



DECEMBER 2021

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# The Father's Christmas Card

One of the greatest joys of the Christmas season is opening up envelopes from all over the country and pulling out Christmas cards from family and friends. Each year, beginning in late November, the mailbox is stuffed with pictures of old friends, their children, their pets, and their homes. Before people posted everything on Facebook and Instagram, these cards were one of the ways we kept up with far-flung but not-forgotten relationships. In those photos, we get to see who has gotten a little bigger and who has gotten a little older. We learn who has had new kids of their own, grandkids, and who has experienced loss. Those pictures and the simple act of staying connected, tell us so much. They remind us of precious relationships, strong commitments, and enduring bonds of love. (Note: Not all "Christmas cards" come before Christmas, but that's OK too. We are happy to get them any time. We just love seeing how everyone has grown and prospered since last year, even if they arrive in February.)

Each year, God the Father sends us a reminder of his love by giving us a picture of His love. That picture is the Son, Jesus Christ. When God wanted to confirm His truth and remind His people of His love, He sent the very image of Himself, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote:

15 He[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. Colossians 1:15–17 (ESV)

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Colossians is telling us that if we ever want to know what God looks like, we should look at Jesus. If we want to see God and know God, who He really is, and how He cares about us, look at Jesus. If we want others in our families, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods to know who God is, we must show them, Jesus.

This year, during our Advent and Christmas season, we are going to study several passages that remind us that Jesus Christ is God's revelation of Himself. In addition to Jesus being the image of God described in Colossians, The Apostle John tells us that Jesus is the Word of God.

John 1:1, 14: In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Through His Word, God tells us what He wants us to know about who He is, what He wants, what is important, and how He feels. Matthew even tells us that Jesus is not just a visual or verbal representation of God, He is "God with us." Matthew wrote:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:23)

The Father did not send a stand-in or a representative. He gave himself! Jesus Christ is Immanuel—God with us! It was God who was born to an ordinary family in a humble stable, not someone or something less.

God sent his son Jesus Christ so that we would know Him and so that we would know that He loves and understands us. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the birth of Jesus is God's way of saying "I love you" a thousand times over.

Grace, Peace, and Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Fuller'.



**Rev. Dr. Bob Fuller**  
Senior Pastor



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First Press is published monthly by the First Presbyterian Church San Antonio Communications Team.

Want to be featured in FIRST PRESS?

Deadline to submit content: the 15th of the previous month.

Hank Cherry: **Director of Communications**

Abigail Ensley: **Graphic Designer**

Ross Brown: **Media Coordinator**

**Questions? Contact:** Hank Cherry (210-271-2728/hankc@fpcsat.org)

# Save the Date

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, December 5 | After Each Service | Sanctuary**

A special congregational meeting will take place to call a new Officer Nominating Committee. The meeting will take place immediately following each of our two services (9:00 AM & 11:00 AM). Note: there will be no 11:02 Contemporary Service.

## YAC CHRISTMAS PARTY

**Monday, December 6 | 6:00 PM | 132 Parklane Drive**

You are invited to our Annual YAC Christmas Party! We hope you will join us for dinner, a White Elephant Gift Exchange, and prizes! Come dressed in your ugliest Christmas attire, and please bring an unlabeled, wrapped gift that costs no more than \$5! Prizes will be given for the ugliest Christmas outfit as well as for the most spectacular gift under \$5!

RSVP by signing up or by emailing Carrie Everson at [carrie@fpcsat.org](mailto:carrie@fpcsat.org). Please RSVP by December 2.

## MIDDAY NOELS

**Thursday, December 2, 9, 16  
12:00-12:45 PM | First Presbyterian Sanctuary**

Once again, FPC offers its holiday 'gift to the city' with a variety of creative musical offerings. In addition to in-person seating in the sanctuary, all three concerts will be streamed live at our site and will be available for viewing on our YouTube.com channel after the concert. Following the concert, we will be offering a hot lunch (\$12) in Westminster Hall or 'Grab and Go' lunches (\$5), available on the sidewalk just outside our sanctuary doors.

Dec. 2: Merry Organ Pipes Celebrate the Season!

Dec. 9: Shimmering Songs and Sparkling Singing

Dec. 16: Christmas with the Castle Brass Quintet

For more details about this free concert series, please visit [fpcsanantonio.org/noels](http://fpcsanantonio.org/noels).

## FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Living the life of your dreams starts with a solid financial plan. Join our virtual Financial Peace University class and learn to dump debt and build wealth. You won't even have to leave home and it's FREE. Visit [fpu.com/1143678](http://fpu.com/1143678) to sign up now. Please share with your family and friends also! Class starts Wednesday, January 5, 2022 from 7:00-8:00 PM and ends March 2. Visit: <https://fpcsanantonio.org/ramsey/> for more information.

## POINSETTIAS

**Order yours before December 12!**

Each year during the Advent season the congregation has an opportunity to remember a loved one, honor an individual or recognize an occasion by purchasing a poinsettia to be placed in the Chancel by the Sanctuary Flower Committee. Download the order form at [fpcsanantonio.org/poinsettias](http://fpcsanantonio.org/poinsettias).

## LITERATURE CIRCLE

**Tuesday, December 14 | 1:00 PM | McCullough Room**

The FPC Literature Circle will meet Tues., December 14, 2021, in the McCullough Room at 1 PM for a social & 1:30 PM for Martha Smith's review of THE MYSTERY OF MRS. CHRISTIE. Described as "A fact-based, fiction-laced novel," author Marie Benedict writes of the eleven day disappearance of Agatha Christie, the famous mystery writer. A mystery in itself, Martha will present the clues & explore the time period.

Men & women of all faiths are invited. The reviews may also be viewed on our website: [fpcsanantonio.org/lit-circle](http://fpcsanantonio.org/lit-circle)

## JOY! CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

**Sunday, December 5 | 11:00 AM Traditional Service (Rehearsal – Saturday, Dec. 4)**

A Savior has been born! He is Christ the Lord! Come hear the story of God's love told through our FPCchildren during the 11:00 am service.



## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

**2:30 PM: Communion Service**

**5:00 PM: Family Service**

**7:30 PM: Candlelight Service**

**10:00 PM: Candlelight Service**

Join us for your choice of four services, as we celebrate the birth of Christ. We hope to see you, your family and friends during this most wonderful time of the year. Childcare available for babies through 3 yrs. by reservation at [child-care@fpcsat.org](mailto:child-care@fpcsat.org).

## GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Gift of Christmas matches FPC covenant partners with needy families in San Antonio who are screened by House of Neighborly Services and Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services. Please prayerfully consider, either with a group or individually, "adopting" one of these families and sharing the joy of Christmas with a less fortunate family. Information and Family Request Forms will be available at the Ave. E. porte-cochere entrance every Sunday in November. Completed forms are requested by December 2. Visit [fpcsanantonio.org/giftofchristmas2021](http://fpcsanantonio.org/giftofchristmas2021) or contact Jessica Young, [jessica3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jessica3@sbcglobal.net) or Janet Pritchett, [jejrpritchett@outlook.com](mailto:jejrpritchett@outlook.com)

## ROAD CLOSURES ANNOUNCEMENT

**Sunday, Dec. 5**

Due to the Rock 'n Roll Marathon taking place that Sunday morning downtown, several streets will be closed. We recommend all congregants take Highway 281 that morning and use the McCullough Ave. exit and entrance ramps, which will not be affected, nor will streets directly surrounding FPC. For more information on course routes: <https://www.runrocknroll.com/san-antonio-courses>

## DISCOVER, KNOW, JOINFPC!

Interested in learning more about FPC San Antonio or joining us as a Covenant Partner? Sign up for the Discover, Know, JoinFPC! Winter program that begins Sunday, January 9.

For more information or to register, contact

[SheilaF@fpcsat.org](mailto:SheilaF@fpcsat.org), or register online at:

<https://fpcsanantonio.org/new-to-first-2/how-to-join/>



**Alternative Gift Market**

Do you want to give Christmas gifts that will make a difference in San Antonio and the world?

Purchase a gift that will help impact the people and the work of several of our Local and Global missions partners.

We will have a table with shopping lists in the Mauze Lobby on December 5, 12, & 19 You can pick up a shopping list or print one from the church website and submit it along with a check or cash to Lindsay Selli in the church office.

You may also fill out your shopping list online and pay with a credit or debit card beginning December 6.

For more information, please contact Lindsay Selli ([lindsays@fpcsat.org](mailto:lindsays@fpcsat.org)).

