

# Ramblings

# from the

# Reverend

Friends,

Every first and third Thursday of the month, at 9:30AM, a group of men gather for a bible study here at the church. We are slowly making our way through the gospel of Mark. These guys – almost all retired (which makes sense because of the time of day) – bring their bibles and their wisdom. Some of them have been part of First Pres for many years, some of them relatively new.

Here are some things that happen in the group, all aspects of why I find this time so meaningful.

- We're focused on Jesus. This isn't just because we are in a gospel, but that certainly makes it easier. It's mostly unspoken but I get the sense that we are all attempting to place ourselves in these accounts, to envision what it must have been to be a disciple in the presence of the miracle-working, teaching, loving Jesus. We're trying to puzzle out the meaning of his parables, just like the original disciples did. We're willing to be as challenged by Jesus as they were.
- One of the benefits of our study is that the sequential nature of it (verse by verse, chapter by chapter) allows us to see the unfolding ministry of Jesus. Stories, miracles, parables, teachings none are taken out of context. We have noticed together not only the developing nature of Jesus's ministry but the growth in understanding of his disciples, and even of the growing hostility of the religious leaders who were threatened by Jesus. Seeing this arc of the accounts is a gift and allows us a deeper empathy with the first disciples.
- We are listening to each other. There is a broadness to the backgrounds of all of us participating. We have a diversity of life experiences, work history, church experiences, and faith experiences. Out of that we genuinely listen to each other. We haven't had a gathering yet where I don't learn something new or hear a perspective that is different than my own. I know that is true of all of us. Even as different guys read out loud, the versions of the bibles that we are reading are different in their own right and so we have to listen to God's word more closely.
- The format reading out loud a story at a time, after which I ask some questions about that passage allows us to react to the scripture in real time. There are other ways of reading scripture alone or in groups which come with an expectation of previous study, but certainly this way works for us. My questions are usually pretty open-ended and because we have grown to trust each other they serve as a good enough prompt to get the conversation rolling.
- Most of the time, our conversation around the passage unfolds in two ways: What did it mean for the folks who were there, and what does it mean for us? Seeing it first from the perspective of the disciples, or the one being healed, or the Pharisee questioning Jesus, makes the application to our own lives deeper, more challenging, and more fulfilling.
- There is a third audience that we have in mind as well. We challenge ourselves to think about how we can invite this way of Jesus, with his grace, his compassion, and his kingdom-of-God values in our interactions with others. Those "others" are our friends in the church, and those we feel called to outside of the church. You cannot bear witness to the life of Jesus without thinking about what Jesus can mean to them.

There is nothing about this that is new or "cutting edge." What we are experiencing is something that many of you have experienced along the way – opening up God's word in the presence of each other and allowing the Holy Spirit to collectively guide you as you come closer to Jesus and each other. I'm grateful for these men and this time!

Blessings – John Sowers

PS: This is an open group. So if any of you guys would like to join us, we'd love to have you...

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# FPC Intergenerational Events





Sunday, May 12 Spring is here!

Join us after worship for intergenerational fellowship.

We'll enjoy coffee & treats ... hopefully on the east lawn.



# FPC Night at the Ballpark Thursday, June 20 Tickets: \$6 per seat

We'll sit together in bench seats. Get the link to tickets in FirstWord. Gates open at 5:30. Game starts at 6:30.

This is a "Dollars in Your Dog Night."

### Financial Update: March 2024

- Pledge income was \$25786 favorable to budget.
- Non-pledge income is \$12505 unfavorable to budget.
- The expenses were \$18303 unfavorable to budget.
- Church operations is \$452 favorable to budget.

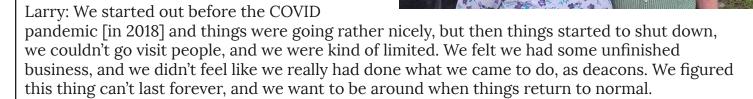
Church Only	YTD Actuals	YTD Budget
Pledge Income	348,410	322,624
Non-pledge Income	44,245	56,750
Other Income	36,249	30,775
Total Income*	428,904	410,149
Total Expenses	476,005	457,702
Income over (under) Expenses	(47,101)	(47,553)

# Congregational Care

### Deacons: Larry & Carole Mann

In early June, we will ordain a new class of elders and deacons for servant leadership at FPC. One couple who has served as deacons for 6 years in a row will finish their term—Larry and Carole Mann. They talked with Betsy about their time in that role.

