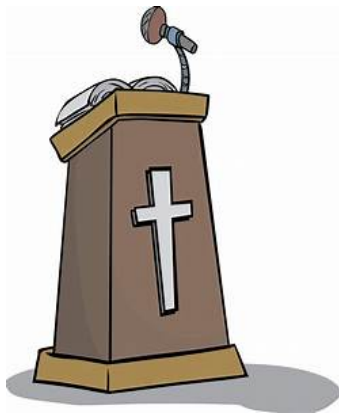




FIRST PRESS EXPRESS

The newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Concord, California

Summer 2021



During this past couple of months those who tuned in or were able to attend worship services heard messages from Pastor Johanna, Darryl McCollum, and DeVonn Powers. Yet many of our congregation were not able to hear the Words of our service leaders. First Press Express will be sharing highlights of these messages for our congregation to read as a supplement to the recordings available on our website and on YouTube.

Pentecost Sunday May 23, 2021 Pastor Johanna

Our culture is facing a kind of burn out after fifteen months of coping with the pandemic and its effects. Many people are feeling as if they have more work than they can handle; they lack control; they aren't appreciated; and they are having to go it alone.

At the same time, it has struck me that over the last few months the liturgical year has been trying to lead us out of this state of burnout. On Ash Wednesday, we confirmed that we are mortal and affirmed that the time to take action is now.

Through Lent, we were reminded that it takes practice to move forward and continue to strive. On Easter, we heard the good news that life can be good, bright, and sweet. Then on Pentecost, we acknowledged that it's a good thing to be at church because the church has the power to summon and infuse the Spirit's energy, its intoxicating drive, heat, and fire, into us.

There are people who face objections and obstacles to their faith as "the world" often views us as crazy when we stand up for our beliefs. But that's okay because, like those disciples on Pentecost who were mocked for speaking other

languages – and accused of being drunk on new wine! – we Christians are all learning another language, namely, the language of love. We are

all here to support one another, and to be there for those of us who are feeling lost and burned out.

A Few Thoughts on Life Today and Tomorrow

"Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died." — Erma Bombeck

"If I knew I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself." — Mickey Mantle

"My doctor recently told me that jogging could add years to my life. I think he was right. I feel ten years older already." —Milton Berle

"Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint." —Mark Twain

Helpful Hints

Do you make online purchase through Amazon? If so, you may be missing an opportunity to help FPCC with every purchase you make. All you need to do is make your purchase at [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) instead. This site has all the same products and prices as the regular Amazon website, but Amazon donates 0.5% of your purchase to charity. All you need to do is register your ID and designate FPCC as your favorite charity. It's easy and costs you nothing (smiles are free).

Thanks,
David Stearns





ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON A GREAT 2021 TAX BREAK?

The new income tax law passed in 2017 roughly doubled the

Standard Deduction starting in 2018. This makes it less likely that you will choose to itemize your deductions, thus making charitable deductions less likely to reduce your income taxes.

An investment in a Traditional IRA was originally made with non-taxed income, but it is taxed as ordinary income when withdrawn. At 70 ½ years of age you must start to make mandatory (taxable) withdrawals. The yearly Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) starts small, at 3.65% of your IRA balance at age 70 ½, but goes to 8.77% at age 90.

The good news is that you can distribute up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year to a qualified charitable 501(c)(3) organization, such as FPCC and it will **not be counted as taxable income**. The transfer must be made directly from the Custodian of your IRA to the charity, however most people request the Custodian to make a check payable to the charity and mail it to your home. That way you can detach and retain the check stub to document that it was a

direct transfer. Then all you have to do is put it in the offering plate.

The only qualifications are: 1.) You must have a Traditional IRA, and 2.) You must be over 70 ½ years old.

Custodians differ on the number of withdrawals they allow. Some allow monthly, some quarterly and some annually. Check with your IRA Custodian to find out. FPCC has no requirement on the frequency of distributions. It can be monthly, quarterly or annually.

NOTE: Distributions to Donor-advised funds do not qualify for this tax break. Also, funds distributed directly to you (the IRA owner) and which you then give to a charity do not qualify as tax-free, unless your total deductions exceed the standard deduction.

You can't give your required minimum distribution from a 401(k) to charity without triggering a tax. However you can roll over your 401(k) tax-free if you roll all of the funds to a Traditional IRA. When the entire 401(k) is rolled over, then you can make limited tax-free distributions to a charity.

*Vern Hance
FPCC Finance Committee*



The 2021 FPCC Leadership Retreat

This year's Retreat took place at the church June 11-12. This is what our Leadership teams worked on:

The 2021 Leadership Retreat began with a deep dive into FPCC's vision of being a Community Hub by discussing what makes this vision a real possibility for the church, as well the degree to which this vision resonates with our congregation's passion to make an impact on the larger community. It then moved on to a discussion of particular programs and how these could come to reflect our vision of being a Community Hub.

Elders and deacons considered such things as how to align the church's staff and committees with its vision and worked on coming up with mission statements for a proposed new committee system. They also had a chance to learn about two different approaches to discernment in the Christian context, Ignatian discernment and Quaker Clearness Committees.