Visit [www.fpcsanantonio.org/agm](http://www.fpcsanantonio.org/agm)



# Christmas at FIRST

## *Midday Noels*

**THURSDAYS, DECEMBER 2, 9 AND 16 | 12:00-12:45 PM**

Once again, FPC offers its holiday 'gift to the city' with a variety of creative musical offerings. In addition to in-person seating in the sanctuary, all three concerts will be streamed live at our site and will be available for viewing on our YouTube.com channel after the concert. Following the concert, we will be offering a hot lunch (\$12) in Westminster Hall or 'Grab and Go' lunches (\$5), available on the sidewalk just outside our sanctuary doors.

**MERRY ORGAN PIPES CELEBRATE THE SEASON!**

**Thursday, December 2 | 12:00 PM**

Our highly skilled organist, Dr. Jae Ha, provides musical and seasonal inspiration from the mighty sanctuary organ of First Presbyterian Church. Jae will be performing the famous "Nutcracker Suite" by Tchaikovsky, a highlight you will not want to miss!

**SHIMMERING SONGS AND SPARKLING SINGING**

**Thursday, December 9 | 12:00 PM**

Our FPC Chamber Singers present four beautiful choral pieces of the season, interspersed with captivating vocal solos that span diverse genres including opera and popular song.

**CHRISTMAS WITH THE CASTLE BRASS QUINTET**

**Thursday, December 16 | 12:00 PM**

We are pleased to welcome the Castle Brass Quintet, a brass quintet featuring some of the finest freelance professional musicians in the San Antonio area. The ensemble is comprised of two trumpets, French horn, trombone, tuba, and percussion and is led by Jeff Castle, a United States Air Force veteran and trumpet teacher at The University of Texas San Antonio.



Each year during the Advent season the congregation has an opportunity to remember a loved one, honor an individual or recognize an occasion by purchasing a poinsettia to be placed in the Chancel by the Sanctuary Flower Committee. If you would like to participate, the cost is \$15 to reserve a plant for one individual or one couple. Proceeds have enabled the Sanctuary Flower Committee to make many special gifts to beautify the church over the years. Your check should be made payable to the Sanctuary Flower Committee. Mail to First Presbyterian Church, c/o Sanctuary Flower Committee, 404 North Alamo, San Antonio, 78205-1918, or place in the Sanctuary Flower mailbox in the workroom. **Requests received later than December 12, 2021 will miss the insert printing deadline.**



# HISTORY: THE TEXAS REFORMATION BY JOBE S. JACKSON

## Part 8: First Presbyterian Church from 1866 to 1895 – Growing Pains from the Ashes of War

First Presbyterian Church at the conclusion of United States Civil War was a church in shambles. Between the departure of Rev. Robert F. Bunting in 1861 and the arrival of Rev. John F. Martin in 1867, the Church had no settled pastor and was without most of its male membership that had served in various capacities elsewhere during the war. Despite these unstable circumstances, the Church would see its membership overcome countless challenges and grow to two-hundred strong by the time of Rev. Arthur Gray Jones' arrival in 1895.

As chronicled in Part 7 of this series, the financial condition of our Church was dire from 1861 to 1879. Construction of the Old Adobe's replacement at the corner of Houston and Flores streets began in 1860 after a heroic fundraising effort by Rev. Bunting, but the construction would not be completed until 1879 due to insufficient funds. The intervening period saw the church engage in many fundraising efforts; some of which, during the tenure of Rev. John F. Martin, were quite strange.

Rev. Martin recognized that although the structure at the corner of Houston and Flores was incomplete, First Presbyterian Church's building could serve as a community center hosting any number of non-religious public events and lectures to raise money. In 1868, Rev. Martin presented a lecture to much fanfare titled "Genesis and Geology" discussing Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, which is especially remarkable given the subject matter did not gain widespread attention until the Scopes "Monkey" Trial in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925.<sup>1</sup> Hardly a year later, Rev. Martin lectured to a large audience that the second coming of Jesus Christ was imminent, arguing that the world would reach, according to "Biblical Chronology," 6,000 years in 1869 at which time Christ would return and reign on earth for 1,000 years. *Id.* And, if that was not enough to raise the Calvinist eyebrows of the congregation, Rev. Martin permitted the Church to host lectures on the then emerging cult of "Phrenology" – the study of the shape of the human skull as indicative of an individual's mental abilities and character traits – "which attracted many of the San Antonio elite of that day." *Id.*