# What led you to sign on for another 3 years after your first term as Deacons had finished?



Carole: It still hasn't completely, but it's better!

#### What has been the most satisfying part about serving as deacons?

C: Getting to know more people in the church! Getting to know the other deacons, everyone in church really. Building relationships.

L: It feels like I can walk around church and see all kinds of people we know, say hi and call them by name. We feel like we're more part of the church than we did before.

# What lessons have you learned about faith, about God, or about yourselves, during your time as deacons?

C: I learned where I'm strong and where I'm not. I learned that the more you learn, the more you learn you don't know. I've learned what I need to do to build my faith. Also we learned a lot about prayer! We prayed before every meeting [with a care recipient]: Lord, help me to listen, help me to really hear what they're asking for, what they need, and please don't let me do anything stupid! [laughs]

L: Serving communion was quite meaningful to me. I like doing it with care recipients but also in church, and that's deepened my faith too.

#### If you could encourage our church in one thing, what would it be?

C: To trust one another and love each other and not be afraid to ask for prayer. We can trust that the deacons aren't going to blab it all over the place. We take that very seriously, we don't make fun of anybody or take people's prayers lightly, no matter what it is.

L: One thing I like about our church is it's multi-generational. We need to talk to each other, continue to focus on getting to know each other. Our church should be a family.

#### What would you want our church to know about the deacons who serve them?

L: We would want younger people to know that the deacons can help them too!

C: We learn as much from [those we serve] as they do from us! As much as we try to help people, being with them helps us too.

C: I think we've both grown, I can definitely see it in Larry, but I feel different. I feel good. I feel full, my heart feels full!

Thank you Larry and Carole, for your 6 years of service as Deacons at FPC.



Thank you to Steve Baird, Cynthia Geraghty, Shirley Vines and Andy Wick who are also finishing their 3-year term as Deacons this June. You have been a blessing to our church in this post-pandemic season!

# **Bethany Grenfell Ordination**



Some of you may remember Bethany from her time at FPC as a Whitworth student, an active member, a Shift intern, and one of our Candidates for Ministry under our care. In the last several years Bethany has completed her Masters of Divinity degree at Fuller Seminary, joined the Air Force Reserves where she is training to become a chaplain, gotten married to Harry and relocated to the Wenatchee area. On April 27th, she was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and finally became a fully fledged pastor. Congratulations Bethany!

Greetings can be sent to her at her new work place, the Wenatchee Rescue Mission, 1450 S. Wenatchee Ave, Wenatchee WA 98801, where she is serving as a chaplain. Between the Mission, helping out at a local Methodist church, and serving in the Air Force Reserves, she is busy but thriving as she serves people. She writes, "I am passionate about journeying with others in the messiness of life and I believe that Jesus is with us in the midst of it all."

We are so proud of Bethany and pray for every blessing on her continued ministry.

# **FPC Congregation Member Memorials**



Gary Plowman's memorial service will be held in the FPC Sanctuary at 10am on Saturday, May 18th.

Charlotte Glouser's memorial service we will held in the Fireside Room at 2pm on Saturday, May 18th.

# LAUNCH PAD

### NEW SERIES - ONE SMALL STEP

Astronaut Neil Armstrong once said landing on the moon was "one small step for man." The biggest adventures start in such a simple way — especially when it comes to space! Asteroids, distant planets, and brand-new galaxies await us once we leave earth's atmosphere. Being the first to explore such uncharted territory can be intimidating. In this four-week series, we'll take a look at the Book of Acts to learn from the first Christians. Through their stories of faith and bravery, kids will learn how to take the first step



of believing in Jesus, the next step of praying for others, and an even bigger and brave step of trusting the Holy Spirit. But they won't want to skip the last step of telling others about Jesus.

#### DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Join us for a day of mystery. That's right. You'll sign up and have no idea what surprises are in store for you during an afternoon of adventure! Of course parents can know, but it'll be a complete unknown for kids! Just know it will be something you won't want to miss out on!

Once registered, you'll be sent some details on what to bring for the day. Also, parents can reach out to Ryan at ryans@spokanefpc.org for the details of the day (you just have to promise to keep it a secret!).

#### **ELEMENTARY NIGHTS**

Calling all Elementary kids! Get ready for a new way to experience VBS! We'll be having three awesome opportunities over the course of the Summer to get together, sing with one another, play some crazy games and learn more about God's story and how we fit into it! Each night will have a unique theme from space exploration to Christmas in July and competing in some Olympic-sized games, there will be no shortage of fun together!





