

God's Pick-Me-Up By Darryl McCollum, CLP

The middle of March was turning out to be very stressful. It seemed as if every aspect of life was getting more difficult to manage as new and increasing pressures piled on. Without going into detail, both personal and professional stressors were weighing on me heavier than I can remember them being for a very long time. I wasn't looking forward to work on Friday, but when I arrived, an amazing gift greeted me. This double rainbow, captured on camera by Cristina Mario, one of our fantastic Beginnings and Beyond teachers, immediately lifted my spirits. God reminded me in this moment, that no matter what trials I may be experiencing, the presence of God is always near.

Deuteronomy 31:6 states, *"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread for it is the LORD God who goes with you; God will not fail you or forsake you."* We can all be encouraged by the nearness of God. This rainbow reminded me of our blessings, not the trials. It reminded me that God cares for this corner of the Kingdom and is blessing us daily. It also reminded me to look for God in situations where I am not expecting and trust that God provides.



Photo taken from FPCC parking lot by Cristina Mario

The date of the last Come and See class, March 24th, is a perfect example. I was expecting three people to come. However all three that I expected to show ended up with commitments that prevented them from coming. I could have been discouraged, but after recognizing that God is blessing this place, I bought the pizza, showed up not knowing what to expect, and God provided three completely different people in the class. It's still to be seen whether they will opt to become part of the covenant family here at FPCC, but God brought them, God provided, God blessed.

I will be hosting Come and See classes each quarter on a Sunday at 12:30pm, but if weeknights work better for any of you that are interested, please

let me know, and we can schedule a class to meet your schedule. My prayer is for all who call this place their church home to take the step to join the covenant family.

We are all members of God's family. We each also have an opportunity to enter into a covenant relationship with a specific group of God's family. This covenant is a bond that joins us in love, fellowship, and commitment to God, to the teachings of Jesus, to one another, and to this corner of God's kingdom.

I love you all like my own family. Oh wait! We are family!

Love God, Love People, Serve.

Blessings,

Darryl

Update: FPCC Staff Changes Announcement from Personnel

Rev. Dr. Keith Geckeler to Serve as Bridge Pastor



Rev. Dr. Keith Geckeler, the Presbytery Liaison working with our Pastor Nominating Committee, has agreed to also serve as a part-time Bridge Pastor for FPCC this spring and summer, while the PNC continues its search for our next installed pastor.

As the Bridge Pastor, Keith will assist with preaching and church administration that will provide leadership for our church and Session, and well-deserved support for our Commissioned Lay Pastor Darryl McCollum and Director of Community Care Rebecca Chase.

Pastor Keith graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1973, was ordained in 1974, in Ohio, and subsequently received his D.Min. from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1984, specializing in Congregational Development. He served 40 years in congregational and presbytery ministries, and moved back to the Bay Area a few years ago to be close to family. Although Honorably Retired, Pastor Keith remains active in ministry. In

September 2017, he became the Transitional Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of San Francisco, until the new Stated Clerk was installed in February of this year.

During the time Pastor Keith has worked with our PNC, he has become familiar with our church, and since our time between pastors has been a little longer than we anticipated, Pastor Keith graciously agreed to serve as our short-term Bridge Pastor.

Please join us in welcoming Pastor Keith to FPCC.

Lisa Justice to Serve as FPCC's Administrative Assistant



Lisa Justice will join FPCC, effective April 2nd, as our new Administrative Assistant.

Lisa is a former FPCC member, Sunday School teacher, and Youth Group adult leader. With her knowledge of our church and history of working for non-profit organizations, Lisa is excited to become a member of the FPCC team.

Lisa grew up in Concord and earned her Master of Arts Degree in History from UC Davis. From

2002 through 2011, she worked as an instructor at three universities. For the past eight years, Lisa served as an office manager for a non-profit organization with responsibilities matching those required of our Administrative Assistant.

Lisa lives in Concord with her sister and four cats, and is a member at Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church, where she is an Elder currently serving on their Session. In her spare time, Lisa reads widely and enjoys knitting, cooking, and spending time with her goddaughters.

Please stop by the office and welcome Lisa in her new role as our Administrative Assistant.

Thank You Judith Snider

We would also like to take this time to thank Judith Snider for staffing the front desk while we searched for a new Administrative Assistant. Judith volunteered when Ann Keirns first became ill, thinking it would only be for a month or so, not knowing that she would still be there five months later. During this time Judith has been the face of FPCC to all those who came in the front door or called, handled whatever emergency came her way, has done a wonderful job preparing our weekly bulletins and managed all the other responsibilities needed to keep the office running smoothly.

