- MESSENGER

NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A HEALING PATH



ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

A PLACE
TO GATHER
AND BE NURTURED

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From the Editor | #ENCOUNTERS

Can you imagine what the Biblical characters in John's Gospel would say and do after encountering Jesus today? Would there be an artsy Instagram of the wine jugs from the Wedding at Cana, #CupRunnethOver? Nicodemus might tweet that God so loved the world, #BornAgain? Perhaps the Woman at the Well would post a selfie, #IsHeTheMessiah? For sure, Mary and Martha would be all over Facebook with the news that Jesus raised their brother from the dead, #HelsAlive. Perhaps Jesus' entry into Jerusalem would be live-streamed or posted on YouTube, #Hosanna.

While the encounters in the Gospel of John happened 2,000 years ago, the personal stories surprise and inspire us still today. The characters are real, relatable people. Their actions and reactions are completely understandable. I can certainly imagine myself saying, "What are you talking about, Jesus?"

What would you do if you encountered Jesus today? While we can't click "Like" or retweet our encounters with Jesus this Lent, we can spread the Good News around Northern Colorado. Pick up a Lenten Card from the church and share it with your neighbor. Forward *The Messenger* online to a friend. Like First Presbyterian Church on Facebook and follow upcoming events. Download the Lenten Study Guide and join a small group—and invite someone along.

The amazing thing is you CAN Encounter Jesus today! Join us at FPC this Lent and spread the news! #HeisRisen

—Cathy Richardson

THEMESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 531 SOUTH COLLEGE AVENUE FORT COLLINS, CO 80524 (970) 482-6107 WWW.FIRSTPRESFC.ORG

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PUBLISHING GUIDELINES | THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via e-mail to crichardson@firstpresfc.org. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



PASTOR'S CORNER

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

—As You Like It, by William Shakespeare

When I returned to the United States after serving as a Young Adult Mission Volunteer overseas, I was invited to share my experience in a number of venues across the church. I quickly discovered that if I reported on the details of my work and the country and context where I was serving, people would nod in appreciation and offer their gratitude for my service. However, if I told personal stories about my struggles and successes, my encounters with other people and how we were all mutually impacted as a result, audiences would suddenly engage in an entirely different way. Instead of just receiving information, people began to reflect on their own lives, their own sense of call and faith journey as they listened to my story.

The truth is that we are wired as social creatures that want to know other people and are drawn to their personal stories. The appeal of a good novel, movie or play is that it draws us into the story so that we identify with one or more of the characters. Some authors write simply to entertain readers, while others write in order to persuade their readers of a particular viewpoint.

This kind of story telling is at the heart of the Gospel of John in our New Testament. John explicitly states his overall purpose in chapter 20, verses 30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." In order to accomplish this purpose John deliberately puts on the stage various characters that interact with Jesus. As we hear the array of responses, we are challenged to evaluate our own stance regarding Jesus and understanding of who Jesus is.

During the season of Lent this year, we are all invited to participate in the stories from the Book of John, complete with narrative and characters from ancient scenes, in a church-wide study called "Encounters with Jesus." We will explore the moments when five different people met Jesus and, as a result, were transformed by the experience. A study guide will be available both in print and online and can be used in Small Group gatherings [its not too late to sign up for one!] as well as your own personal devotional time. These stories from John will also be the theme for worship and the sermon each Sunday from March 5-April 2. On Palm Sunday, April 9, we will hear from each of the five people that Jesus encountered the previous five Sundays as they now watch the palm parade and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Holy Week this year will see the return of our Community Noon Services from Monday—Friday, inviting local pastors to lead us in worship each day. You'll find more information on page 11 of this *Messenger*. Finally, our Easter Sunday services will bring us to a conclusion of the story from John's Gospel, though we hope it is only the beginning of our next story as God's faithful community.

My prayer is that these stories inspire and challenge us – opening our eyes to see Jesus as never before. In the end, may we be reminded that whether you find yourself today in the midst of a valley of shadows or ascending the mountaintops, Jesus meets you right where are, calls you Beloved and accompanies you on the journey today and everyday.

Peace, Pastor Corey

A HEALING PATH

REALITIES FOR CHILDREN THANKS FPC

It seems every day there is another headline of child abuse in the paper. When you read about the terrible stories of neglect, physical and sexual abuse of children in our community, do you find yourself overwhelmed and wishing you could have done something to help these children? In most cases, what you are reading is just the beginning. Long after the headlines, these children continue their journey down the path of healing and recovery from the atrocities of childhood abuse.

