

FIRST PRESS

The newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Concord, California

Fall 2022



News From the Church Ministry Partners

Session did not meet in August, so we want to share some of the things that are being addressed at the Tuesday morning staff meetings.



Importantly, the Church has signed a contract with our new ministry coach and mentor, the Reverend Doctor Carol Antablin Miles. To help ensure the success of our interim leadership model the Presbytery encouraged FPCC to retain a pastor, counselor, or coach with pastoral experience to coach and support the four Ministry Partners. The Reverend Doctor Miles has agreed to work with FPCC. She will operate in an

advisory capacity and will attend staff meetings, meet individually with each ministry partner, and attend other important meetings. She will also serve as the Presbytery's ordained pastor supervising FPCC's three Commissioned Lay Pastors. Reverend Doctor Miles currently serves as senior pastor for the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Oakland.

by Darryl McCollum CLP



Lunch with the Pastoral Team

Your pastoral team is here for you and wants to hear from you, including how you've been holding up during these tumultuous times. You are invited to join them for a small-group lunch that will be part of a series. Each lunch will be held on Sundays following the Sunday School hour.

You can sign up in advance during the Sunday coffee time. The first lunch will be on Sunday, September 25 at 12:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall.



Summer Barbecue Fun

As indicated in the accompanying photos, the BBQ on August 14 was a remarkable success. More than a hundred hamburgers and hotdogs were grilled and served. Four of the churches on campus participated, and several community representatives attended. The “bounce house” was very popular among the children, and we’re sure we saw some disappointed adults when they found out about the weight limit.

Thanks to all of the volunteers who made the day fun, memorable, and tasty! Thanks is also due to all of you who attended. Opportunities like this provide social bonding, which is an important part of the lives of our worshipping community.

About the Tuesday Staff Meetings

For those who are not familiar, a typical agenda for the regular Tuesday staff meeting looks like this:

- Opening prayer and a devotional
- Review of the Sunday worship service
- Discussion of congregational concerns
- Assessing pastoral care needs and assigning responsibilities
- Discussion of any new business
- Identifying new visitors to the church and planning follow-up
- Discussing other issues that need to be addressed
- Closing prayer

During this meeting we review both the in-person and online Sunday service experience to see what worked, what didn’t work, and how we can we do better. For instance, it is at this meeting we learned that our t-coil loop for hearing aids often doesn’t work and is inconveniencing some of our attendees. Accordingly, the staff is taking bids on a replacement system to improve the worship experience.

Another example has to do with our new September sermon series. A church member suggested a sermon series on “bread” in the Bible. The staff agreed that it was a worthy topic. In our discussion, the idea of serving communion each Sunday during the sermon series was suggested. The staff then made a motion for Session to approve serving the sacrament of communion each Sunday during September. This motion passed unanimously via an e-vote.

Here are some of the issues the staff has been involved with recently:

- Emergency response
- Mandatory reporting training
- Safety policy for children and at-risk adults
- Relating to diverse populations
- New member classes
- Communication strategies

Pastoral Care – we regularly review and respond to all pastoral care needs that we learn about from the deacons, family members, and individuals.

Q. How is the model working out?

by Darryl McCollum CLP

Our All-Church Barbecue





The Godly Play Program

“Time, time, time... there are all kinds of time.”

This is the beginning of the lesson, “The Circle of the Church Year,” when the children learn about how “church time” works. Our summer ended with all our parables uncovered. A new year begins when we learn there are mysterious great feasts of the year

(Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost), and times is needed to get ready for them.

In the next few weeks, the children will be introduced to the Holy Bible and the Good Shepherd. Then, in mid-September the children begin at the beginning, with the stories of Creation, and The Ark, and the Flood.

From October until Advent, Godly Play will be all about the Old Testament stories that take place in the desert or the wilderness. We have a desert box that we pull out, where People of God will walk, where almost nothing grows, and where there is almost no water. Each week, they are reminded of the following:

“The desert is a dangerous place. People die without food and water. When the wind comes, it blows the sand and the shape of the desert changes. People lose their way. The desert is a dangerous place. You need to be ready to go into the desert.”

In late November, we will begin telling the story of Advent, lighting a candle for the prophets. We have learned from our first story about the church year that this purple Sunday is the beginning of the church year. It is also a time to get ready to enter the mystery of Christmas.

I wonder which story the children will like best. I wonder where they will find themselves in these stories. I wonder what questions they will ask. I do wonder.

by Rebecca Chase, CLP



DeVonn Powers to Serve as a Missionary to the Holy Land

DeVonn Powers has responded to the call of our Lord to join with Christy Reiner to serve as a short-term missionary for Christy’s “In His Steps” Holy Land ministry. She will help Christy launch Phase 1 of a new breast cancer project and will be serving from approximately September 22 to Oct. 4.

DeVonn already heads a major community ministry, “Humanity Way,” that is headquartered on our campus. She will be taking leave of absence and resume her work with “Humanity” Way when she returns.

DeVonn has received approval from Session to begin raising funds to pay for her travel expenses, which are expected to total \$5,000. She has already halfway there, having raised \$2,500. You can support her in this effort by making your tax-deductible contribution to the church. Be sure to indicate “Holy Land Mission” when making your contribution.

