm
Lunch \$8.00
Chair: Suzanne Thomas, 820-3245
Moderator: Grace Labatt

BIBLE CIRCLE 2/4

Tuesday, January 19 • 1:30 PM • FPC Rm 226
Chair: Char-An Witten, 341-1856

CIRCLE 5 SHAWL MINISTRY

Friday, January 15 • 12:00-1:00 PM • FPC Rm 228
Chair: Caryl Gaubatz, 651-0208
Co-Chair: Jane Ann Temple, 414-9956

BIBLE CIRCLE 6

Tuesday, January 19 • 1:30 PM • FPC Geneva Rm
Chair: Mimi Hart, 822-0809

BIBLE CIRCLE 7

Tuesday, January 19 • 11:30 AM •
Home of Cynthia Robinson 7902 Woodridge Dr 78209
Bring a "Sack Lunch"
Moderator: Barb Baldrige
Chair: Linda Delano, 614-208-3600

CIRCLE 8 MOM'S GROUP

Wednesday, January 13 • 9:30-11:30 AM • FPC Rm 108
Snacks Provided
RSVP for childcare 2 days prior to Sonya Wright at son-yaw@fpcsat.org
Chair: Sara Parish, 394-0865

BIBLE CIRCLE 9

Tuesday, January 19 • 10:00 AM • FPC
Hostess: Angie Richmond
Chair: BJ Neal, 210-260-9638
Co-Chair: Lucille Lammert, 832-8414

BIBLE CIRCLE 11

Monday, January 25 • 6:30 PM
Hostess: Contact Chair
Chair: Suzanne Norton, 287-1392

CIRCLE 13 LITERATURE CIRCLE

Tuesday, January 12 • 1:00 PM • McCullough RM
Book Review: The Ranch That Was Us
Author: Becky Crouch Patterson
Reviewer: Becky Crouch Patterson
Chair: Jeanne Browning, 824-3921

BIBLE CIRCLE 14

Monday, January 25 • 12:00 PM • FPC St. Andrew's Rm
Lunch \$8.00
Chair: Marti Taylor, 210-334-9684

CIRCLE 16 MARJORIE MCLERNON SEWING CIRCLE

Wednesday, January 20 • 9:30 AM • FPC Rm 228
Chair: Lee Pressly, 735-0978

CIRCLE 17 EDNA RALSTON SEWING CIRCLE

Wednesday, January 13 • 9:30 AM • FPC Rm 309
Chairs: Jeanne Baker, 494-0972; Gigi Duke, 695-4363

CIRCLE 18 CARE AND CONCERN

(No date)
Chairs: Char-An Witten, 341-1856; Georgia Heath, 695-9511

CIRCLE 19 WHITE CROSS CIRCLE

Wednesday January 6 • 9:30 AM • FPC Rm 309
Chair: Janet Beauch, 673-3251

CIRCLE 20 CIRCLE OF SERVICE

(No date)
Chair: Bunkie Shed, 824-6690

BIBLE CIRCLE 21

Monday, January 18 • 6:30 PM •
For location contact Co-Chairman.
Co-Chair: Francis Warrick, 210-408-1775

Ladies' Night Out

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2016 ♦ 6:30 PM ♦ LA FONDA ON MAIN

Guests are welcome. Reservations are by check for \$20.00. Checks may be mailed to Anne Scales (211 Hill Country Lane, San Antonio 78232) made payable to FPC and include "Ladies' Night Out" in the memo line. Deadline is January 24, 2016.

KEYS



WOW! How time flies! Another year has come and gone again. Here we are at the beginning of another year having wrapped up December with a flurry of Christmas events and projects. If you missed any of our events, please read the following recap of our busy December written by Nancy Black, Co-President of KEYS:

ELF LOUISE CHRISTMAS GIFT WRAPPING

A dozen FPC Christmas elves took the van (or their private sleighs) to the Elf Louise warehouse on December 1 to drop off gifts and give an hour and a half of volunteer wrapping. That is, wrapping gifts for San Antonio children—not wrapping the volunteers! And, what an efficient selection and wrapping system it is! Working in pairs, each group took an envelope with the names and ages of the receiving children in a family. Then, one child at a time, the pair walked the aisle where toys had been stacked by age and gender. After two items had been selected, the volunteer returned to the wrapping table and wrapped and attached the provided gift label. Once the toys for all the children in that family had been wrapped and labeled, they were carried to a central collection table and the volunteer was given another envelope for another family. When the FPC elves had to give up the space to other volunteer elves, they gathered around a lunch table at the Arcadiana Cafe and continued to revel in the give-and-receive blessings of the season.