#### FAMILY VBS

We are super excited to offer something BRAND NEW for families this summer! Introducing... Family VBS! Instead of the old-school church way of having separate activities for kids and adults, this is an opportunity for the whole family to eat together, worship together, play together, serve together, and engage in God's story together. We'll be having all sorts of fun thinking about what it means to be in the family of God. If you have kids (or grandkids!) age 0-18, we've designed this for YOU – and we'd love to have you join us!

JULY 25-28
COST: \$50/FAMILY

THIS YEAR, VBS IS FOR THE WHOLE
FAMILY! JOIN US IN THE EVENINGS
(S:30-7:30DPM) ON JULY 25, 26 AND
27, AND AFTER CHURCH ON JULY
28 FOR A FUN-FILLED FAMILY VBS
SUMMER CAMP!

REGISTER YOUR
FAMILY ONLINE
TODAY!

Family VBS will take place on the evenings of July 25, 26, and 27 from 5:30-7:30pm, and will wrap up on Sunday morning with worship and a VBS party after church on July 28. It's going to be a wonderful weekend celebrating what it means to be the Church!

Questions? Email Ryan at ryans@spokanefpc.org. You can also register your family online today!



### The Gospel According to John taught by Bruce Gore

May 5, 19 & 26 and June 2 in the Sanctuary

### TED Talk & Intergenerational Conversation led by Brad & the Initiative 3 Team

#### May 19 in the Fireside Room

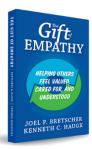
We'll watch the 11-minute TED Talk then have some conversation.

About the TED Talk: The Silent Generation, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, Gen Z -- we're all in this together. How are our assumptions about each other holding us back from working and communicating better? Social psychologist Leah Georges shows how we're more similar than different and offers helpful tactics for navigating the multigenerational environment.

### The Gift of Empathy ... led by Betsy and our Stephen Ministers

#### May 19 and June 2 in Room 210

Empathy is a necessary skill for Christians who wish to love others! We can all get better at expressing empathy to our neighbors, families, in the workplace, or with strangers. Join us to learn about empathy and practice together over these 2 sessions.



# Serve.

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." — John 1:14, The Message

# Family Promise of Spokane

For over 25 years, Family Promise of Spokane (FPS) has embodied the love of Jesus by **walking alongside families experiencing housing instability and homelessness.** We operate low-barrier, trauma-informed, holistic housing services to families with minor child(ren) and pregnant parents. We provide individually tailored support services that not only meet children's and families' basic needs but foster a stronger, more resilient community and a renewed sense of purpose for those we serve. FPS has developed a proven model and is Spokane's leading agency in preventing and permanently ending family homelessness. In 2023, FPS rehoused over 100 families!

#### Also, in 2024, FPS has the following goals:

- 1. At Least 300 family households are prevented from eviction and homelessness through financial assistance and case management support.
- 2. At least 250 families receive emergency housing services.
- 3. Over 50 percent of emergency shelter guests move into permanent housing.
- 4. At least 90 percent of families who moved into apartment housing will maintain stable housing for one year after accessing FPS's emergency shelters.

#### **How can First Presbyterian Partner with Family Promise in 2024?**

- 1. In 2024, FPS is forming a Community Volunteer Response team to support newly housed families in meeting their needs and integrating into the community. This team will assist with activities like helping families move into their homes, acquiring household items, and helping them establish community connections. We are in need of volunteers for this program, and if anyone is interested, please contact Tricia Dunlap at 509.850.5223.
- 2. Members from the congregation could host a supply drive to collect goods and items like diapers, wipes, baby food, and welcome home kits. If members are interested in hosting a supply drive, a list of needed items can be found on our website here under the 'Get Involved- Goods and Items' tab. Interested in spearheading a drive? Contact Brad!
- 3. FPS is always looking for individuals to understand and advocate for the work we do. We host regular Come and See events, which are an opportunity for community members to learn about the work we do and how individuals can make a difference. If anyone from the congregation is interested in learning more about the issues surrounding homelessness, they are welcome to join one of our events and can sign up at our website here under the 'Events-Come and See' tab.
- 4. Members of the Church can pray for the families we serve and our staff.
  Also, they can leave encouraging messages on our website under the 'Get Involved- Contact' tab.



For more general information about Family Promise of Spokane go to their website, www.familypromiseofspokane.org.

