

Deny Yourself

by Darryl McCollum, CLP

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"
- Mark 8:34-36 (NIV)

This is one of those passages that's so familiar, sometimes we don't really think about what it really means. I was reminded to reevaluate it during a recent Wednesday night small group class. We are studying along with Andy Stanley from his series "Follow" where he challenges our concept of what it means to be a Jesus follower.

Just looking at verse 34, if we put ourselves in the mind(s) of the original hearers of this word, we would be terrified. In first century Palestine, Roman crosses were an all too familiar sight. Original hearers would interpret the words of Jesus to mean, "deny my desire to live and instead follow Jesus to my death". I suppose the good news for us today is that we're not physically following Jesus from town to town, inspiring people to kill us for believing in a Rabbi that's upsetting the way things have been done for 1500 years.



We have mentally watered this statement down, white-washed it to match our context of culture as it applies to us. For some it boils down to an advertisement I saw recently, "FOR LESS THAN THE COST OF A CUP OF COFFEE PER DAY, YOU CAN SPONSOR A CHILD IN NEED." Accurate as this statement may be, many have come to believe that "denying myself" that cup of coffee to save one of the "least of these" equates to picking up our cross.

Andy Stanley would probably say, this is likely the reaction of what he calls "Consumers of Christianity". His definition of consumer is this: "people that attend church an hour or two per week, want the service to meet their expectations, so they can feel good when they leave, and may or may not have given up their cup of coffee per day to sponsor a child in poverty"

There is a deeper theological truth however for followers of Jesus: When you follow Jesus, there will be a personal cost. Following

Jesus completely, may damage some relationships, while building others. A non-believing parent, sibling, friend, may not understand why you open your home to foster kids, the homeless, or a fellow believer that is struggling, because their past may include prison. Non-

believing children may contest an aging parent's desire to leave a bequest to their church. Also, friendships that you have counted on for years may become strained simply by asking, "May I pray with you"? You may have to sever relations with non-believing friend to avoid times when their influence may be stronger than your ability to follow Jesus. Consider our brothers and sisters in cultures where following Jesus can ostracize them from their community. Many followers of Jesus are disowned by family and friends. Some are killed for their relationship with Jesus.

"From Nov. 1, 2015, to Oct. 31, 2016, Open Doors, a nonprofit that serves persecuted Christians, documented as many as 1,207 Christians who were killed around the globe for faith-related reasons during the 2017 list's reporting period. This is a conservative estimate since it only includes documented cases and does not include statistics from North Korea and large areas of Iraq and Syria." (Tanner, April 14, 2017)

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

When Jesus continues in verse 35, Andy Stanley puts an interesting twist on it – *“Whoever wants to save their life ... (that’s pretty much everyone, since most of us prefer to live) ... will lose it”* Andy points out that all of us eventually lose our life, Christ followers, non-Christ followers, even consumers of Christianity. All of us are going to die. Let that truth sink in for a second, then read the last bit of verse 35, *“but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”* Andy points out the brilliance of Jesus for using this phrase in His ministry. Jesus has established that we are all going to die, (lose our life)...so, why not make it count for something? Theologians around the world would caution me to consider the afterlife implications inherent in this statement. But we know that we are already saved through faith, so dying on a missionary trip in a war-torn region of the earth is not going to earn us any extra points toward saving our lives. As Andy pointed out, we are going to die. Our choice is this, when we

die, will it be as a follower of Jesus? Did our life as a follower make a difference in the Kingdom. Did our choice to follow Jesus, rather than be a consumer of Christianity, make someone’s life better. Did we plant seeds of the Gospel to grow in the hearts of some part of humanity? The saving of our life does have eternal implications, but more importantly, when we save our lives as used in this context, it means we set aside, consecrate, and/or sanctify our lives for God’s purpose.

Jesus returns to the concept of denying one’s self in verse 36. *“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* When we are self-serving, gaining the world for our short time here on earth, what good is that if we forfeit the eternal part of our being. I am reminded of a sermon by Francis Chan where he took a couple hundred feet of rope and put a single row of duct tape on one end. That 2-inch piece of tape he said, “represents our time on earth”. The remaining 199’ 10”, which when stretched out exited the building, is eternity. That is the afterlife we are promised as followers of Jesus. Francis goes on to say that we often spend 199’ 10” worth of our energy on the 2-inches of tape rather than the other way around. If there is an afterlife, shouldn’t we focus on making the 199’ 10” count, since that is where our eternity resides?