As unorthodox as Rev. Martin's fundraising efforts were, he was successful in raising money for the piecemeal construction of and repairs to the church building. Eventually, the beginning

of the end of Rev. Martin's unconventional tenure at our Church came when the Clerk of the Session, Frank McCarty Newton (who served as Clerk from 1872 to 1901), announced that a congregational meeting had been called to select a replacement pastor due to Rev. Martin holding doctrines contrary to the Presbyterian Standards. Later, on April 23, 1872, the Presbytery "divested Mr. J.F. Martin of all authority to preach on the grounds of heresy," among the "dangerous errors" reported were Rev. Martin's denial of God's ability to "convey salvation by a Sovereign act of grace."<sup>1</sup>

After the departure of Rev. Martin, our Church was graced with the long tenure of Rev. John Witherspoon Neil. Rev. Neil served as pastor from 1872-1891, and he, among other things, transitioned the Church to more contemporarily acceptable methods of fundraising to complete the structure at Flores and Houston – pew renting. Records indicate that in 1878 twenty-seven pews were rented at rates ranging from \$120 down to \$60 per pew, or the equivalent of approximately \$3,300 to \$1,650 in 2021 adjusted value. The practice continued even after the church at the corner of Houston and Flores streets was completed in 1879.

Rev. Neil's ministry to our Church and San Antonio at large was without a doubt successful. Upon his death in 1891, the *San Antonio Express* recognized that "Probably no man in the city was more universally loved and respected."<sup>1</sup> However, our Church was not without various struggles during and immediately after his tenure. Namely, Rev. Neil and the Session had to contend with the effects of worldly temptations on the congregation.

In 1885, Elder J.D. Stevenson issued a call to action for the Session to exercise discipline on increasingly wayward members. Stevenson identified that membership was apathetic to observing the Sabbath and, among other things (like attending the theater and opera), "have lately been seen, on their way, to and from the week of horseracing in this City, a sort of gathering, at which the worst characters of the community, are found, where betting is the custom, and thousands of dollars change hands, and these races, in addition, were continued over the Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> In response to Stevenson's concern, Clerk



# 175TH ANNIVERSARY



*Rev. John Witherspoon Neil*

of the Session Frank Newton issued letters to “delinquent” members like the one on March 15, 1885, as follows:

“Dear Brother: The Session of the Church, charged with its oversight, has for months noticed with great solicitude your continued absence from services of the Sanctuary. We do not know your reasons for this studied absence. Hence, we address this affectionate epistle to you, as we do to others, and ask you to return to the church and its public services. Or if for any reason or grievance, say why you cannot return. We urge you to meet with us and tell us your troubles. You have been, with others, the special object of our prayers and we affectionately urge you to come back to your Father’s House and grieve Him no longer for your absence. Again Brother, let us assure you of our deep interest in your allegiance to Him who has done so much for you.”<sup>1</sup>

Letters like these eventually ceased after some members objected and others sent responses “kind and sentimental” in tone.<sup>1</sup>

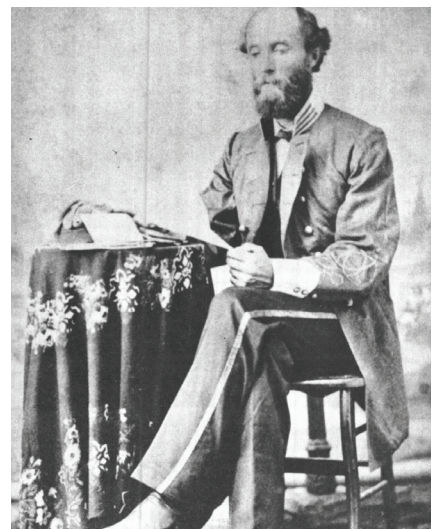
Records indicate that the temptation of gambling in particular continued to drive a wedge between our members and faithful church attendance over the following decade. In May of 1893, Clerk Newton issued a letter condemning the growing pastime of playing “Progressive Euchre,” highlighting that: “The Session

of this Church desires to call the attention of its members to the prevalence in our community and even among members of this Church of playing of games with gambling tendencies . . . we do single out the phase of card playing known as Progressive Euchre and all other so called progressive games . . . as now played they have a direct tendency to gambling . . . How much nobler it is to forego a questionable pastime than to run the chance of leading one astray.”<sup>1</sup> Although Newton’s letter from the Session is nearly 130 years’ old, the message is as true to our Church’s members today as it was back then – how much nobler is it to forego questionable pastimes than run the chance of being lead astray from worship and growing in our relationship with the Lord.