Now that we have hired Lisa Justice, we are still looking for volunteers to help out in the office. If you are interested, please contact the office to find out how you can be of service.



Worship & Music

by Andrew Cardiasmenos – Director of Worship & Music

As we continue our Lenten journey, 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. Hymns, praise songs, and anthems play an important role in setting a contemplative tone throughout Lent and a mournful tone during Holy Week.

Palm Sunday – April 14

The Preschool children will join us on this special day of worship and will grace us with song.

Maundy Thursday – April 18

I encourage you to attend Maundy Thursday services at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church (7pm), where we will be joining other

Diablo Valley "Church Without Shoes" churches in celebrating Christ's Last Supper.

Good Friday – April 19

FPCC will have a Good Friday service at noon in our chapel. This is a special time to reflect on God's love and sacrifice for us.

Easter Sunday – April 21

This will be a special worship service with triumphal music, featuring guest musicians, and celebrating Christ's resurrection.

The more we participate, the more we build a deep relationship with the Lord.

Sunday Classes

The week after Easter I will be teaching a Sunday school class on April 28th at 11:30am, covering the basics of designing worship and contemporary music. Be prepared

to learn a new song or two! Hope to see you there. This will also segue nicely into the May series, when Beth Byrne will explore the theology behind traditional hymns.

Spring Choir Concert

Last but not least, we hope that you will join us for our Spring Choir Concert, which will be in the late afternoon on Sunday, June 2nd at 4:30pm. We will be featuring our favorite anthems from throughout the year! There will also be a light reception to follow.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in our many events to come!

Andrew †

Beginnings & Beyond Preschool

Preschool Workday

April 26 & 27

There is a lot of items on the preschool project list that needs help from able bodies. On Friday April 26 and Saturday April 27 the preschool would like to check off a few of those items. Our aim will be to weed the garden, add bark to the playground, and paint chairs. We will start at 10am each day. Please let **Robin Stearns** know if you can help, 925-676-6244.

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See's Candy Fundraiser

It is Chocolate time again! Beginnings & Beyond is having another See's candy fundraiser. During our winter fundraising we raised about \$865.

Our See's Candies fundraiser has already begun and is almost over. All orders are due by Tuesday April 2 to ensure delivery before Easter. You can pay by check or by Zelle.

If you have any questions ask **Robin Stearns**, 925-676-6244. Thank you for your support through our fundraisers.

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Tax Tip

from the Finance Committee

The following is a summary of a recent East Bay Times article on how you may be able to reduce your Federal taxes.

If you are over 70½ and taking the RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) from your IRA account, you may be able to reduce your Federal taxes by making a direct donation of all or a portion of your RMD to the church or another qualified charity. By doing this, the RMD is not included as income on your return and is not subject to tax. This is especially important since last year's tax changes which increased the standard deduction. For more information talk to **Vern Hance** or **David Stearns**, or consult a tax advisor.

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From the Desk of Rebecca Chase

Director of Community Care

Small Groups

"Living into our calling to follow Jesus by gathering into small groups to love, pray, and care for each other, disciple each other on our spiritual journeys, and serve our community together."

See the schedule of current weekly Small Groups at right:

- *Easter Realities* – This series walks us through Jesus' trial, the prophecy and his suffering, the cross, and looking at what this means to our call to faith.
- *Christ in the Psalms: A Guide to Praise* – This study focuses on the psalms that predict Christ: His coming, His work, His Lordship, and his reign as King of kings.
- On Wednesdays the Clayton group has been making their way through Jesus' story by watching parts of a movie and then referring to the Gospels to compare.

We are currently keeping our subscription to "The Wired Word," a curriculum which takes the latest news stories and uses supporting Bible passages to work through current issues. It is "ready to-go" for someone who has wanted to get together with folks and talk about the news with a Biblical lens. Your house or ours!

In addition to the two Small Groups listed we also have other Bible Study Groups and Life Groups as shown at right.