[A 2017 Rasmussen Reports national telephone and online survey finds that 62% of American Adults believe in life after death. Just 17% do not, but 20% are still unsure if there’s an afterlife.](#)

So, most people still believe there is, or may be an afterlife. This means they also believe in an eternal component of our being, or soul. Andy asks the question, “If you found out that you had lost your soul, what would you give to get it back?” The answer Everything. We would give everything to earn back our soul. Jesus’ question becomes more real and less an exercise in metaphor when placed in the context of following. Each opportunity that presents where we have the choice to deny ourselves and follow Jesus is a crossroads. We will fail often to deny ourselves, because it is not consistent with survival instinct; it’s not part of our culture; and It doesn’t fit with our “take care of number one” mindset. Yet, I can tell you from personal experience that every time I have chosen to follow, though it may be uncomfortable, it may seem impossible, God comforts, God provides, and the reward is a deep and lasting joy. God truly does deliver a peace that surpasses understanding.

I urge you my brothers and sisters to tune into God, so you may more easily recognize a crossroads moment. I pray that you would choose to follow Jesus, even when that means giving up more than a cup of coffee per day, and remember Andy’s question when you stand at a crossroads of your life.

What would you give for your soul?

In Christ’s Love – Darryl †

FPCC Staff

Darryl McCollum	Certified Lay Pastor
Ann Keirns	Certified Lay Pastor and Administrator
Andrew Cardiasmenos	Director of Music & Worship
Rebecca Chase	Director of Community Care
Robin Stearns	Preschool Director
Lisa Gonzalez	Administrative Coordinator
Susan Soehner	Organist
Harold Lund	Custodian & Night Watchman

Worship & Music

by Andrew Cardiasmenos – Director of Worship & Music

The choir has just returned from it's annual retreat in Bodega Bay on the October 19th weekend. We enjoyed working on music for the Christmas season, brushing up on our technique and having wonderful fellowship together. It was capped off with a very moving, spiritual worship service at Tomales Presbyterian Church under the guidance of Pastor Cornelia Cyss-Carter.

I want you to know about two wonderful musical opportunities coming up for the congregation and community:

Christmas Choir Concert December 9th

Please join us, as we set off the Christmas season with this inspirational and spiritual event. The Christmas choir concert will be Sunday, December 9th at 7:00pm, and will include traditional Christmas congregational hymns and anthems performed by the choir and guest instrumentals. It's an event you don't want to miss!



African Children's Choir January 2nd

Those of you have been here for a while will remember what a wonderful experience this is. The African Children's Choir is making another U.S. tour and will be here Wednesday January 2nd at 7:00pm. The "Just As I Am" tour combines traditional hymns with African cultural sounds and a stunning visual story of God's faithfulness. Each song encourages us to know that we are made for a purpose and that God loves us and wants us to come to him... just as we are. Don't miss out on this uniquely immersive experience through song, dance and video-story telling.

We are looking for families to host these kids and their chaperons. If you can open your home, please contact **Ron Potts** or **Andrew Cardiasmenos** with your availability.

Housing requirements are as follows on January 2nd and 3rd.

- 3 homes for 1 adult and 3 girls each
- 2 homes for 1 adult and 3 boys each
- 1 home for 1 adult and 2 boys
- 1 home for 1 adult

Andrew ✝



Preschool Fund Raiser

See's Candy for Christmas



Do you enjoy chocolates? Do you often give See's candy as gifts to Christmas visitors? We have the perfect opportunity for you to do both and help Beginnings and Beyond raise money for some quality tables. We are excited to begin our See's Candies fundraiser starting Sunday November 11th. Last year we raised enough for some of our new tables. We expect to purchase the rest of our tables and chairs for the toddlers this year. Our fundraiser will continue through December 2nd and will be ready to deliver in about a week. For more information talk with **Robin Stearns**, Preschool Director at 925-676-6244. ✝

The Great Commission Team – A Mission Christmas

As usual, the Great Commission Team encourages all of us to keep our mission partners in mind during the holiday season. Many of you have purchased a *Gift Around the World*, providing donations to one of our missions to include in a Christmas card. We appreciate your generosity. We are also offering the following usual activities to remember those less fortunate during Advent.



