

FPCC 2018 Leadership Retreat



San Damiano Retreat - Danville

Each year in January your Elders and Deacons attend a weekend retreat. This year's retreat, as in past years, was held at San Damiano Retreat, a beautiful hilltop retreat in the hills above Danville. The purpose of these retreats is to celebrate the past year and prepare church leadership for the upcoming year. It is also a time where the Deacons and Elders come together for spiritual renewal and spiritual growth.

This year the Leadership Retreat was held January 19-21, (Friday evening through Sunday noon). Pastor Toby moderated, and our guest speaker was Reverend Dan Prout, president of Sierra Ministries International, a teaching and healing ministry headquartered in Grass Valley. Pastor Dan's two main topics on leadership were "The 7 Prayer Principles for Leadership: How Jesus Did It" and "Leadership: How Moses Did It".

Pastor Dan's interactive and personal style of teaching gave us many new and relevant insights taken directly from scripture. On the first topic regarding Jesus' teachings on prayer we learned that Jesus' approach to prayer began with praising God for who He is and giving thanks to Him for all things. We noted that Jesus' prayers were frequent and often done alone in a quiet place. Jesus always sought the will of his Father. He made a point of praying in times of anguish and need, seeking strength and guidance from God. Regarding our own prayer, we found that Jesus teaches us that we need to acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness, thereby allowing our hearts and bodies to be cleansed.

In the second topic regarding how Moses exhibited leadership, we learned the importance of leading by example. We also learned how God chooses leaders, and that they may not always seem to be up to the task, but God gives them strength and even altering

circumstances to ensure that His will is done. Leaders need to acknowledge God's power and fully rely on Him, while acknowledging their own weaknesses. Importantly, leaders must be teachable and also be encouragers of others.

Other highlights of the Retreat this year included the following:

- Beth Byrne's spirited direction of the group singing and piano accompaniment
- Rebecca Chase's direction of several group experiences throughout the conference that led to deep and personal sharing in small groups
- Remarkable prayer experiences and gaining assurance God heard those prayers and will empower us to do His will in our church
- Quality time for Elders and Deacons to interact with each other, to mutually share spiritual experiences, and to jointly address the goals and issues of our church in unity

We feel that this special weekend definitely left us spiritually renewed. Thanks to everyone who participated and to those who helped in various ways to make the 2018 Leadership Retreat one of the best ever. A special thanks goes to Pastor Toby, who planned the program and invited Pastor Dan to inspire and enlighten the leadership of our church through God's Word.

See the list of current Elders, Deacons and Trustees on Page 2



Music and Worship Report

by Andrew Cardiasmenos

I thoroughly enjoyed my first Christmas concert season at First Pres featuring soprano soloist Taylor Haines and other guest musicians on tenor, percussion, and flute. The choir did a marvelous job tackling challenging music in a variety of styles, and all their hard work paid off. A couple weeks later, Christmas Eve was a very moving service, and you could feel the love of Jesus throughout the sanctuary.

As we approach the Lenten season, which begins on February 14th (Ash Wednesday), we are called to pray, reflect, and meditate as we devote our lives to God. We are reminded of God's grace and love as we anticipate Jesus' passion on the cross to save us, and look forward to his glorious resurrection. Along these lines, some upcoming themes in worship include love, mercy, sacrifice, and forgiveness of sins. Hymns, praise songs, and anthems play an important role in setting a contemplative tone throughout Lent and a mournful tone in Holy Week. I encourage you to allow the music of the choir

and other worship leaders to influence and shape your Lenten journey. The choir will lead worship and sing a very moving anthem on Maundy Thursday (March 29th) – we really hope you will share the experience with us! Finally, stay tuned for triumphant Easter music accompanied by guest brass musicians!

Goals for the upcoming months include incorporating different arrangements of the Doxology, teaching new contemporary hymns, composing music, and

strengthening the size of the choir. I encourage anyone who has an interest in singing and glorifying God to join! It has truly been a joy and a blessing working with accompanist Beth Byrne while Susan Soehner has been recovering from her shoulder surgery. Susan's health is gradually improving and we're hoping she'll be back with us very soon!