Children & Youth

Children's Worship for April & May

April 7 – Jesus prays in the garden
April 14 (Palm Sunday) – Jesus dies on the cross

April 21 (Easter) – Jesus rises from the dead

May 5 – Thomas doubts that Jesus has risen from the dead

May 12 – Jesus goes back to heaven

May 19 – The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

May 26 – The Early Christians Share Everything

Small Groups Meeting Schedule

Wednesdays <i>Easter Realities</i> <i>Christ in Psalms</i>	6:30 pm	Fireside Rm	Rebecca Chase
Wednesday bi-wk <i>New Testament</i>	7:00 pm	Clayton	Jim W & Marilyn W
Other Bible Study Groups			
Tuesdays (men)	6:45 am	Digger's Diner	David Dowell
Wednesdays <i>"Revelation"</i>	1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Fireside Rm	LaVerne Herren
1 st Thursdays (women Circle IV)	11:00 am - 2:00 pm	Varies	Anna Belle Horgan & Joanne Myers
2 nd Mondays <i>"Daniel"</i>	10:00 am - 1:00 pm	Fireside Rm	Catherine Longoria
Life Groups (monthly)			
First Fridays (Under 40s) <i>Theol./Art/Culture</i>	6:00 pm	Harvey House	Eric & Kristin Harvey
Merry Macs <i>Fellowship & Service</i>	Varies	Varies	Bill Selb
The Crew 5 th - 8 th Grades	11:00 am 2 nd Sundays	Room 205	Ann Johnson & Jeremy Martin

The Spiritual Growth Team for Children is currently seeking people who would like to serve in a team about one hour a month with children ages 3 to 10. In order to give the older children a more focused lesson, we need 4 people who feel a call to walk with our young disciples! Please pray on it and let me or Marilyn know if you can serve God by serving the children!

Our **Nursery** (found in Room 101 across from the office) is exploding in size!! Lynn Justice MUST HAVE another helper! She is looking for a team of 3 or 4 that can rotate. Find me or Lynn on a Sunday morning and we'll give you a ministry of the greatest joy! Lynn will walk beside you if you're feeling a little unsure. Thank you to Kristin Harvey for giving Lynn a Sunday off once a month.

The **Youth** group, called The Crew, is official! With three youth so far, an amazing curriculum ("Dares from Jesus"), loving adults, and a fabulous youth room, more will follow. They meet on the second

Sundays for fun and study, and on the forth Sundays to "hang with Pastor D" at Peet's or Starbucks. Your prayers and encouragement for leaders Ann Johnson, Jeremy Martin, and Meg Berry are welcome!

Prayer and Healing

Continue to pray for:

- Pastor Nominating Committee! 6pm Mondays
- Sunday morning Prayer Team in Prayer Room – Robin could use a prayer partner
- A NEW Prayer Walk schedule: now Quarterly third Saturday – next one is April 20th at 9:30am. Join the walk to bless our neighborhood.

Outreach Activities

- Looking forward to a **Pancake Breakfast** on April 14th – before Palm Sunday service! Children of Beginnings and Beyond Preschool will be joining us during service to sing, so encourage their families to come early for breakfast!
- **Activity calendars**, created for the

Continued Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

visitor mugs, have been highly popular. Presently gathering information for April/May calendars. What is your ministry team doing?

- I have written about a dozen **Welcome cards** to guests and visitors since Christmas. If visitors are writing their address,

we need to be reaching out! Please contact me to help!

CLP Training

I have had three Commissioned Lay Pastor classes so far. I will be in class at the Presbytery office in El Cerrito on the second Friday night and Saturday of each month

through this year, and a couple of classes next year. I am happy to tell you about them! The other CLP candidates are Carlos Flores and Ruth Mejia, (from CDRJ), and DeVonn Powers. Continued prayers welcome.

Rebecca †

What is the Great Commission Team Up To?

April Adventure

This is our third April Adventure. This month we lift our spirits in the adventure of loving and serving God, our church and our community with small acts. When we all work together these small acts can have large impact on our church and our community. Here's how it spells out:

A is for Adore - Week of March 31

We worship and adore our amazing God. Adore by helping with the homeless dinner March 30.

P is for Prayer - Week of April 7

We try to pray every day at 12pm. Spend a little more time in prayer than you usually do.

R is for Reach Out - Week of April 14

We reach out to welcome and include others. Sit in a different place; look for a new face to greet.

I is for Invest - Week of April 21

We share a little more of ourselves for the kingdom. Give a little extra time, talent or money.

L is for love - Week of April 28

We reflect the love that God has for us all. Perform loving acts, be kind, listen to others.

Watch for more details as we act out FPCC's Mission Statement: Love God, Love People and Serve.



What Can You Do for the Winter Nights Shelter?

For fourteen years, churches in central and east Contra Costa County have hosted homeless families during the cold months, October through April. In the last two years the program has been extended through May, and the Homeless Summit group which runs the program is working to fund and find host churches to extend the program through the entire school year for the 2019-20 season.