Despite the struggles identified above, and many others that could not be detailed in this brief account, our Church was able to survive and grow from ashes of the Civil War to a membership of 200 by the time Rev. Arthur Gray Jones arrived in 1895. The persistence paid off, and Rev. Jones inherited a resilient congregation that was able to grow to 1,127 members by 1920.

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<sup>1</sup> *Adobe Walls to Stone Edifice*, by Donald E. Everett



*Frank Newton, son of Rev. Sam Newton, served as Clerk of the Session for 29 Consecutive years.*

## LOVING ONE ANOTHER

### WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

# Circle Chairs & Bible Moderators

#### Circle 1/12

Suzanne Thomas, Chair (210-846-3240)  
Grace Labatt, Moderator  
Third Monday, 11:30 a.m., Geneva Room (with meal)  
Fourth Monday in January

#### Circle 5

Kay Weber, Co-Chair  
(210-288-5290)  
Mary Fruge-Medford, Co-Chair  
(210-823-7054)  
SHAWL MINISTRY  
Third Wednesday, 1:00 p.m., Room 228

#### Circle 6

Jean Parsons, Chair (210-240-7483)  
Members of Circle, Moderators  
Third Tuesday, 1:30 p.m., McCullough Room

#### Circle 7

Mary Ellen Mauze, Chair (210-844-5549)  
Pat O'Neill, Moderator  
Third Tuesday, 11:30 a.m., Members' Homes

#### Circle 8

Under Construction  
YOUNG MOTHERS  
Time and Place to be decided.  
Call Nona Hall for information. (210-274-2643)

#### Circle 9

Ann Smith, Chair (210-822-2440)  
Members of Circle, Moderators  
Third Tuesday, 10:00 a.m., St. Andrews Room

#### Circle 11

Jean Swanson, Chair (210-826-0766)  
Members of Circle, Moderators  
Fourth Monday, 6:30 p.m., Members' Homes

#### Circle 13

Grace Clouse, Chair, Moderator (734-718-7057)  
LITERATURE CIRCLE  
Second Tuesday, 1:00 p.m., McCullough Room

#### Circle 14

Karen Carawan, Chair (210-213-4589)  
Suzie Simpson, Moderator  
Third Monday, 12:00 p.m., Geneva Room  
(with meal)

#### Circle 18

Char-An Witten, Chair (210-341-1856)  
CIRCLE OF CONCERN

#### Circle 20

Muffin Camp, Chair (210-789-1808)  
CIRCLE OF SERVICE



*"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."*

*Luke 2:12*

As a child growing up we had a tradition in my family. My mother's family began this Christmas quest that the baby Jesus in our Nativity scene never appeared until Christmas morning. I knew as did my four cousins that He was hidden somewhere in the house. I never found Him, but my cousins would occasionally find Him (there were four of them and one of me) and proudly tell me as they arrived for lunch. Finally at about 12, I found Him in a little box on my Dad's dresser. I was triumphantly excited and my Dad and Mom said, "you have Him in your hand, now make sure you find him in your heart." I knew what they meant and had accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, but it took years for me to let Him make my heart His home. If you are still looking for the baby Jesus for your manger, I pray that this Christmas He becomes your most precious gift. If He resides safely in your heart, then gift someone else with the overflowing love He brings. Share the Good News that Jesus Christ is born! Merry Christmas to all and God's blessings for the New Year.

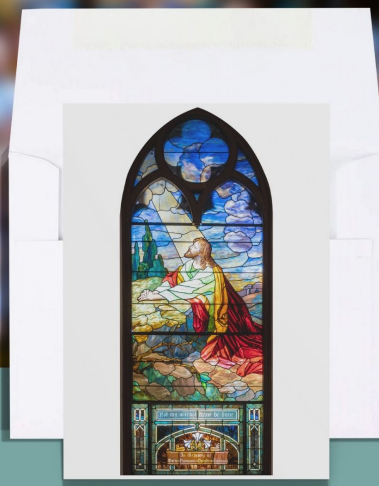
In Christ Alone,

*Janet Wernli*

President  
Women of the Church



WOMEN OF THE CHURCH



# GREETING CARDS FOR SALE!

Six different designs featuring FPC's stained glass windows.

Available in packs of 12.