Giving Tree

Giving Tree sign-ups start early this year. FPCC is again helping provide Christmas presents for four families from Interfaith Housing. This year, we are assigned ten children, ages one to fifteen and six adults. The Giving Tree will be set up in the Fellowship Hall November 18th. Choose an ornament from the tree. It will have the age of the recipient and their Christmas wishes. You may also sign up for a Safeway gift card for a family. We have an early distribution date this year, so presents/gift cards should be turned in to the Fellowship Hall on December 2nd. Contact: **Susan Lawson**, 285-4430.



Bay Area Rescue Mission

FPCC will again be participating in the Bay Area Rescue Mission Toy Drive this Christmas. BARM holds a Christmas party each year for homeless and needy children. Donated toys will help make a child's Christmas special. Over 5,000 gifts will be handed out at this event. FPCC will also serve as a drop-off point for other churches and individuals in the Concord area. Collection barrels will be placed in the Narthex and in the Fellowship Hall starting on Sunday, November 25th and will be available until Sunday, December 16th. Please plan to make a difference in a young person's Christmas by bringing your unwrapped gift. Contact: **David Dowell**, 914-0429.



Christmas Offering Medical Benevolence

Every December the Great Commission Team chooses a mission partner to receive a special offering. This year's Christmas Offering will go to Medical Benevolence Foundation.

Your donations, above and beyond your regular offering, will go to support a special project at the Darbonne Maternal and Child Health Clinic in Haiti, which is the most dangerous place in the Western Hemisphere to give birth. The clinic is located in the Leogane district in southwestern Haiti and operated by the Episcopal Church. The project goal is to substantially reduce maternal, infant and child mortality rates in the region by providing access to skilled birth attendants for labor and delivery, vaccines and well-baby visits, and offering family planning services. We hope that you will join us in supporting this project. Special offering envelopes will be provided in the pews during the month of December. We are planning for a special guest speaker during the Sunday School hour at the end of November. Contact: **Ann Johnson**, 676-4330.

As always, your mission team wishes you and yours a blessed Christmas season. If you would like to know more about any of our missions, please join us at our meeting, the first Tuesday of each month.



Announcements

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

PDA is offering immediate aid to the communities impacted by Hurricane Michael. This joins responses already underway for those impacted by hurricane Florence, Typhoon Mangkhut, and other international disasters that have suffered a lack of media coverage.

Hurricane Michael struck the Florida panhandle with devastating winds and storm surge, causing loss of life. The storm then cut a path across the southeast, moving through the same areas impacted by Hurricane Florence just a few weeks ago.

PDA is deploying teams to affected communities. Emergency aid, assistance in the development of a short-term response plan, as well as a ministry of presence will be the priorities of the initial response.

Meanwhile, areas impacted by Mangkhut and Florence have received aid and support through the gifts of Presbyterians like you. In humility, with God and your continued support, we will continue to help draw hope out of the chaos, together.

If you would like to help, please mark your additional giving check payable to First Presbyterian Church, and please write "Hurricane (DR000194)" in the memo line. For more information, contact **Maren Stanczak**.



New Member Class Sunday, November 11th

Membership – Why We Ask

Presbyterian churches are organized so that only official members of the congregation can vote to call new pastors, to elect their representatives to manage the church and care for the congregation and community. And to serve in the capacity of an elder, deacon, or trustee (those elected positions) one must have made that additional commitment to this church.

We love everyone in our congregation and our community, and we always welcome our many friends who come to worship and serve with us, regardless of membership status. We will always ask anytime we offer the prerequisite class for membership, to reach out to anyone who might be interested in taking that step.

If this time is your time to take that class, and you feel led to become a member here, the short, 2-hour, class will be held Nov. 11th at 11:30am and will include lunch. Please let **Ann Keirns, Jon Myers** or **Darryl McCollum** know if you are ready to "Come & See" what our congregation and denomination are all about.



Welcome Jim Allardice

We welcome Jim Allardice to our congregation. He will be with us through January, providing pastoral care for the congregation and providing support and training for the Deacons. He is also training Rebecca to be a Stellar Deacon's Pastor.