DECEMBER 4 CHRISTMAS PARTY

While enjoying delicious appetizers created by our talented Chef Maurilio and his staff, the older adults of FPC and their guests began the morning with laughter and smiles during our pre-program social. Then, Director of Mu-



WISHING HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND GOD'S BLESSINGS IN 2016

sic Darrin Newhardt with his wife Sharon and their son Evan, plus four members of the Forest Hills Presbyterian Church choir and several of Darrin's voice students took us through a musical review of Christmas. It seemed like family had gathered to entertain and enjoy each other. They brought us into the program with a sing-a-long of carols and left us humming as we continued around our Christmas party lunch. The room and the table decorations were beautiful. (Thanks, Virginia Nilsson, Ginger Davenport and helpers!) With the centerpiece arrangements, Virginia made clear glass Christmas ornaments filled with glitter and wearing the group's namesake, a key. So creative and so pretty! Each of the December birthday honorees received one of these Virginia originals.

On behalf of the KEYS members, Harold Black acknowledged our Kitchen and Household staff and each staff member was presented with a monetary gift. The FPC Kitchen and Household staff graciously and dependably help us utilize this church's building to strengthen our fellowship and continue the mission of this congregation. We are very grateful for each one of them.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY

The gifts and donations for our KEYS-sponsored Christmas family have been collected for delivery. I especially would like to say "thank you" to Chairman, Geri McCorkindale and everyone who generously donated money, gifts, and their time shopping, preparing, and delivering the Christmas Basket to our family. The hundreds of volunteer hours, given by KEYS members within FPC and throughout the community, have been offered in love and compassion. The Christmas party never ends!

HOLIDAY LIGHTS BUS TOUR

On Monday, December 7, a bus full of holiday lights seekers left FPC at 4:00 PM to head for an early dinner at PoPo's, that Comfort, Texas icon of home cooking and generous portions. The restaurant did not fail us. Several FPC members brought along friends, family and out-of-town guests. After dessert, it was dark and time to be on the search. We saw holiday lights occasionally along the highway and a display around Kerrville's city center. However, the first true blaze came in Fredericksburg. Their Marketplatz is gorgeous. The giant German Christmas/Nativity tree was turning with its levels of the manger scene, the animals, the dancers, and the angels--right in keeping with the German heritage of the region. The photo ops were numerous, but the small Christmas train had many young-in-hearts smiling for the cameras! In Johnson City, the Perdenales Electric Company had their adjacent walking park dazzling with lights wrapped right out to the end of every branch on every tree. Quite a sight! Our driver and our guides, Henry and Susan Holloway, had us back home on schedule at 11:00 PM. Twinkling lights and Christmas decorations can still work their magic. Shared with friends, it is even better.

AND NOW IT'S 2016—and we'll start New Year off with stellar KEYS programs, including many excellent speakers, programs, trips and special events planned for this coming year. Taking part in KEYS is a great way to join together to serve, join in fellowship and meet new people.

NO PROGRAM

Friday, January 1 and January 8

KEYS leadership committee, however, will meet at Geri and Don McCorkindale's home January 8 at 10:00 AM, to finish planning the Spring Programs. Please let me know of any speakers, movies, trips, service and volunteer ideas you would like to see the KEYS plan. Contact Pat McCleary at 210-271-2726.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Friday, January 15 • 11:30 AM

We'll celebrate January birthdays at the beautiful Fort



Sam Houston Golf Club where you will enjoy a delicious lunch. Cost is \$12.50 per person, except for our birthday-month guests who will receive a complimentary meal. Reservation and menu preordering must be made by noon on Tuesday, January 12. You are responsible for your reservation if you cancel after that date. Menus to make your selection will be available from Phyllis Griffin. Please make check payable to FPC, and on the memo line write "KEYS Lunch."