# Gretchen James Kenyan Mission

Gretchen James (who is part of our FPC community along with her daughters) & David Opap have been called to the mission field in Kenya to provide love, medicine, toothbrushes, glasses, and soccer balls to those living in the villages surrounding the area David grew up in without clean water. The 24-person team is made up of six medical providers, a pharmacist, nurse, and others including a concert violinist and six amazing teens joining a group of Kenyan nurses and translators.

#### From Gretchen:

I have a heart for missions. My first trip to Mexicali, Mexico during high school Spring Break; to the medical trips I have taken to Haiti, Guatemala, Brazil, Ethiopia and my most recent trip with Fellowship of Christian Athletes to Peru with my late husband. This medical trip to Kenya with David Opap of Spring of Hope International has been a two-year work in progress. David is celebrating the 20th year of taking non-medical teams to the village where he grew up without clean water; which is now blessed with many public health improvements in many surrounding villages. We hope to provide de-worming medication, tooth brushes, and soccer balls to all of the 40 schools SOHI supports, and treat a few thousand patients during our clinic days. The biggest challenge has been, and will be, obtaining all the supplies and medications we plan to disseminate during the trip.

Our team includes 24 Americans and 10 Kenyan Nurses and Translators. I am excited to share missions with my 16 year old daughters. Furthermore, I am blessed that my nephew who is applying to medical school will be joining us with his father, my brother. We have six medical providers from all over the US and our pharmacist is my sister. It is a dream come true and a prayer I never dared to pray, that I will watch how God transforms the lives of six of my family members going on their first mission trip.

Often, we go with the mindset that we will help others, but the reality is the experience changes us and shapes our lives in ways that cannot be measured. I am most excited to watch that unfold for my daughters, Sophia and Olivia on their first mission trip. One story in my life stands out. In Haiti, on my first medical trip, God spoke to me that I was to be a medical provider, not a science professor and I would be a mother. In Haiti, I delivered a baby, which was amazing ... and I knew my gift was medicine. I flew home, filled out an application to PA school the next weekend, turned it in late, and started several months later.

On the last day of clinic, a mid-wife brought a laboring mother to us to help with her delivery because she was not progressing. Ultimately, I monitored the mother on Pitocin, caught the slippery baby, and was given the privilege of cutting the cord while the mid-wife who had delivered hundreds of babies watched. We never spoke a word, but much more transpired than I knew. Later, I learned she was a witch doctor, and it was a big deal that she brought a laboring mother to us and sat in clinic all day. I knew she experienced the love of God that day and compassion in Christ. I left Haiti with that story as the starting point for my career and my desire to be a mother deepened! Ten years later I returned to Haiti while in the middle of infertility treatment. I was blessed by the presence of that beautiful witch doctor who gave her life to Christ after being in our clinic watching me love and care for a struggling mother in labor. She was my patient now and I was stunned to learn that God had worked through me to bring this woman to Him. At that moment I knew





#### Donations:

- Prescription glasses
- Reading glasses
- Sunglasses
- Soccer Balls& pumps
- Toothbrushes

# Over the Counter Medication Needs:

- Tvlenol
- Ibuprofen,
- Benadryl
- Vitamins
- Prenatal Vitamins,
- Omeprazole
- Hydrocortisone, etc.

All medication must be unopened and not expired.

that God would bless me with a child and that His work is done in His time. I learned that I could be an Evangelist through love and compassion, my gifts... It took another two years before God blessed me with not one child but two beautiful daughters.

We would love the help and generosity of FPC to help collect donations for us to take to those in need in Kenya this summer. Please bring any of the listed items to the donation bin at church by May 27th.

### First Pres Christian School

#### Flower Basket Fundraiser

Our annual flower basket fundraiser is here! Bring spring joy to the flower lovers in your life while raising money for your favorite school. You can:

- Brighten your front or back porch.
- Celebrate the moms, grandmas, and beloved mother figures in your life on Mother's Day.
- Thank a teacher for a wonderful school year.
- Lure those hummingbirds to your yard for the growing season.
- Remind yourself that summer is indeed coming... and soon!

Each large, beautiful flower basket costs \$38.00. Please order by Sunday, May 5th. They will be available to pick up on Monday, May 6th between 9:30am - 12pm out in the main (north) parking lot at First Presbyterian Church.

We may have additional flower pots to choose from at the pick-up time (at \$40 each), BUT ONLY IF they have not all been reserved by people who have pre-ordered. Reserve the number of baskets you want today!