It has been a while since FPCC has sent out a missionary, in part due to Covid. Our departed friend, Sally Smith, helped Christy in the early days of her Holy Land ministry, and traveled overseas to help her ministry out on more than one occasion. Christy is a member of our church.



Fall Music Happenings

As the summer ends and we usher in the Fall, the choir is back again in full swing! It's great to have our voices back in worship, preparing an anthem and leading hymns to add color to Sunday services! Soon the choir will come together on October 29 in the Fireside room for a fun and productive retreat, delving deep into new music for the Christmas concert this year. While we're at it, please mark your calendars for the concert, which will be on Sunday, December 11 at 7pm. It will feature guest vocalists and a small chamber orchestra. It will be memorable for sure, and we look forward to sharing it with all of you!

As we begin a new Fall season and gear up for our upcoming concert, we welcome anyone interested in singing to join our choir family! Why join the choir, you might ask?

- Singing during worship is a wonderful way to participate in the service!
- Singing together on Thursday nights is a truly cathartic experience that can melt away stress and anxiety and replace it with joy!
- You join a wonderful close-knit family that supports and uplifts each other
- It's fun! We laugh in rehearsals and build a solid community alongside the music.
- Our annual retreat in October features food and activities alongside workshops and rehearsals!

"Grateful Heart" is another wonderful opportunity for music ministry at FPCC! We welcome singers, guitar and bass players, drummers, and keyboardists to join our praise band! It's so much fun to rock out for the glory of God!

If you play ANY musical instrument, whether violin, trombone, or marimba, please reach out to me as we would love to have you participate in special music throughout the year, including for the concert!

Lastly, we are pleased to have Jason Stanczak mixing sound in the booth, and Amit Poudel running video and slides at the Sunday services. We appreciate all your help!

by Andrew Cardiasmenos



Major Coming Events to Calendar

Sept 11 Deacon's meeting
Sept 11 Come and See classes begin
Sept 17 Merry Mac annual potluck and wine tasting*
Sept 22 Tea and Coffee – 2-4 PM
Sept 2 Lunch with the pastors
Sept 25 First "Lunch with the Pastors"
Sept 27 Theology on Tap guest speaker Dr. Eric Harvey
Oct 8 Tea, Coffee, Ice cream and games – 2-4 PM
Oct 8 3PM to 7PM Family movie in the afternoon followed by dinner
Oct 29 Octoberfest celebration and dinner at the Church
Oct 29 Choir retreat on campus (Choir will take a break to participate in Octoberfest)
Dec 11 Christmas Concert (Time TBD)

* RSVP to Frank Fribley. New members welcome.

Solar Energy System Now Operating!



It's official! On August 9th PG&E gave the final approval for FPCC to turn on its solar power system, meaning that we are now able to generate our own electricity! This is a crucial step for us, as it is estimated to reduce our electricity consumption by 80%. The up-front cost of the project was \$92,460 but will pay for itself within about 5 years. We estimate our bill from PG&E will be reduced by approximately \$20,000 in the first full year of operations and by more than \$1 million over the expected 30-year life of the system.

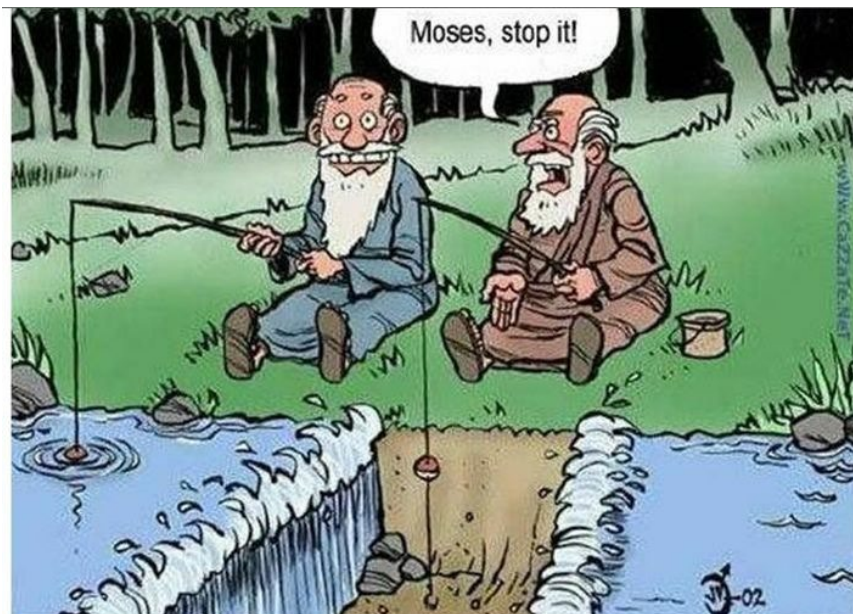
But, more importantly in this age of environmental concern, this reduces the church's carbon footprint significantly.