DANNY THOMPSON/WOAI/FOX 29 PILOT

Friday, January 22 • 11:00 AM

You may know Danny as our Sunday morning crossing guard, but he also flies helicopters for WOAI 4 and FOX 29 working full time doing electronic news gathering by helicopter. Danny will explain and discuss how the television media in San Antonio (and other major cities) utilize helicopters in the daily operations to gather news electronically.

PAULA ALLEN, AUTHOR

Friday, January 29 • 11:00 AM

Come and hear Paula Allen, who has written a question-and-answer column on San Antonio and Texas history for the San Antonio Express-News for the past 52 years. She will discuss her book, "San Antonio Then and Now." Today in its second edition, the book features historical and contemporary photos of local landmarks. Please plan to arrive by 10:45 a.m. so you will be seated by 11:00 a.m. Luncheon reservations (\$8) should be made by calling Phyllis Griffin by Tuesday, January 26.

GAMES

Mah Jongg

Friday, January 8 • Friday, January 22 • 11:00 AM

Bridge

Friday, January 22 • 1:00 PM

Nancy Johnson is the new Bridge Chairman

KEEP MOVING FITNESS CLASS

Friday Mornings, January 22 and 29 • 9:30 AM

*See "Save the Date" section for more upcoming events!

HISTORY CORNER

BY BILL COGBURN

Rare photo of First Pres in snow. View is looking east from upper floor of old San Antonio Light Building after a five inch snow fall in January 1949. First Pres is in upper left and San Antonio Express-News building in the upper right. Scottish Rite Temple beyond is First Pres. Surely some of our old-timers will remember this unusual sight.



PRAYERS FOR FORGIVENESS

BY CHUCK BEATTY

PRAYERS FOR FORGIVENESS, HEALING AND RECONCILIATION WITHIN OUR CHURCH

As the congregation of First Presbyterian Church moves beyond 2015 when we voted to leave the PC(USA) denomination and move to the ECO: A Covenant Order of Presbyterians, and into the year 2016, we want to enter a time of forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and unity. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us to embrace one another in the love of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. May all our hearts be open for the renewal of our lives as individuals and as a congregation.

Let us pray the words of the great hymn of the church, “The Church’s One Foundation” is Jesus Christ her Lord, she is His new creation by water and the Word. From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride; with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died. Elect from every nation, yet one o’er all the earth, her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth; one holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food, and to one hope she presses with every grace endued. Though with a scornful wonder the world sees her oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed, yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up; “How long?” And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song. Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war, she waits the consummation of peace for ever more; till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest, and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest. Yet she on earth has union with God the Three in One, and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won; O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we, like them the meek and lowly on high may dwell with Thee.”

RITUAL FOR FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

Pray these as you are led by the Holy Spirit:

- I acknowledge that I have held on to feelings about people in this congregation and presbytery that are hurtful to me, to them and to the community of our church. Forgive me God.
- I ask your help in releasing all my resentments, hardness of heart, and blame I have placed on others. Forgive me and heal me.
- I ask your help so that I will not let events of the past have power over my present or future, or in the life of our church. Help me Lord.
- I ask that you will fill me and this congregation with the fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Fill me Lord.

Pray the words of “The Servant Song” Richard Gillard:

“Brother let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too. We are pilgrims on a journey, we are brothers on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load. I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear. I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I’ll laugh with you. I will share your joy and sorrow, ‘til we’ve seen this journey through. When we sing to God in heaven we shall find such harmony, born of all we’ve known together of Christ’s love and agony. Brother let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.”

O Lord, our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people. In the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help. We give you glory, honor and thanks eternally, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



MISSIONS DIRECTOR, ALYSSA PAYNE, LEAVING FPC

Dearest Friends,

FPC has been an incredible place to work for the last eight years, and I have loved my job tremendously. I have spent almost a fourth of my life working and worshipping at FPC, and I am entirely grateful for how the church has blessed me and my family for the last almost decade!