Pick up in the Mauze Lobby before and after services on Sunday.

To order, contact Janet Wernli at [janetw1966@hotmail.com](mailto:janetw1966@hotmail.com)

# FPC HELPS BORDER PASTORS



## THROUGH R.A.M.

Reaching Across Ministries (RAM) works to promote the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) through developing and equipping pastors and church leaders in Mexico and across the border. Their mission is two-fold, one of building a community of encouragement between local pastors, and taking an active role in partnering with them on discipleship efforts.

Recently, FPC provided RAM with 25 Spanish Language Study Bibles to help in equipping the pastors they work with. Rick Lay, the RAM Director, shared the following update:

I am pleased to report that the 25 Bibles donated by FPC for the border pastors were distributed to a select number of them in the last 24 months. Recently, during a pastoral workshop in Acuna, Mexico, I was able to get comments from some who had received them (shown here). These pastors represent different denominations and none have attended formal Bible schools, yet all have fully planted churches that RAM ministry has been blessed to be able to support with discipleship training material.

It is always interesting to see how the Lord speaks to each pastor through His written word, and here are some of their comments regarding the use of the Bibles.

"The extensive introductions of each book in this Bible help me understand the purpose of each of the letters. This is very helpful in selecting the proper book for sermon topics."

"I liked that the verse explanation notes in this Bible come from a broad group of Bible teachers from different conservative theological backgrounds."

"I was pleasantly surprised to see the availability of this Bible and to receive it as a gift, thank you!"

"It is not my pulpit Bible but it is very valuable for my studies at home."

As these pastors continue persevering in expanding the Kingdom in their own communities, we will continue to support them and I know that these Bibles will help them even more as they continue studying . . . always searching the truth in them. Thank you again for this donation to the pastors and for everything else FPC does to support other ministries and pastors.



## LOVING ONE ANOTHER



## Not All Superheroes Have Capes, Some Have Teaching Degrees.

Last month, members of First Presbyterian Church decided to "love our city" by celebrating teachers and staff at Washington Elementary and the IDEA Ewing Halsell. Many of you wrote notes of encouragement that we shared with them along with bottled water and granola bars in their teacher workrooms. A few days later we attached a tag to a bag of M&M's that said

"Thank you for being **Marvelous & Magnificent!**"

No doubt every profession has been affected by the pandemic, but maybe teachers have had the most difficult challenge. Teaching online, the rise in depression and anxiety and the difficult balance they must walk as they try to keep students and staff safe, have placed an incredible amount of stress on them and a huge increase in their workload.

We hope our small act of encouragement has made a difference in their lives and look forward to finding more opportunities to bless them. If you are interested, we would LOVE to have you join our team.

Please feel free to reach out to us! Contact [Lindsays@fpcsat.org](mailto:Lindsays@fpcsat.org).

## STEPHEN MINISTRY

## Care Receivers Share How Their Stephen Ministers Made a Difference

*Although my needs changed as I went from wife to caregiver to widow, my Stephen Minister's love and support remained a constant. She was **there at every stage of my journey**, helping me through some of the most difficult moments of my life—so I could begin to heal.*

Susan ●

*When things seemed like too much to handle, **my Stephen Minister brought normalcy and calm**. With him by my side, I knew I could make it from one week to the next. I could feel God's presence when my Stephen Minister was there.*

James ●



*My Stephen Minister was a consistent presence walking with me throughout my divorce. He would always show up, and **most importantly, he refused to give up on me**. I'll forever be grateful for the way he changed my life.*

Ralph ●

*When I was with my Stephen Minister, **I felt Jesus was with me**. I saw the love of God in her eyes while we talked and prayed, and it would fill me with such comfort and peace. It helped me know that I could make it through.*

Ashley ●



After the death of my mom, **I needed someone who would listen**—even to the same stories over and over—and who wouldn't be afraid to say her name or bring up her memory. That's who my Stephen Minister was, and I don't know how I would have gotten through it without her.

Molly ●

My Stephen Minister listens—really listens. **He doesn't judge me or tell me what to do** but walks side by side with me. I never realized how helpful and healing that can be. With his care and support, I'm making it through.

Brian ●

I'm blessed with an amazing Stephen Minister. She's been genuinely attentive and caring ever since she came alongside me. She's kind of fearless in that way—**she'll just be there without trying to fix me** or talk me out of my feelings as I struggle with what's happening.