Realities For Children Charites has been serving the needs of children that have been abused, neglected or at-risk in Larimer County for over 20 years — providing emergency funding and fortifying the Healing Path to recovery. In an effort to further strengthen the healing process, we have been called to build and provide the Realities For Children Homebase facility and youth activities campus. This 4-acre property hosting nearly ten thousand square feet of space will enhance Realities For Children Charities services by providing a one-stop location for Back To School

Supplies, Warm Winter Clothing, Santa's Toy and Bikes For Tykes distributions. The Homebase facility will help to ensure safety through confidentiality while providing a quality location for the children we serve. It will also provide the grounds necessary for a playground and picnic area to host visitations and special youth activities. This central location between Fort Collins and Loveland will be equally accessible to all 31 Affiliate Youth Agencies county wide to use for their services as needed to further expand our reach and positively impact more lives.

First Presbyterian Church is an important step on this healing path, not only in the year round mission support to help provide all these life changing services, but also in a recent year end gift that will help to see this calling become a reality for children in need in Larimer County.

The walkway to the entry the Realities For Children Homebase facility is paved with engraved bricks from donors like First Presbyterian Church that have helped to build this path of healing for children that have been abused, neglected or are at-risk in Larimer County. To further the power of this wonderful gift we are excited to share that the Richardson Foundation is generously matching every donation made until the goal is met.

Thank you for being part of this amazing and caring congregation that will forever be recognized as a step on the Healing Path. To learn more about the Realities For Children Homebase facility, service programs or to donate a brick on this healing path please visit Realities Homebase.org or call the Realities For Children office, (970)484-9090.

Every child deserves the best possible services along the path of healing from child abuse. The real story is the healing process that comes after the headline. Thank you for being such a valuable 'step' on this healing path of service for children in and families in need.

—Craig Secher



Build a Habitat for Humanity home in the

Dominican Republic JUNE 17-25, 2017

Leaders: Mark and Erika Nossokoff



Cost: \$2,000 per person (discounts/scholarships available)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact (970)229-0936 or ENossokoff@FortCollinsHabitat.org





Potential to visit a Plant with Purpose village that FPC sponsors

THANK YOU FROM MISSION & OUTREACH

THANK YOU, FPC members and friends, for your generous giving in 2016. Because of your faithful support of the operating budget, 10% of which is tithed to Mission, the Missions and Outreach Center (MOC) was able to send every dollar of budgeted support to FPC's mission partners here and abroad. Because of your generosity in December, we were also able to send a little extra to two of our missionary couples, Crossroads, Habitat, Plant with Purpose for their response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, and \$5515.66 to Realities for Children for their new site! (See Realities article on p. 4).

Our congregation's enthusiastic support of the Housing Families initiative, including so many people's participation in the service auction, exceeded our expectations by bringing us to our ambitious faith goal of \$50,000 for the Habitat home for the Bhatti family AND allowing us to provide a playhouse for the playground at the new Realities site AND providing appliances for the kitchens of the Faith Family Hospitality transition house. (See FFH article, p. 6) It's amazing what God has inspired!

—Center for Mission and Outreach



Few would argue that a home's most-used family meeting place is the kitchen/dining area. The area where food is prepared and served attracts all family members to formal or informal togetherness. Throughout Jesus' ministry, he and his disciples were frequently "at table" for meals, where, in togetherness, profound teachings took place.

- "And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples." —Matthew 9:10
- "One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table." —Luke 7:36
- "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it....And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him." —Luke 22:8, 14

For many months, Faith Family Hospitality has been negotiating with the City of Fort Collins to assume ownership of a two-house complex on Sherwood Street that formerly housed Crossroads Safehouse. This will be a "transition house" for families whose road to home ownership is longer than anticipated due to the tight housing market, educational needs, and a variety of other factors. The "Sherwood House" may shelter up to eight families in transition, and renovations have begun!

In large-hearted, generous support of Faith Family Hospitality, Eileen Matthews, through the Matthews Fund at the First Presbyterian Church Foundation, recently gave \$6000. Our congregation, by supporting the Housing Families Service Auction, provided \$2065.75 more. Together, these gifts have provided all funds needed to purchase the ranges, dishwashers, and refrigerators for all three Sherwood House kitchens.