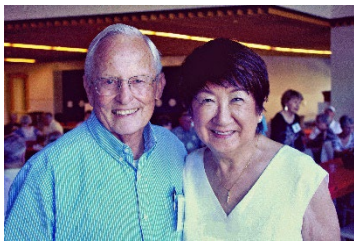
This marks the end of a long journey for FPCC and our prime contractor WattHub LLC. In 2019 Session gave approval for us to begin the task of requesting proposals for this solar project, and in early 2020 WattHub and two other contractors submitted their proposals. Then COVID hit, and things slowed down. The uncertainty of our church finances delayed our initial decision to proceed, and it wasn't until October 2020 that we finally signed a contract with WattHub. But COVID kept getting in the way. First WattHub had a delay in completing their design, and then their installation subcontractor went out of business, forcing them to find another contractor and resubmit applications to the approving agencies (Fire Marshall, City of Concord, and PG&E).

Finally, things started moving again late in 2021. In November, the solar panels were ordered, and installation began in February 2022. We began producing energy on March 21, but even though the system was operational, we couldn't get full benefit until the 3 approving agencies signed off. So back again to the Fire Marshall, City and PG&E, with additional hoops to jump through. Finally on August 9th PG&E gave us their approval to turn the system on, which meant we could now get full benefit from the system. Our thanks to the team from FPCC who shepherded this project through, including Jeremy Martin, who got the ball rolling back in 2019 and 2020; Jim Whitfield, who acted as our "expediter" to keep the fire under WattHub's feet; Frank Fibley, who provided Trustee approvals when necessary; Jon Myers, who provided advice along the way; and David Stearns, who acted as the facility contact during installation.

by David Stearns

On the Lighter Side





September Biography: Kimi and David Dowell

God works in mysterious ways, and in the case of David and Kimi Dowell His timing was impeccable!

David was born in Birmingham, Alabama and moved to Concord with his family in 1951 when in the 5th grade.

Eventually his family began to call FPCC their church home after David joined the Boy Scout Troop sponsored by the church.

Kimi was born at Concord Community Hospital and lived on a farm with 3 brothers. During the 2nd World War her family was shipped to the Tule Lake Internment Center in Northern California when she was about 4 years' old, but the family returned to Concord after the war, and Kimi and David were classmates at Mt. Diablo High School. Kimi also participated in the FPCC high school youth group. Both David and Kimi attended the University of California-Berkeley, married others soon after college, and moved away from the Bay Area. When single again they reunited at the 40-year high school reunion and were married 6 months later in 1999!! David has 3 sons, and Kimi has a son and a daughter plus 2 Korean girls adopted at about 4 or 5 years of age. (The current family count: David has 10 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren; Kimi has 6 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild).

David earned his MBA in accounting and practiced his vocation as Chief Financial Officer in Berkeley, Fresno, and Quincy hospitals. After moving back to the Bay Area, he became Director of Finance and Administration at the UC Berkeley Extension, and later served as an administrator at Peralta Community College District in Oakland. He finished his career as a financial consultant, and finally a part-time income tax preparer.

Kimi, likewise, had gone back to school, earning her Doctor of Law degree at American University in Washington DC, where she worked for the US Department of Labor. After marrying David, she transferred to the SF office and worked there another 15 years.

Settling in Clayton, and later Benicia, we are fortunate that David and Kimi chose to "come back home" to FPCC in 2000. Their spiritual kinship was a major factor in their marriage and has certainly been a spiritual blessing for us!! Kimi has graced the sanctuary with her beautiful floral arrangements, and both help with Sunday coffee service; together they served as co-Deacons. David is in his 4th term as an Elder. He has been involved with planning leadership retreats many times, has served on the Mission Committee for 20 years and has been a Trustee. He also has started a series of men's Bible studies that began in 2002 that have continued to the present day. Recently, he has become our Communications Chair, leading him to become a "graphic artist," designing beautiful posters to promote current church events.

On June 25, Kimi was awarded the Paul Harris Fellow award from Rotary International Foundation for community service for her leadership and efforts in helping to secure honorary diplomas for the families of Mt. Diablo High School students who were taken out of school and sent to the internment camps. It took more than a year to get the school approval and track down the families or descendants for 40 students. Kimi conducted most of this work while undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. Recent scans indicate the cancer no longer seems to be spreading! Praise God!

Thank you, God, for these two wonderful people who are sharing their multiple skills and talents so unselfishly with all of us! David's favorite song is "Hallelujah". Let's sing it in praise to God as a thankful tribute to Kimi and David who responded to God's impeccable timing and chose to love and serve us in His name!

by Beth Byrne



Editor's Note: First Press *Express* is a publication of the First Presbyterian Church of Concord, California, printed several times each year.

FPCC Staff

Darryl McCollum, CLP
Rebecca Chase, CLP
DeVonn Powers, CLP
Lisa Justice, Student Pastor
Andrew Cardiasmenos
Robin Stearns
Linde Weber
Harold Lund

Ministry Partner
Ministry Partner
Ministry Partner
Ministry Partner
Director, Music & Worship
Preschool Director
Financial and Human Resources Specialist
Custodian & Night Watchman

David Dowell

Acting Editor, First Press and *Express*