Nancy ●

My Stephen Minister's weekly visits became an anchor in my life—something I could rely on when everything else was so uncertain. **She was a steady reminder of God's presence**, helping me know I was never alone.

Heather ●

When someone you love is terminally ill, people often pull back because they're scared and don't know what to say. But **my Stephen Minister stood with me through it all**—listening, talking, and helping me on the journey. It was so reassuring to know he was by my side.

Andrew ●

My Stephen Minister loves me, listens to me, cares for me, prays for me, supports me, and **gives me a safe, confidential relationship** where I can totally share my heart. No matter how much I have to unload on her, she listens to whatever is going on.

Celeste ●

I needed to know that there was one person in the world who knew the good, the bad, and the ugly about me—and still cared for me. Experiencing that through my Stephen Minister was **a tangible expression of God's love**. It changed my life.

Julia ●

Stephen Ministry showed me the face of Christ. **God brought me exactly what I needed** through the care of my Stephen Minister, and that demonstrated to me how God cares for each and every one of us.

Frank ●

Stephen Ministry is a lay caring ministry being used in over 12,000 congregations across the United States, Canada, and 29 other countries.

With Stephen Ministry, congregations can equip a team of lay caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—to provide one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people experiencing grief, divorce, major illness, loneliness, financial stress, and other life difficulties.

Learn more about participating in FPC's Stephen Ministry by contacting Rev. Scott Simpson at [scotts@fpcsat.org](mailto:scotts@fpcsat.org) and Stephen Ministry Leader Jim Carssow at [jimcarssow@gmail.com](mailto:jimcarssow@gmail.com).

This article is republished courtesy of Stephen Ministry ([stephenministry.org](http://stephenministry.org)).



## LOVING ONE ANOTHER

Believe it or not December is here. I love Christmas and I am excited as we enter into Advent season. My prayer for us is that we will not focus on the business of the season and miss out on the center of our celebration, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

December 3 will be our KEYS Christmas Party with special Guest Miles Pike. Miles warmed our hearts in April through a Live Streamed concert. Don't miss the opportunity to experience him in person. Make your reservation by calling the office, \$10 for lunch.

We will kick off the New Year on January 14 with a visit from Tim Morrow from the San Antonio Zoo. Our Birthday lunch in January will be at a favorite restaurant, Milano's on Warzbach.

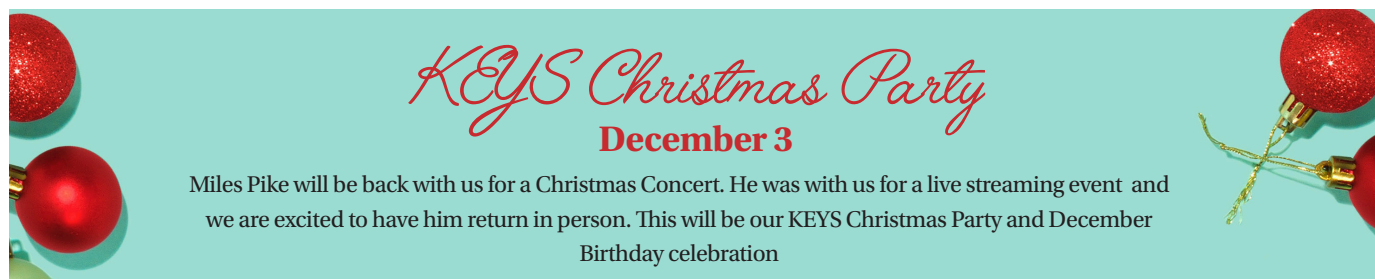
As of November 23 we have collected \$650 for our Christmas Family in addition to the individual gifts that you have purchased. Thank you for your generous participation again this year.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Blessings for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

*Rev. Dr. Joe Moore*

Minister for Older Adults and Congregational Care



*We now have a live streaming element so that you can watch the speaker on your computer.  
Watch for the link via email.*

**Jan. 7**

**No KEYS**

**Jan. 14**

**Tim Morrow, San Antonio Zoo**

**Jan. 21**

**Birthday Lunch at Milano's on Wurzbach**

**Jan. 28**

**Dayne Sullivan, San Antonio Rodeo**

### Friday Fitness with Jacqi Crow

Friday Fitness via zoom through the end of the year. This makes it easier for those who are not venturing out to continue participating and is easier for Jacqi to manage. She will send a reminder email each week with the link to the zoom room. There is also a room at the church set up with a computer that will be connected in so you don't have to rush to participate in KEYS.