I am excited to continue working with everyone at First Pres!

Andrew ✠

Deacons

by Wayne Matsen, Deacon Moderator

Returning from the Session/Deacon retreat, the Deacons are energized and looking forward to serving God and his people in Concord and surrounding areas in 2018. Be aware that we have restructured some of the Parishes and have some new Deacons (see below) so please be patient as your assigned Deacon gets organized for the year.

We ask you to help us minister to new faces you may see in worship. Share with them about yourself and your experience with First Pres, and invite them to join you for coffee after the service. Introduce them to an Elder or Deacon or another friend of yours. One of the things I love about the church is the friendly caring community and love that I receive from each of you. Please continue to show this not only on Sunday mornings, but to everyone you come into contact with during the week, so that others may know our faith not only by what we say but by what we do.

Pray for all of the leadership group and especially the Pastor Nominating Committee. ✠

FPCC Staff

Rev. Dr. Toby Nelson	Interim Pastor & Head of Staff
Andrew Cardiasmenos	Director of Music & Worship
Rebecca Chase	Director of Community Care
Lisa Gonzalez	Administrative Coordinator
Ann Keirns	Admin to the Pastor & Elders
Susan Soehner	Organist
Harold Lund	Custodian & Night Watchman

Current Elders, Deacons and Trustees

Elders

Matt Chapman
Vern Hance
Ann Johnson
Ann Keirns
Susan Koester
Jon Myers
Ron Potts
David Stearns
Marilyn Wollenweber

Deacons

Beth Byrne
Kaffy Cecil
Phyllis Graser
Carol Hance
Wayne Matzen
Bev McHale
Diane Nickerson
Nancy Sansom
Carrie Smith
Diana Stearns

Trustees

Frank Fribley
Allen Nickerson
Bill Selb
Vern Hance

Sunday Time Change Experiment – Starting April 1

Starting on Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018, we will begin an experiment of starting Sunday mornings 30 minutes later, with Worship beginning at 10:00am and Sunday School completing at 12:30pm.

Over the past six months, Session has received feedback from the congregation about FPCC's Sunday morning schedule. New families with young children are beginning to join us for worship, although some are not yet attending consistently. At the same time, a few of our seniors have shared with us that they are increasingly finding it difficult to get to church by 9:30 am Sunday morning. Each individual and family is a cherished part of our church family and an important part of our Community.

This congregational input was discussed by our Elders, Deacons,

and staff at the January 19-21 Leadership Retreat. The leaders explored our current and alternative schedules for Sunday worship, fellowship, and Sunday School – including the advantages and disadvantages of each. The overwhelming majority felt starting our Sunday morning activities (choir practice, worship, fellowship, and education hour) 30 minutes later will allow FPCC to reach out to those around us and minister to our Community more effectively. This is consistent with the Vision Statement in our 2017 Mission Study: *"As a community hub, connect with the needs of people, joyfully sharing Jesus and serving where God calls"*.

Accordingly, at the January Session meeting held at the end of the retreat, Session decided on an experiment to attract and encourage families with young

children to join us in worship, and to make it a little easier for some older folks. We did this in large part because we very much value their fellowship with us and want to make it a little easier for our congregation to worship together as a church family. This five-month experiment will start on Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018, with our worship service starting at 10:00 am, and the fellowship time starting at 11:00 am. There is no Sunday School hour scheduled for Easter Sunday. In the weeks following Easter, worship will again start at 10:00 am, with our fellowship time from 11:00 to 11:30 am, and our Sunday School hour starting at 11:30 am. At the end of August, we will evaluate the experiment to determine if it has been fruitful and whether it should be continued.