Jim attended seminary and spent twenty years working as a teacher and administrator in colleges and universities, most recently at the University of San Francisco, and then after another twenty years as a therapist working with survivors and perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence. He is now retired.

When he was three years old, his parents joined a Presbyterian church and he went to the Sunday school class, where he first met the girl who would become his wife. They have been married for 47 years and have two sons, both of whom are married and live in the Bay Area. They have a six-year-old granddaughter and a two-and-a-half-year-old grandson.



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."

At right are the current weekly Small Groups

- "Follow" is an eight-week DVD curriculum examining where Jesus says to follow Him. We'll talk about what does this mean for us, through Nov 14th.
- Simply the Story is a method of telling stories from the Bible in a way that can be useful for all cultures and those new to hearing the Bible.
- Be ready to dive into ADVENT, coming week of November 25th!

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!

Children's Worship & Education

The children's event in September – Parents' Night Out – was a great deal of fun! The activities were painting pumpkin shapes, planting seeds, singing Farmer in the Dell and Oats, Peas, Beans, hearing a silly story about the farmer's mouse, and hearing an important story called a parable about a sower. We had delicious pizza, too. We chose to offer this event as donation-only, and raised over \$100!

Please plan for the December Parent's Night Out: Saturday December 8th, from 5:30pm to 8:30pm. Parents/grandparents, go enjoy your evening. We and the children will be talking all about a special little baby!

Small Groups Meeting Schedule

Wednesdays <i>Follow/Advent</i>	6:30 pm	Fireside Rm	Rebecca Chase
Wednesday bi-wk <i>Ephesians</i>	7:00 pm	Clayton	Jim & Marilyn W
Thursdays <i>Simply the Story</i>	TBA	Baypoint	Ruth Stevenson
Other Bible Study Groups			
Tuesdays (men)	6:45 am	Digger's Diner	David Dowell
Wednesdays	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	10:00 am - 1:00 pm	Fireside Rm	Catherine Longoria
Life Groups (monthly)			
First Fridays <i>Theol./Art/Culture</i>	6:00 pm	Harvey's House	Eric & Kristin Harvey
Saturdays <i>Fellowship & Service</i>	Varies	Varies	Bill Selb
2 nd Sundays (Youth Grp 5 th -8 th grade)	11:00 am	Room 205	Ann Johnson & Jeremy Martin

Children's Worship in November will be focused on Daniel. December and January will be all about JESUS! We'll talk about how he was promised to us, where he was born, and who knew. Then we'll talk about the many ways Jesus cares for us. Marilyn will lead in November, Carrie will lead in December, and Beth will be the January leader. Prayers of thanks to the many hands who work together!

You may have noticed we are starting up The Children's Message during the Worship time, just after we sing our first two hymns, and before welcoming. I'll bet you have a two-minute message you can share with the children! Come see me – we are creating the schedule NOW!

We are excited to announce... A **Middle School Youth Group** is starting in December!! Fifth graders through 8th graders will gather with **Ann Johnson** and **Jeremy Martin** (among others), starting December 9th. This group will meet on the second Sundays for games, stories, snacks, and fellowship.

The Nursery is really getting ready for new little guests now! 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! This could be YOUR time/talent offering to God.

Prayer and Healing

Continue to pray for:

- Pastor Nominating Committee! 6pm Mondays
- Sunday morning Prayer Team in Prayer Room – needed.
- MONTHLY Prayer Walk on the THIRD Saturday of the month: November 17th & December 15th

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.

Rebecca ✝



1965 Colfax St., Concord, CA 94520

Change Service Requested

First Press

**Deadline for Feb. 2019 Issue:
Thursday Dec. 27, 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.*

Upcoming Events

Come & See New Member Class – November 11 – 11:30am

Mountain View Family Shelter Dinners – November 11 & 12

Prayer Walk – November 17 - 9:30am

Giving Tree Gifts & BARM Toy Collection - December 2-16

Parents' Night Out – December 8

Christmas Choir Concert - December 9 - 7:00pm

Prayer Walk – December 15 - 9:30am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – December 24 – 7:00pm

Homeless Dinner, Concord Adult Homeless Shelter – December 29

African Children's Choir "Just As I Am" Concert – January 2 – 7:00pm

First Press Distribution

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