For years to come, this purchase will support FFH's efforts to keep families together by enabling families to prepare meals and "break bread" together. It is our prayer that, through the loving and welcoming care of FFH and FPC members, families will find their way to the source of that care, Jesus who offers this:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." —Revelations 3:20

-Lu Brevard

LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE

A review of *Religious and Ethical Perspectives on Global Migration,* edited by Elizabeth Collier and Charles Strain (2014).

Following Moses are peoples of every race and age, with children on their fathers' shoulders, infants in mothers' arms. Abraham is called by God to leave Ur. Hagar and Ismael are sent into exile. Mary, Joseph and infant Jesus flee into Egypt. Muhammed and followers flee from Mecca to Medina and are strangers in a new land. Early church histories contain many immigration experiences.

As populist sentiment affects government across Europe and in America, do religions offer a perspective on immigration issues?

Immigration is currently a frequent news headline. It factored in the Brexit vote. It is impacting national elections in America and across Europe. It has begun to stir concerns even in the up-till -now welcoming Scandinavian nations. Princeton's Center of Theological

Inquiry has announced its 2017–18 Global Concerns Research Project to be Religion and Migration.

In this new book, five articles give global historical background, including Unauthorized Migration as a Global Phenomenon, Migration and the Global Work Force, and International Law and Forced Global Migration.

Five articles provide religious and ethical perspectives of several religions: Presbyterian, Catholic, Islamic, Buddhist. The first three of those religions speak of significant early history political and economic events which forced their own people to be immigrant travelers.

Finally, six articles address religious and ethical issues on immigration within the United States. One focus of these articles is the Sanctuary Movement that began in 1981 with actions by Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson to assist undocumented Central American refugees, many of whom were dying in attempts to cross the borderland

desert. The Sanctuary Movement persists today, evidenced by a November 19, 2016 Wall Street Journal headline: "Cities Defend Sanctuary Policies." Our Fort Collins Coloradoan ran a November 18 article headlined: "Is Fort Collins A Sanctuary City?"

The USA-focused articles recount the variety of congregational conversations and viewpoints on the issues. Citations of scripture, immigrant experiences among the people of the early church, the rights of migrants, the right of citizens within nations to exercise control of political and economic circumstances... all are mixed in thoughtful reflections. A good summary is provided by the concluding articles: The Claims of Restrictionists and Non-Restrictionists, and Immigration Reform: What Can Religious Voices Require of the State?

Look for this new book in our second-floor Word Source Library.

—Tom Tonoli



A CHURCH OF CHARACTER

TOLERANCE and ENTHUSIASM

The character quality for February is TOLERANCE (versus prejudice). Tolerance can be defined as: "Recognizing and respecting the right of others to their beliefs and practices, without necessarily agreeing with or sharing them". Since persons with differing beliefs and practices are part of everyday life, we have plenty of opportunities to develop and demonstrate tolerance -- friends, relatives, co-workers and others holding different beliefs and practices about the existence of God, the authority of the Bible, absolute truth, cohabitation outside of marriage, homosexuality, abortion, use of profanity, lying and cheating, keeping one's word and carrying out one's responsibilities, respect for authority, greed, selfishness, harshness, courtesy - and on and on. Again, it is important that we think of tolerance as recognizing and respecting the right of others to their beliefs and practices, but without necessarily agreeing with those beliefs or practices. We must not confuse what is right with what is popular in today's society. It is very important to recognize that young people and others today are being given a dramatically different definition of "tolerance". Rather than "to recognize and respect the right of others to their beliefs and practices, without necessarily agreeing with or sharing them", the new definition of tolerance seems to be "to accept every persons beliefs and practices as equal". According to this definition, all beliefs, all values, all lifestyles, all truths -- are equal. All truth is relative to the individual. There are no absolutes - no right and wrong. Unfortunately, this new definition of tolerance is becoming more and more accepted as the "proper" definition of tolerance in America. Many people today have the attitude that if a person states that they think something is right or wrong, that person "is not being tolerant". It is an interesting twist, therefore, that those

who hold to this new definition are actually very intolerant of Christians (and Orthodox Jews) because we believe that there are absolute truths, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ. However, let us hold fast to our Christian standards of right and wrong, remembering the true definition of tolerance, and, when necessary, be prepared to let others know what tolerance really means.

"Never mistake God's tolerance for a sinner as tolerance for sin."