The program was originally sponsored by the Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County. Up to 30 people who are part of a homeless family spend their evenings at the host churches for 2 weeks at a time, living in tents set up in fellowship halls. The program provides staff, tutoring for the children, help for the parents in finding jobs and searching for permanent housing, and a place at the Oasis Center at St Vincent de Paul in Bay Point during weekdays for those that aren't working or in school. The host church and other co-hosting churches provide meals and special

activities. To find out more, please check out their website, www.cccwinternights.org.

For seven years, FPCC has been a co-host, the last five at St Andrews Presbyterian in Pleasant Hill. We are scheduled to co-host there again this year on May 13 -15. The Mission Team invites you to join us, preparing and serving food or being on site to interact with the clients. Specifically, we need cooks, servers, food donations, people to help monitor the children as they wait for dinner and to assist the tutors as they work with the children on their homework, and someone to spend the night as the church contact. If you have any ideas for special activities for either Monday or Tuesday evening, please contact **Maren Stanczak** at 408-5930. Sign-ups will start in mid-April if you'd like to help.

Uganda

This summer between June 26th and July 9th is the annual inter-generational mission trip to Uganda. So far from FPCC only Robin Stearns will be going. If you are interested in joining her or know someone who might be, please contact **Robin Stearns** at RobinLStearns@msn.com or 925-685-7916, or visit the RTR website at www.raisetherooftacademy.org

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FPCC Session Meeting – March 19, 2019

a brief summary of discussions and actions by your Session

The Session of First Presbyterian Church of Concord met Tuesday, March 19th in the Fireside Room with a quorum present and the Rev. Dr. W. Keith Geckeler moderating.

Elders present: Lee Borden, Matt Chapman, Carlos Flores, Vern Hance, Susan Koester, DeVonn Powers, Jeremy Martin, Ruth Mejia, David Stearns, and Jon Myers, Clerk of Session

Staff Present: Jim Allardice and Rebecca Chase

Guests: Jim Whitfield and Marilyn Wollenweber

The meeting was called to order at 7:07pm with prayer by Moderator Keith Geckeler.

Agenda and Consent Agenda approved.

Minutes of Session and Congregational Meeting were approved. Gary and Ann Rowe membership transferred to Geneva Presbyterian Church, Modesto, CA. Sign-up sheets distributed.

Final approval of Session assignments and 2019 communion dates.

Jim Allardice introduced a report from Deacons that lists members and active participants, and includes information on attempts by Deacons to contact members who are no longer participating to determine whether or not they should be removed from the rolls. A committee was formed to pursue this further and make final recommendations at a future meeting.

“Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety” introduced by Rebecca Chase for first reading. Has been recommended for adoption as policy to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from sexual misconduct.

Conversation about Visitor follow-up process.

Approved Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast for all congregations sharing the campus. Cooks, servers, and washer/dryers needed.

Heard about “Food It Forward” proposal to come to next month’s meeting.

Photo Directory planned—to be completed before arrival of new pastor.

No report from Trustees.

Personnel recommended approval of DeVonn Powers to enroll in Commissioned Lay Pastor program. M/S/P. Announced hiring of Lisa Justice as new Administrative Assistant.

Heard recommendation for June 2nd Choir Concert.

Organ repairs in extended conversations in Worship Committee. Set communion dates as “normally” first Sunday.

Ruth Mejia / Carlos Flores announced their New Worshipping Fellowship received \$7,500 Seed Grant from the denomination.

PNC reported on effort to keep congregation better informed regarding progress; e.g. over 250 Personal Information Forms (PIFs) received and reviewed.

Matt Chapman reported on ministry at Heritage Plaza Tower.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

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2019 Session:

Moderators: Pastor Keith Geckeler and Commissioned Lay Pastor Darryl McCollum

Elders and the committees/teams they are assigned to:

- Lee Borden – Worship & Music
- Matt Chapman – Leadership Development, Nominating, and the Heritage & Tower ministry
- Carlos Flores & Ruth Mejia (shared position) – Casa de Dios Roca de Jacob, Congregational Care (Ruth), and Communications (Carlos)
- Vern Hance – Finance
- Susan Koester – Missions and Pastor Nominating Committee
- Jeremy Martin – Spiritual Growth
- DeVonn Powers – Clerk of Session, Personnel, and Communications
- David Stearns – Property Management
- Ruth Stevenson - Outreach



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1965 Colfax St., Concord, CA 94520

Change Service Requested

First Press

**Deadline for June 2019 Issue:
Friday May 24**

*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.*

Holy Week Schedule

- April 14 – Palm Sunday & Pancake Breakfast
- April 18 – Maundy Thursday at Walnut Creek Presbyterian
- April 19 – Good Friday Service – Chapel
- April 21 – Easter Sunday - Special Choir Music & Egg Hunt

First Press Distribution

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