#### Registration

Do you know a child who would thrive in a smaller classroom with loving, experienced teachers? Have

you wondered what it would be like to be part of a learning community that supports and loves your family while sharing the love of Christ? Join us for the 2024-2025 academic school year! We are now enrolling students ages 3 through 4th grade. We are especially excited to announce the addition of a half-day kindergarten class – perfect for those sweet incoming kindergarteners who are still growing into their big school experience. Join us!







<-- Please sign up





SPRING 2024



- 5/7 SHIFT 6:30-8:30
- 5/14 SHIFT 6:30-8:30
- 5/17-18 OPERATION:AGAPE
- 5/21 CELEBRATION NIGHT 6:30-8:30
- 5/28 ART IN THE PARK 6:30-8:30 (MEET AT THE CHURCH)



- 509-844-2579
- @shiftjrhi
- keziar@spokanefpc.org



- o 6/4 Ice Blocking Night 6:30-8:30
- 6/11 FINAL SHIFT! 6:30-8:30







### **SHIFT April Happenings**

#### **OPERATION: AGAPE**

Agape is Greek for "unconditional or sacrificial love." More importantly, it's the kind of love God has for all of us. In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us the greatest commandment is to love the Lord God with all our hearts/strength/mind/spirit and to also love our neighbor as ourselves! So what does it look like to love our neighbors? Who is our neighbor? How can we show love to our neighbors in not just a superficial way, but in an Agape way? This Spring will be dedicated to learning, understanding, and serving God and our neighbors, all culminating in Operation:Agape. May17th-18th will be a weekend all about showing Christlike love to God's people near, far, and farthest! The best part? Shifters are in control of the narrative! We decide together how to show Agape to our neighbors!

#### **ART IN THE PARK**

This is a night all about celebrating God's creation in our community! We'll meet at the church, then carpool down to riverfront park to decorate the pavement with beautiful art and warm encouragements!

# Praxis Spring Calendar 2024





**APRIL 3 NO PRAXIS - SPRING BREAK** 



**APRIL 10** PRAXIS IS BACK! 7-9 PM



APRIL 17 **SPAGHETTI DINNER 7-9 PM** 



**D-GROUPS IN HOMES APRIL 24** 



MAY 1

PRAXIS 7-9 PM



MAY 8

PRAXIS 7-9 PM WESTPORT APPLICATIONS DUE



**MAY 15** 

LAST PRAXIS OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

**MAY 22** 

**SENIOR NIGHT** 





STAY TUNED FOR SUMMER PRAXIS DATES!

QUESTIONS? CONTACT LYDIA (LYDIAP@SPOKANEFPC.ORG // 619-458-5304)

## **YOUNG ADULTS: COFFEE WITH JOURDAN!**

Schedule coffee with Jourdan by going to calendly.com/revitc or using the QR code.

You choose when and where and Jourdan will meet you and treat you.





# Coming Up

May 6 Flower Basket Pick Up

May 9 Can I Ask That?

May 12 The Gathering

May 17 Film & Theology

May 19 Destination Unknown

May 23 FPC's Got Talent

June 2 Encore Gathering

June 20 FPC at the Ballpark

#### **Contacts**

(509) 747-1058

**Deacon Prayer Line: 747-1050** 

#### **Pastoral Team**

John Sowers (250)

Betsy Wynne (253)

Administration

Stephanie Coy (244)

Worship/Music

Derrick Parker (307

Finance

Ella Makarov (242)

**FPC Christian School** 

Tracy Blue & Shawna Harris (120)

**Family Ministries** 

Ryan Schmall (163)

**Launch Kids Coordinator** 

Valli Downey

**Childcare/Nursery** 

Ryan Childers (164)

**Family Ministries Admin.** 

Melissa Condon

**High School Ministries** 

Lvdia Halma (161)

**Middle School Ministries** 

Kezia Rhodes (173)

**Intergenerational Ministries** 

Brad Hauge (252)

**Young Adult Ministries** 

Jourdan Cornell

**Adult Ministries** 

Brenda Norton (243)

**Newcomers Ministry** 

Sue Reidt (241)

**Communications** 

April Egly (245)

**Barton English Language School** 

Becky Rempe (212)

#### **Office Hours**

M-Th 8:30am-4pm and Fridays 8:30am-1pm

**Sunday Worship Services** 

Online and In-person Sundays at 10am