—the Power of True Success: How to Build Character in Your Life

The character quality for March 2017 is ENTHUSIASM (vs. apathy). Enthusiasm can be defined as "Expressing joy in each task as I give it my best effort." It can also be defined as "God's energy in my spirit expressing itself through my mind, will, and emotions."

"Enthusiasm" is a dynamic success quality as well as a very interesting word. It is actually formed from two Greek words: "en" = in, "theos" = god. So enthusiasm literally means "in God". For the Christian believer, this is a very important life message. Whatever we do, if we feel that God is in the task, we want to give everything we have to that task! In fact, it's a Scriptural principle: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might!" — i.e., enthusiasm! (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

But how do we generate enthusiasm?

First, as Christians, we are "indwelt by God", so the first source of energy for a task is simply knowing that God wants you to do it, or knowing that God is in it,

and you will have a tremendous amount of energy to accomplish His will!
Consider Paul's enthusiasm in telling people about Jesus and in writing letters to the new churches.

Second, if you are convinced your cause is just, enthusiasm springs to your aid. Martin Luther King, Jr. persevered against great odds because he knew his cause was just. Consider for a moment, the enthusiasm contained in his "I have a dream" speech! His enthusiasm for what he was doing often landed him in jail, but it also aided him to help our nation actualize the freedom we all hold dear.

Third, if you are convinced that what you are doing will enrich the lives of others, enthusiasm provides the energy needed to get the job done! Thomas Edison knew what the electric light would do for the farms and small towns of America, to say nothing of its business community. Enthusiasm sustained him through his own long nights and hundreds of failures. He got the job done!

A very helpful life maxim is this truth: "The difference between success and failure, as often as not, depends on what you do when you feel like quitting." If you can keep enthusiasm for the task at hand, for your job, for keeping your marriage strong and joyful, you won't quit, and ultimately both you and those around you will be glad that you didn't!

"Maintaining enthusiasm requires continuous fellowship with the Word of God and the Spirit of God."
—the Power of True Success: How to Build Character in Your Life



—Not to give up our bread, but to share it

In Isaiah 58, God issues a call and a challenge—to love one another more deeply by sharing what we have with those in need. One Great Hour of Sharing is our direct response to the ways in which God has called us to share.

With your gift, you...

LOOSE THE BONDS OF INJUSTICE

SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE (SDOP)

You partner in projects like Jobs Not Jails, which has already assisted over 7,000 people with access to jobs and education as they establish new lives after prison, thus reducing the probability of repeat offenses.



SDOP works with grassroots groups to change structures that keep people living in poverty, oppression, and injustice.

SHARE YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY

PRESBYTERIAN HUNGER PROGRAM (PHP)

You engage in sustainable agriculture and water projects as well as initiate and support programs like Joining Hands, Peru, and Earth Care Congregations that creatively work to address long-term care of the earth to end hunger and poverty for the most vulnerable.



 PHP is committed to alleviating hunger and eliminating its causes with long-tem solutions including environmental steward ship, education, and outreach.

BRING THE HOMELESS POOR INTO YOUR HOUSE

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (PDA)

You provide food, shelter, and education to refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria and helped the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon rebuild 40 homes in Homs, Syria, for those who wish to restore the Syria they love.



PDA responds to disasters around the world by providing immediate relief like food, water, and shelter, while helping to rebuild and address long-term recovery

This Lenten season, please give generously to One Great Hour of Sharing, through your congregation or online.

ONE STEP

HELPING OTHERS ONLY TAKES ONE STEP

Do you know that there is only ONE STEP between stepping IN to help somebody, and stepping BACK and choosing not to help somebody? I didn't arrive at that easily. Sure... there are opportunities I do step in to help somebody, and the same is true for all of you, but it's the opportunity I missed to take that step IN to help someone that haunts me today.

Several weeks ago I was in a diagnostic lab for yet another test. After being administered the test. I was led into a small waiting room to await the "results." For any of you that have ever had the experience of awaiting "results," you know it's agonizing. A young woman sat two chairs away from me—a few simple steps away—awaiting her results. Her eyes were fixed on Food Channel repeats on the TV in front of us (put there ,I'm sure, to keep people's minds off of why they are really there). I fixed my eyes there as well—to avoid I suppose having to talk. I mean, I didn't even know her so what would I talk about? I was busy maintaining my own breathing and trying to calm myself. Basically, I was busy taking care of me. After a few minutes, her doctor came whisked her away, and I relaxed a bit more with the room and the waiting all to myself. My doctor, too, came in a few minutes, whisked me away, gave me the good news I was hoping for and sent me on my way.