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Sound System Update

by Darryl McCollum

Many of you may have noticed that our sound system has been experiencing issues the past few months. Teeth grinding feedback, mysterious loss of volume, improper operation of T-Coil loop, weird ringing, hums, and noise have all plagued the system. We have attempted to correct issues as they arise, but the reality of the situation is that the sound system was installed 20 years ago and has been failing piece by piece for a couple of years. The past two directors of worship and music, Jim and Paul, each commented on the need to replace the system during their tenure, but with our

unsure future during discernment, no action was taken, and Paul was unable to complete the process of upgrading the sanctuary prior to his departure.

The Flock has been trying to help with the use of their sound system to bridge the gap, but the reality is that a band's small venue PA is not designed to handle this kind of building and make our worship as inspirational as it can be. In fact, the failing sound system has become a distraction to worship. The good news is Session has approved worship and music to take bids for a new sound system.

The current system installed in 1998 cost \$40,000. Like all technology, costs have come down and capability has gotten better in the past 20 years. We are currently looking at a cost of about \$25,000 to revamp and upgrade the system. Bids are being taken to get the best bang for our buck, and we hope to be able to replace the system in early spring. Depending on the total cost, a Capital Campaign may not be out of the question to help fund the new system. Please prayerfully consider whether you may be able to help should a capital campaign be initiated. God Bless. †

From the Desk of Rebecca Chase

Director of Community Care

Small Groups

Small Groups are up and running! Facilitators, snack-providers, pray-ers, hosts, etc. are providing valuable pieces to the group experience. Many many thanks to each of you.



Listen, Love, Repeat, by Karen Ehman is a six-week Small Group video curriculum that I hope extends out to our greater community action plan (and Mission of FPCC) of Love God, Love Others, Serve. We will be having a final session all together on the morning of Saturday, February 24th at 9:00 am. Attenders will create care packages for some of our less mobile friends or community members.

If you heard about the book and didn't join a group, I may have an extra. Come find me.

The Elders and Deacons had a pretty powerful small group experience during the Leadership Retreat. We were reminded of how important it is to have a group of people around us encouraging us, praying for us, and most importantly LISTENING to us. The love we find and share in a small group cannot be overstated!

If you would like to start or join a group, let me know! I have all sorts of helpful tools and trainings available to get a group going.

Don't be shy! If you:

- H** – Have a Heart for people
- O** – Can Open your home (or a café or ...)
- S** – Can Share some Snacks
- T** – Can Turn on a DVD player or video

... then you can HOST a small group! Next series starts **during LENT!** **Make sure to join one if you do not lead one!**

Adult Education

On February 18th Kristin Harvey will be wrapping up her current series of classes based on the book *You Lost Me*.

There will be no class on February 25th due to the Annual meeting.

After we wrap up the 6-week study with Kristin Harvey based on the book *You Lost Me*, we'll be looking at how to follow up. How do we reach out to folks we'd like to share the Good News with, like our younger family members and their friends? How do we prepare our congregation to receive a new pastor into a growing community of faith, reversing our shrinking numbers? Churchless people are all around us -- among our closest loved ones, at our workplaces, in our neighborhoods. And more and more, they are becoming the norm. The number of churchless adults in the US has grown by nearly one-third in the past decade. Yet the startling truth is that many of these people claim they are *looking* for a genuine, powerful encounter with God—but

they just don't find it *in church*. What are they (or we) missing? How can we better reach out to them? What can we say or do that would inspire them to want to join a community of faith? Beginning March 4th and continuing through Palm Sunday, Ann Keirns leads this Sunday School adventure: March 4, What's next?; March 11 – Reaching the Skeptics (Atheists & Agnostics); March 18th – Faith, Future Tense (Unchurched Adults are seeking...); March 25th – Why Churches Matter (Advocating for Church in Post-Christian Culture).