Here are some of the questions leaders discussed in their breakout sessions:

- How is our vision of being a Community Hub something we can be "the best" at?
- How might our vision inform the way we do ministry?
- How might we rethink our committee system given the following...
 - That multiple committees are currently being staffed by the same people?
 - That many of our committees would gain from being in close conversation with other committees?
 - That some of our current committees are on the small side and would benefit from additional voices?

The Teams included these members of our congregation (in no particular order):

Trudy Meigs	Judith Snider	Susan Koester
Matt Chapman	David Dowell	Frank Fribley
Ruth Stevenson	Terry Jones	Rebecca Chase
Beth Byrne	Robin Stearns	David Stearns
Jon Myers	Nanci Powers	Harold Lund
Andrew Cardiasmenos	Carolyn Thornton	Josie Mauck
Don Horgan	Lee Borden	Josh Maitland
Jeremy Martin	Ron Potts	Charmaine Ferrera
Bill Selb	Emily Selb	
Pastor Johanna	Lisa Justice	

Future editions of *First Press Express* will contain more information regarding the thoughts and experiences of the participants so stay tuned.



“Make Us One,” by Jesus Culture

Teaching new songs to the congregation every now and then is an essential part of Presbyterian

worship. If we never did this, we would be limited to singing hymns from the 1800s, and classic modern hymns like “Shine, Jesus, Shine” and “10,000 Reasons” would never be familiar to us. On top of this, there is something especially refreshing and exciting about introducing Christian songs that are meaningful and inspirational for a particular sermon’s message. Therefore, in each First Press Express as we move forward, we plan to highlight a song FPCC is currently learning as an opportunity to delve deeper into its meaning and real-world application.

This month for two Sundays in a row, we introduced the song “Make us One” by Jesus Culture. Written in 2017, “Make Us One’s” lyrics are a powerful reminder that God intends us to live in harmony, since we are all one family under the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although we live in a broken world today, filled with divisions, barriers and conflicts, we have hope to

overcome this through our trust in God.

We started out by learning this very simple chorus:

“Make us one, make us one. Your will be done, make us one!”
The frequent repetition of the chorus serves almost like a mantra or meditative prayer. When we sing it collectively and with true faith in God, we hope to manifest it in our world.

Meanwhile, the bridge addresses some of the challenges facing our society: pride, wars, and violence, to name a few. These lyrics help us to acknowledge and recognize ways that our community has wandered from the will of God.

After addressing these issues, we then call upon the Lord to heal our world with “His great river,” before transitioning back to the invocation in the chorus.

The beauty of “Make us One” is that it’s not a personal or individual prayer, but rather a collective one, reaching out to the big picture of reconciliation and unification that ideally should be on our minds as Christians every day.

*In Christ,
Andrew Cardiasmenos*



Summer is here and for many of us, now that the Pandemic is not in the forefront of our lives in the same way it has been for the last 15 months, that means gatherings with family and friends, BBQ's, trips, and so many things that we enjoy. So, beginning with this issue, First Press Express is going to, with the help of our members, publish a recipe for food to accompany the fun.

This first one is a family favorite of ours. We call it Mary Kay's Pink Salad, in honor of Diane's BFF, Mary Kemp. It is really tasty and pretty easy to prepare.

1 small package of Strawberry Jell-o
1 pt. container cottage cheese
Mix well

Add 1 medium size container of cool whip
Mix well
Add 1 small can of mandarin Oranges (drained)

May be made early and chilled or prepared at mealtime
Serves 6-8

If green Jell-o is your preferred flavor, this can be made with that and crushed pineapple. Of course, then it's not Mary Kay's Pink Salad . . . That's okay.

Submissions of favorite goodies that you would like to share with others are encouraged. Please send them to me at allen_nickerson@comcast.net. The more the merrier and please make my selections difficult by sending a lot of ideas. Happy Summer!!



But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)



FPCC is Going Solar!

As many of you know, Session approved a solar energy project last fall to install solar panels on the Education and Fellowship Hall roofs. The project would have been installed in December 2020 but the pandemic delayed solar panel production until now.

The current schedule is for installation in August and PG&E approval for activation by August 1. The system will generate significant savings for us – our annual electric bill is over \$20,000 per year. The new annual rate (12 months after activation) should be under \$2000 per year.

We are excited to make a beneficial environmental impact that will reduce our carbon footprint and improve our financial picture for many years. Over the estimated 30 year lifetime of the system, FPCC will save an estimated \$935,000. So watch for the construction to begin soon!

Jim Whitfield
FPCC Solar Project Team

FPCC Staff

Rev. Dr. Johanna McCune Wagner	Senior Pastor
Rebecca Chase, CLP	Director, Children and Family Ministries
DeVonn Powers, CLP	Director, Outreach
Andrew Cardiasmenos	Director, Music & Worship
Darryl McCollum, CLP	Director, Special Musical Services
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Lisa Gonzalez	Financial and Human Resources Specialist
Harold Lund	Custodian & Night Watchman



Editor's Note: *First Press Express* is a publication of the First Presbyterian Church of Concord, California, printing nine times each year. Comments or questions may be directed to Allen Nickerson at allen_nickerson@comcast.net.