



First Pres Challenger

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SERVE

Equipping God's Family at First Presbyterian Church, Fresno

January 2009

The Annual Report For 2008

New Appearances By Jamie Evans

We were given a new set of appearances by 2008. We are fast changing as a congregation.

I watch as the AWANA culture percolates through our congregation, junior and senior high meet here on Wednesday nights, and the campus teems with life and Biblical teaching. Home-schooled, private-schooled, and public-schooled children are all together in this mix.

We fuse a set of educational cultures in this way. The home schoolers are growing in our population in their intentionality and their passion for the family's role in raising up the next generation.

Though Kristy and I have chosen to raise our two in the public system, we are grateful for them rubbing spiritual elbows with this burgeoning home-school ethos. This has brought change to our campus, more complicated and richer, not a homogenous culture any longer, and very intentional.

What is God up to in this? I believe He is deepening all of us. Youth is a major emphasis; babies ride a tsunami here in number and for this we are thankful. Greg Ehlert, Marcie York, Craig Blodgett, Corrie Sands, Stacy Johns and Rebekah Pope all deserve our deep appreciation for this vision playing out well.

We chose by a maximum vote 550 to 10 (449 to 9 members) to leave our denomination, remain Presbyterian, but travel to a more orthodox body, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. This was the culmination of years of study, prayer and preparation as the elders and staff voted 37 to 0 to follow this course. Now we wait in

the hands of our Presbytery for their choices on the matter. We do not travel alone. Already six churches have intentioned this, and more may follow in this region. We are in very good company as we go: Trinity, Fowler, Millbrook, Hanford, and Sanger are all fellow passengers in this quest.



This is a massive vote, for culturally Christ appears to be calling a number of congregations out of comfortable relationships into very new alliances in order to remain vital in His ministry. David Abdo and Chris Rosik did much to prepare the ground work for this exodus. We owe them much for their prescient theology and courageous recommendations.

Ted Miller, our financial elder, has brought us good news for this year's financial closing. In a disastrous economic era the Holy Spirit has given us encouragement as you have supplied giving levels close to last year's, meeting all the commitments to our missionaries, ministries and staff needs while at the same time completing our capital campaign out at over \$3.4 million given. For this we are yet again dependent

upon our Father who has never let us fall into unmet need.

In January our last two phases of construction will begin as we rejuvenate our sanctuary exterior creating a gentle and gracious early California mission architecture. We want to participate in the renovation of downtown Fresno, and our hope is that God's House will be of the highest of quality, be more beautiful than our own homes, and communicate that serious business is done here.

We will begin with a mess in 2009 as construction alters our appearance, yet the final result should be a gift to the next generation as an anchor in time.

Kristy and I continue to find this calling a joy and privilege. You are a dream congregation to serve. We believe we are just getting started in the labors to which God has called us.

Special Sunday Schedule January 25, 2009

8:30 a.m.

Brunch and Congregational Meeting in Fellowship Hall

10:30 a.m.

Joint Worship Service

Regular Schedule Resumes
On February 1

PRAYER BIBLICAL LITERACY EVANGELISM SERVICE WORSHIP MISSION

A Spiritually Healthy Congregation by Scott McCallum



Each year I have the pleasure to report to you as the Clerk of Session. The activities for 2008 are detailed in each of the Ministry Team Reports. My report is more focused on the spiritual health

of our Session. From my time with Session, I have learned more and more about our eternal relationship with Christ. In the past, I have shared my observations on how the Lord has unified the Session in Spirit. This year I have observed how the Lord has used prayer and faith to give Session the confidence to be obedient to His Word.

Scripture tells us that the prayer of a “righteous” man can accomplish much. Scripture also tells us that God considered Abraham as a righteous man, not on account of his works, but on account of his faith. In 2008, major steps have been taken through prayer and faith. I am very grateful for the elders, and I am pleased to report of Session’s sincere dedication to His will and their trust in His Word.

One of the greatest steps in faith this year was Session’s decision to leave the Presbyterian Church of the USA. It was a decision that took nearly four years of diligence, prayer, discernment, planning and obedience. As we saw the denomination’s devotion to the Word deteriorate, we began to feel broken hearted; much like one would feel upon discovering a spouse’s infidelity. With each General Assembly, the departure of the PC(USA) became greater and greater.

We saw a denomination once dedicated to the Word, transformed into one that would sacrifice the Word for political tolerance. We began to see a denomination where polity prevailed over Scripture. In the process, we found out a lot about the PC(USA) and about ourselves. I witnessed a Session with a solid love for Christ and a commitment to His will. I saw a unified Session, who could not accept the revision of Scripture, and who could not ignore the sal-

vation of those being misled. On November 2, 2008, our Congregation concurred with Session by a vote of 449 in favor, and 9 opposed.