Children's Worship & Education

The Children's Ministry Team held a Christmas Event in the Sunday School rooms on Saturday December 16th, 2017. Thirteen children and several adult helpers walked through a progressive story of Jesus' birth. In each room, children heard a piece of the story and collected a representative item or ornament. We created paper plate angels, "painted" frosted cookies, and decorated wrapping paper. We wrapped 19 books to donate to the Interfaith Shelter families. The children enjoyed hunting down pieces of the Nativity scene hidden downstairs; the crèche came together perfectly! Of course, we feasted: pizza, grapes, and carrots. It was a lively and successful event! Big thanks go to members of the Children's Ministry Team for organizing – **Nanci Powers, Carrie Smith, Marilyn Wollenweber, and Robin Stearns.**

Please save Saturday, March 31st 2018 on your calendar for our Spring (Easter) Event, expected to

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Rebecca Chase (cont.)

be from 10:00am to 1:00pm. Plans are coming together! Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 7th at 6:30pm in the office workroom. Initial summer plans will be discussed, too. Come with your ideas!

The Children's Worship Team has been leading the preschool and young elementary children in lessons about Jesus' miracles from January 14th through February 4th. The theme is "Jesus can do anything!" From February 11th through March 4th, the children will learn the story about Zacchaeus, and what Jesus wants us to learn.

The Nursery is always ready for new little guests. Lynn Justice is seeking warm arms and sharp eyes to help with the tiniest ones in our congregation. Talk to her or to me about dedicating an hour a month to the ministry of babies and toddlers!

We have created a little kid space in the Sanctuary! A pew was

removed, and soft carpet put down. Baskets under the pew have coloring materials, books for looking at, and soft toys for the children who aren't ready to leave the sanctuary (or mom!) yet. Please join me in welcoming new families who find a spot there.

Prayer and Healing

Robin Stearns took some of her preschool Christmas vacation time to go through the Prayer Room and clear it of items that were not appropriate for a prayer room. If you have wall-hangings you think might be appropriate to encourage a soothing and meditative atmosphere, talk to either her or myself.

We are looking for Prayer Team members who can donate time in the Prayer Room on a Sunday morning to pray with those in need. Contact Robin or myself.

Don't forget about our MONTHLY Prayer Walk on the THIRD Saturday of the month. Non-

walkers also welcome in the chapel. Come at 9:30am for refreshment and prayer!

Please get in touch with your Deacon if you are heading to the hospital, need prayer, need communion, or want to keep your church family updated on anything. Your Deacon is such a wonderful resource! If you don't know who your Deacon is, please call Ann Keirns in the office, or Wayne Matzen, Deacon Moderator.

Equipping God's Church – Where's YOUR "sweet spot"?

I am working with the many ministry teams and elders to create a central resource of ministry opportunities. I will also be working with YOU to discover your gifts, dreams, burdens and joys. For all ministers of God, there is a sweet spot where you feel your heart is full when you serve there. I am eager to find your spot on God's ministry path! See Romans 12: 4-8. ✝

Missions

From the Great Commission Team

Introducing our New Mission

FPCC is now partnering with Caroline Kurtz who grew up in the Maji district of Ethiopia because her father was a missionary there. Maji is eighty miles from the national electric grid and not scheduled to be added to the grid anytime soon. The answer to this problem is to bring solar power there. So Caroline has started a project, MaDeCo, Maji Development Coalition, Community emPOWERment in Ethiopia, which the Great Commission Team voted to start supporting in 2018. We supported Caroline for many years when she was with Frontier Fellowship. Several years



after her husband's death, she was called to this exciting new ministry.

Caroline is working with members from the church her father helped start and a coalition of women to bring solar powered electricity to Maji. Her starting goal is three hundred homes and the medical

clinic. Medical teams must use flashlights for babies born at night, sometimes holding the flashlights in their mouths when both hands are needed. In response to that need, Caroline found a provider for a 50 watt unit, which was installed in September 2017.

But there are other problems. Classrooms are so dark, students cannot see to write in their notebooks in the rainy season. Women have to tend to a sick child by candlelight. Bringing light to these dark areas at night can make a difference between surviving and thriving. The

Continued Page 6

Missions (cont.)

Coalition will be working with the first woman Branch Office Development Director to bring about change.