As I left that center, I ran into this young woman again outside the entry door, dressed in a bright red coat now, with a shiny snowflake pin on her collar and a smile on her face. She stopped me and asked me if I would use her camera and take a picture of her outside this door. Finally, I had something to talk with her about , some small bit of conversation. "You look happy," I said. "You must have received good news."

"I did," she said. "I am cancer free they said—and I'm taking this picture here to put on my blog in Casper Wyoming. I write a blog there and people have been following my journey. My mom died Monday, and I don't get to tell her this, but I have a lot of followers who care."

Those words from her about took me to my knees. I threw my arms around her and wept with her. And then I prayed with her. We took pictures and then I took her to coffee. I was her mother for that brief moment. Why had I not reached out to her in that little waiting room where she must have been terrified? Why had I not taken that one step over to her and held her hand? I would not have even had to say anything—just held her hand. But I didn't. And I will always regret the step back I took in there. I could have prayed with her or put my arm around her. There were so many reasons she needed that, and I missed it. That regret will walk with me.

Some of us miss great opportunities every day to take that one step in. If you don't know where to "take a step in" watch what others are doing. Go outside to the vans some Sunday morning and watch some of our Elders as they are saying goodbye to the van riders. They are stopping, before they close the doors, and praying with them so that they might have a good day. They are taking that one step out of their way to envelope someone else in prayer.

There are many of you doing these things on a regular basis. It goes unnoticed by the busy world. Thank you. Thank you for those one step opportunities you take. You are making a difference in somebody else's life. I believe that I was there that day by God's appointment. I think one of the reasons God puts us in tough situation or allows us to be there is to give us the opportunity to sound forth His praises. I didn't come through though and I grieve for that role I could have played in that young woman's life, and that I didn't sound forth God's praises. Don't miss your opportunity! Something special awaits you. It's just one step in... one step. Go forth and sing God's praises to

—Marge Rice



Hey kids! Get ready for VBS 2017 at First Presbyterian Church Get ready to travel to Rome with Paul and discover what it was like to be one of the very first Christians as the church was just beginning.

Mark your calendars now: June 12–16, 2017, 9:00–11:30 AM

VBS is open to all children ages 3-years-old (entering K in the fall of 2019)–5th grade. Cost is \$20/child, maximum \$50/family.

Registration begins mid-April 2017. Stay tuned!

ENCOUNTERS WITH

Great story-telling is at the heart of the Gospel of John. Join us as we explore the moments when five different people met Jesus Christ and were transformed during their experience. The story of our own lives will be both challenged and inspired by these powerful encounters.

All events are free and open to the public.

SUNDAYS, at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 5:

Encountering Jesus in the Flesh

Sunday, March 12:

Encountering Jesus in the Dark

Sunday, March 19:

Encountering Jesus in our Shame

Sunday, March 26:

Encountering Jesus in our Invisibility

Sunday, April 2:

Encountering Jesus in our Grief

Sunday, April 9:

Palm Sunday Worship

Sunday, April 16:

Easter Sunday Worship

SPECIAL SERVICES AND EVENTS

Monday, April 10:

Community Holy Week Service, 12:00 p.m. led by Rev. Michelle Witherspoon, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Sterling and Moderator for the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks

Tuesday, April 11:

Community Holy Week Service, 12:00 p.m. led by Rev. David Williams, Jr., Pastor of Abyssinian Christian Church

Wednesday, April 12:

Community Holy Week Service, 12:00 p.m. led by Rev. Dary Northrop, Senior Pastor of Timberline Church

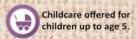
Thursday, April 13:

Community Holy Week Service, 12:00 p.m. led by Rev. Enrique Salazar, Pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church Maundy Thursday Worship, 7:00 p.m.

Friday, April 14:

Community Holy Week Service, 12:00 p.m. led by Rev. Dr. Corey Nelson, Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins

Plus Weekly Small Groups (Find the Encounters with Jesus Small Group Study Guide and class schedules online at firstpresfc.org.





Witherspoon





Northrop





Nelson





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'THE MESSENGER' (U.S.P.S. 562110) is published five times yearly by First Presbyterian Church, 531 South College Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80524. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Collins, CO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to 'THE MESSENGER', First Presbyterian Church, 531 South College Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80524. The publisher of this periodical reserve the right to edit all material submitted.