So it is with great sadness that I have decided to leave my position as Director of Missions at FPC. I love my daily work,

but it has become too hard to balance the demands of the growing job with the demands of my growing family. In this next season of my life, my husband Jason and I feel God calling me to invest more time into our precious family.

The people of FPC are some of the most faithful and generous people I have ever been around in my 30 years of following Jesus, and fifteen years of professional ministry. I have grown tremendously under your tutelage and mentorship. I consider it an honor, blessing, and utter privilege to serve each of you, and for that I will always be thankful.

I will now be taking a hiatus from professional ministry, and working part-time at a mortgage company less than a mile from my home in New Braunfels, hoping I can pour more of myself into the ministry of raising our three kids to be good people – and eventually all followers of Jesus! However, I will continue to worship at FPC from time to time so that I can maintain the fellowship I have been so blessed by over the years. And I hope that God might bless me with another ministry job in the future.

In my eight years here, I have seen God show up in powerful, tangible, and miraculous ways, and my faith is forever blessed by such experiences. What I will appreciate most is working alongside people that I deem giants of the faith—that continue to make Jesus visible daily in how they serve, give, lead, connect, and minister to others in the name of Christ. I want to say a special thank you to those of you that have been especially wonderful and inspirational to me in my tenure here. This includes all of those who have served on and led our mission committees, everyone who has served on a mission trip, and those who faithfully volunteer with our local agencies.

If I leave FPC having gained anything from such faithful mentors and examples, I pray that it will be some of the great wisdom of Barbara Anne Stephens, the godly gentleness and nobility of Mike Munroe, the great steadiness of Frank Patton, the energy and humor of Teresa and Ben McCaleb, the holy hospitality of Holly Youngquist, the active dedication of Cynthia Robinson and Danny Mathews, and the faithful leadership of Fred Wall. FPC is full of the most wonderful and generous people I have ever encountered. I will always look back to your powerful examples; and I hope to grow up in my life and faith to be more and more like each of you, as you are all like Jesus!

Please know how utterly grateful I am to the Lord, and all of FPC, for allowing me to serve in this wonderful ministry.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY | NOVEMBER 2015

OPERATING FUND BUDGET	ACTUAL YTD	BUDGET YTD	OVER/(UNDER)
TOTAL REVENUES	3,249,019	3,799,573	(550,554)
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES	2,743,112	3,300,029	(556,916)
TOTAL BENEVOLENCES	438,869	438,869	0
FUND TFR FROM OPERATING RESERVE	150,000	0	(150,000)
NET INCOME/LOSS	217,037	60,675	156,362

This is truly a special congregation! For the first summer in several years, we have closed each of the past three months with a surplus—without having to draw on Operating Reserve funds. Thank you! Your continued faithfulness and generous support provides great encouragement to our staff and leadership as they seek to share God’s truth and grace in Jesus Christ. A point of clarification: PC(USA) member churches typically are asked to contribute (based on total membership) a small amount of funds to support presbytery and PC(USA) activities. Five months ago, your Session ceased all such support and redirected those funds to the Fellowship Community. If you hear comments to the contrary, please share this message. To God alone be all the glory!

MOMENTS TO HOLD CLOSE | GET MIXED IN | BY MANNY RODRIGUEZ



If you are like us you just concluded a season of celebrating the birth of our saviour with over indulgence of savory foods and goodies. You probably even prepared a good portion of it yourself to share with those you love.

During the baking process I’m sure you mixed in a cornucopia of different products, spices and seasonings to create an edible masterpiece. But have you ever tried some of the ingredients on their own without being mixed together? Like vanilla extract, oh it smells so good and I love the flavor it provides when mixed into a variety of treats but

consuming it straight can almost make you blind. Or sour cream, one of my absolute favorites in potatoes and a variety of baked goods, but to gulp a spoonful would definitely activate my gag reflexes. I can easily provide countless of other examples. The point is this, none of these are good on their own, yet mixed in properly all of their greatness is revealed. The same is true of us if we do not “mix ourselves” with Jesus Christ. On our own we can only achieve so much, but when we are “mixed” and give ourselves to Him, all of our greatness can be properly revealed. I cannot think of a better way to start the New Year, can you?



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