Caroline writes this has been a year of tremendous growth for her as she has learned from her meetings with experts on Ethiopian business and laws, solar technicians, non-profit organizations, and interacting with possible donors. She is gratified by how many doors God has opened for her. We hope Caroline will be able to visit us this year. We would hear how we can become part of shining light and His light in the darkness. Contact: **Susan Lawson**, 285-4430.

New Ministry for Winter Nights Homeless Family Shelter

Recognizing a need, Winter Nights is trial-testing a Parking Lot Ministry. It was noticed that some of the families on the WN waiting list are sleeping in their cars. A church in Pittsburg is providing parking in their lot with a watchperson on duty overnight and access to facilities in the host church during January and

February. The families will also be able to use the shower and laundry facilities at the Oasis Center, associated with St Vincent de Paul, during the day. The host church provides a light breakfast: fruit, juice boxes, granola or breakfast bars. If the program is successful, Winter Nights plans to extend it during the 2018-19 season.

If you would like to help with a donation of food or money during the month of February, please see a Great Commission Team Member. Contact: **Maren Stanczak**, 408-5930.

Watch for details on these Upcoming Events!

Service Worship Day is changing. Its new name is Community Service Day and will be on a Saturday. The congregation will have the opportunity to choose a service project. We will have, at minimum, one local indoor non-physical activity and one physical activity. Great Commission Team is working to finalize the service opportunities. For more information, contact **Susan Koester**, 675-1156.

March 31, the 5th Saturday of the month, is this year's first Homeless Dinner at the Concord Singles Adult Shelter. Look for the sign-up table in the Fellowship Hall, starting March 11. Contact: **Ann Johnson**, 676-4330.

Uganda 2018

Are you between the ages of 12-80? Are you in good health to travel? Can you give 2 weeks of summer to share God's love with children? If yes come join a multi-church mission team for Summer 2018. **Robin Stearns** is organizing a group to head to Raise the Roof Academy June 27-July 10 to lead a Vacation Bible School for 1,000 children in rural Uganda. She is praying the team will be made up of 10 people of all ages from this area. If you are interested in helping spread the word share the brochures found in the Fellowship Hall to encourage neighbors, friends or grand children to join.

Contact **Robin Stearns** at Robin@fpccconcord.org for more information, or check out RTRA's website at raisetherooftacademy.org.



Raise the Roof: Educate 1

The 2018 academic year in Uganda begins on February 5th. There are 138 children who are awaiting sponsorship so they can begin the new year in school. For just \$35 a month, you can make a real and lasting difference for a child today and provide support for their education. Make educating 1 child your New Year's Resolution.

You see the circle at the right? Our New Year's resolution is to turn that white circle all the way yellow! What does that mean? Currently 30 of the 138 children have been sponsored. Let's see how many FPCC can add to the circle.



Family News

Grieving:

Julie Siddall and her family as they deal with the recent death of Julie's mother.

Phyllis Graser and family of **Dave Graser**, who passed away on December 7th. A memorial service was held at 2pm on December 23rd in the Sanctuary.

Dave Ehmke and family of **Mary Ehmke**, who passed away on December 13th. A memorial service was held at 11am on December 23rd in the Sanctuary.

Faye Muti, leading elder at the Tongan Church, upon the death of her husband **Walter Muti** on December 13th. A memorial service was held December 29-30 in the Sanctuary.

Kathy Brock and family upon the death of Kathy's brother **William "Billy" Pinkney**, who passed away on January 18th. A memorial service will be held at FPCC on March 3rd at 2pm.

Larry Cruzen and family of **Jean Cruzen**, who passed away on January 23rd. A memorial service was held at FPCC on February 5th at 3pm. †

February Birthdays

2	Beth Byrne
3	Charlotte DeWitt
3	Charmaine Ferrera
4	Florentino Sagum
5	Betty Jean Myers
6	Eric Hansen
6	Linda Phillips
9	Gilberto Garcia
10	Lydia Hawkins
12	Kathleen Hartwick
12	Jon Myers
13	Mary Shipley
15	Janet Beck
15	Nick Psihopaidas
21	Cher Stearns
26	Ellen Hague
26	Susan Lawson
27	C. Wayne Strongman

Congratulations:

Recently Charmaine Ferrera enjoyed her 90th birthday with a grand celebration at our church hosted by her children. Charmaine likes to say "I'm 18 with 72 years of experience." Congrats Charmaine!