### AARP Safe Driving Course

I have talked to our local representative and have learned that this course will not be offered in person until January. If you need to renew your discount you will have to go to AARP.org and take the class online.

### Mahjong and Bridge

Mahjong and Bridge are on the 2nd and 4th Fridays. Contact Nancy Black for Mahjong and Suzanne West for Bridge if you want to be included to receive information.









# FIRST CUP READINGS

## DECEMBER, 2021

Blessings and love in Christ,

*Sandy Sturch*

Dear Family in Christ,

First Cup is designed to assist you in the habit of daily Bible reading and prayer. The name is to remind you that as you reach for your first cup of morning coffee or tea, reach also for your Bible and prayer list. The prayers at the beginning of each week are taken from hymns, sometimes found in obscure hymnals in my library. They are intended to be read as your beginning prayer, to focus your mind on the daily readings that follow. May this spiritual discipline strengthen you as you face each day.

*Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.— Psalm 143:8*

- 1 Isaiah 40; Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:4
- 2 Matthew 24
- 3 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 4 2 Peter 3
- 5 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 Corinthians 1:18; John 3:16-18

“Thy Kingdom come,” on bended knee the passing ages pray; and faithful souls have yearned to see on earth that Kingdom’s day. And lo! Already on the hills the flags of dawn appear. Gird up your loins, ye prophet souls, proclaim the day is near! The day in whose clear-shining light all wrong shall stand revealed; when justice shall be clothed with might and every hurt be healed; when knowledge, hand in hand with peace, shall walk the earth abroad; the day of perfect righteousness, the promised day of God. (The Hymnbook, #484)

- 6 Luke 1:37-80; 3:1-6
- 7 Matthew 3; 11:1-19
- 8 Mark 6:6b-29; Luke 14:26-27; Matthew 10:17-23
- 9 Isaiah 9:1-7; 11-12; Micah 5:2-5
- 10 Psalm 23; 28:6-9; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 13:1-7; John 10:1-18
- 11 Psalm 46; Psalm 91
- 12 Psalm 143; 121

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free. From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee. Israel’s Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart. Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King. Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious Kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by Thine all-sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne. (The Hymnbook, #151)

- 13 Isaiah 7:13-14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Hebrews 11:6
- 14 Psalm 89
- 15 Hebrews 1-2
- 16 Hebrews 3-5:10
- 17 Hebrews 5:11-7
- 18 Hebrews 8-9
- 19 Hebrews 10

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie; above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light; the hope and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. (The Hymnbook, #171)

- 20 Luke 1:38-56; Psalm 138
- 21 Luke 1:57-80; Joel 2:28-32; Jeremiah 31:27-34
- 22 Romans 10-11
- 23 Romans 12
- 24 Luke 2:1-20; Colossians 1:15-23
- 25 Psalm 47; Colossians 1:24-2:5
- 26 Isaiah 55

Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing, and triumph evermore. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice! His Kingdom cannot fail, He rules o’er earth and heaven. The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice! He all His foes shall quell, shall all our sins destroy, and every bosom swell with pure seraphic joy. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice! (Hymnbook, #140)

- 27 Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Luke 2:21-40
- 28 Luke 2:41-52; Proverbs 3:1-6
- 29 John 1:1-34; Ephesians 1:1-14
- 30 John 3; 5:24; 1 John 3
- 31 Psalm 90; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10



*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (Romans 8:26).*

[illegible]



*Congrats Asusena!*



Please join me in congratulating one of our amazing Caregivers Ms. Asusena Rosas, otherwise known to all the children as “Ms. Suzie”, in the completion of her Master’s Degree this Fall from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Suzie is a First Generation graduate of her family! Suzie has been with First Pres for 5 years as a loving Caregiver to our 4’s thru kinder class and seeks to pursue a career in Childhood Psychology development, concentrating on Children who have sustained trauma. Suzie will stay on as a Caregiver at First Pres while she completes the necessary hours needed to counsel children. Let us all pray for her wisdom and energy. Suzie is a wonderful employee with such a kind spirit, always willing to tackle any task she is given with a smile. We love you Ms. Suzie and can’t wait to see what God does with you in the years to come!!

*Rozlyn Miller*

Ministry Director to Children & Their Families



*First Presbyterian*  
CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO

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