Ann Keirns Ordination as Commissioned Lay Pastor

Here is some super good news from Pastor Toby, who went with Ann Keirns on January 16th to her Commissioned Lay Pastor examination at the Presbytery office. Ann was rigorously examined by the Presbytery subcommittee of COM and was approved for Ordination to become a Commissioned Lay Pastor at FPCC.

Ann, and the rest of the current class of 12 CLP candidates, have now all been examined and will be officially approved by Presbytery at its February 13th meeting, at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church.

Ann's ordination and commissioning ceremony is planned for Sunday, February 25th at FPCC, starting at 4:00 pm. Congratulations Ann! †

March Birthdays

2	Jason Stanszak
3	Kathy Brock
5	Ed Stevenson
5	Gail Carlston
7	Charles Stearns
11	Don Sukk
11	Joanne Myers
13	Trudy Meigs
14	Michael Haswell
16	William DeWitt
18	Laurie Koester
21	Ron Potts
23	Diana Stearns
28	Isobel Erickson
30	Ginny Schwab

PNC Update

As of January 29th your Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) Team has completed reviewing 117 resumes of which 42 were self-referred, and is currently setting up interviews, checking references and meeting with the top-tier candidates. Additional computer-provided resumes have been received for review. You can help by praying on a daily basis for the PNC team and for our future pastor. Pray that PNC will hear the Holy Spirit to select the right candidate for our church. For questions, please contact either of the PC Chairs **Eric Harvey** or **Susan Koester**.

†

See's Candy Fundraiser: Success!

At the end of November Beginnings & Beyond had their annual fundraiser with See's Candy. It must be true that everyone loves See's, because we raised over \$700. We have already purchased some of our new tables. Thank you to all who have supported us at Beginnings & Beyond.

If you missed out and still want to help, Valentine's Day is fast approaching, and you can continue to help raise money for this cause. We have eight 1-pound gift certificates to sell for \$20 each. We receive 100% of the funds to help with the purchase of our tables.

Starting March 4th we will be selling Easter chocolates during coffee hour.

†



1965 Colfax St., Concord, CA 94520

Change Service Requested

First Press

**Deadline for April/May Issue:
Monday, March 26, 2018**

*Thank you for your contribution.
Submit all news in writing. Digital
photos are also welcome as long as
we may use them on our website.
Please contact the church office
with address changes!*

Office Hours!

Monday, Wed. & Thursday

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Tuesday

11:00 am to 4:00 pm

Closed Friday

Mission Vision & Values

Our Mission:

Love God, Love People ... Serve

Vision:

*As a community hub, connect
with the needs of people, joyfully
sharing Jesus and serving where
God calls.*

Values:

*Guided by Scripture and prayer,
we are a welcoming place
where people, service,
and God's love meet.*

*Focused on hospitality,
inclusiveness, and spiritual gifts,
we worship God with delight.*

*Unified in Jesus Christ,
we are led by the Holy Spirit
to invite, engage, and share
God's Truth with each other,
our community and the world.*

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held Sunday **February 25th** following worship. A light lunch will be served. All members and regular supporters of FPCC are urged to attend. This will be an opportunity to review the 2017 Annual Report, hear about the current "State of the Church" and explore the future of FPCC. We hope to see you there!

First Press Distribution

The primary distribution of First Press is electronic via e-mail. If you did not receive this and would like to be added to the electronic distribution please email FirstPress@fpccconcord.org. A pdf copy is also available on the FPCCConcord.org website, and a limited number of paper copies will be available in the Narthex and office. We can also mail copies to those who do not have access electronically and who cannot make it to church. Please call the office to request this service.