I am honored to report that our Session is obedient to God’s Word, prays as a matter of course, and trusts fully in the Lord. I am confident that the Lord will continue to lead our Session, as we leave the PC(USA) and transfer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

During 2008, we began to reap the fruits of another major step taken in prayer and faith. We began to see the results of our Mission Possible Campaign. We now have a larger Nursery on the ground floor. Our high school and junior high students are now worshipping in a renovated space. Through His grace and provisions, we have a new home for Hope Now for Youth and a place of worship for Bethany Inner City Church.

Renovations to Rooms 102 and 104 will soon be completed, giving us the needed space for adult Sunday School classes. We will also have a hospitality room, complete with a coffee bar. We have begun the renovations to our sanctuary, by improving the acoustics and the sound system. In 2009, construction will begin on the exterior.

A daunting task for any Session is adopting a budget. I am grateful to report that 2008 was another year, in which God faithfully provided the perfect amount to sustain His ministries at First Pres. In preparing the 2009 budget, the elders prayed over each line item of their Ministry Team’s budget. The result was a leaner budget for 2009; but one that will assure that our staff is rightfully compensated.

God has blessed our Church with a Christian Education program that continues to grow. On a regular basis, we have over 20 babies in the nursery and 50 preschoolers in Sunday School.

Elementary, junior high and high school groups have also grown. It seems that God had a plan when He called us to expand the nursery and

Sunday School facilities with our Mission Possible Campaign.

He also had a plan when He called us to adopt an AWANA Program. After just a few years, our AWANA program has 125 children in attendance. Members of our church have enjoyed working with the Lord in this ministry, and His Hand is evident. We have received the Silver Award from AWANA, and our program is now a model for other churches.

Session has also been faithful and obedient in our mission ministry. Session believes that God is calling congregations to be conduits for Him to give to others in order to expand His kingdom. Session therefore views our mission budget as our tithe, and sees our members’ dedication to our mission partners as a sign of a healthy congregation. Each year, our mission budget exceeds ten percent. The 2009 budget is no exception. As a result, we have a healthy Congregation, in which our members and our youth have a heart to serve in the mission field.

The fruits of our deacons’ program also reflect our Congregation’s spiritual health. I can tell you from personal experience the value of the deacons’ ministry. My mother is one of the S.T.A.R.S., and I have been blessed by their love for her. We have a church that not only cares for its own members, but also for others.

When the deacons learned that the Angel Food Distribution program had terminated, they decided to institute their own program. We now have a food distribution program, in which children have arrived hours early to receive groceries from our deacons.

2008 has certainly been a year marked by God’s faithfulness to our prayers and our obedience to His Word. And 2009 will bring many new and exciting opportunities for ministry. 2009 will also bring many challenges requiring faith, prayer and obedience.

So I ask that you continue to keep this church, its members, its staff and its leadership in prayer. I look forward to the challenges of 2009, because He has shown me that with faith, prayer and obedience, we will not be disappointed.

Ministry Team Reports

Adult Nurture

2008 was filled with new fellowship opportunities, spiritual deepening and refreshment for the adults in our congregation.

Sunday morning Outfitters classes were filled with inspiring teaching and interaction from both our staff and lay people. Our new members class added 23 new members to our church body this year. Sunday mornings also saw a change in the coffee cart ministry. The coffee cart is now hosted by families and ministry teams. There is a new host each week of the year.

Writing the Word on our hearts is a priority at First Presbyterian Church. This year saw the beginning of Monday Night Moore Bible Study for women. The study runs throughout the school year on Monday evenings. Several dozen women meet, share deeply and learn using the Beth Moore Bible Study programs. Thursday Morning Bible Study and the Morning Glory Bible Studies also continue to minister to the women of our church. The mid-week Bible study at the Elbow Room met for a portion of the year.

Satellite Sundays were introduced this year. These are opportunities for small group fellowships around a common interest. In March we held a Satellite Sunday for Shutter Bugs in Yosemite National Park. They had a delightful time photographing God's beautiful creation together. In addition, several dozen couples from First Pres as well as Bethany Church participated in Mastering the Mysteries of Love classes led by Roger and Marilyn Minassian.

2008 continued the tradition of holding quality conferences at Calvin Crest for the men and the women of our congregation. Our conferences are a great opportunity for members of our church body to grow in their relationships with each other and the Lord.

The Second Half Club held several events during the year. This year also saw the first event for the LAUNCH—the in-betweeners who are not 20 or 30-somethings and not the Second-Half Club. The evening was filled with a delicious dinner and brainstorming for the future of this new group.

Women's Ministries held many events throughout the year. In January, Women's Ministries hosted another Fog-Lifter Series. For three consecutive Sunday evenings, women ate dinner together and learned about God's Covenant. A beautiful Friendship Tea was held for women and special friends and family in May. Throughout the summer, lunch gatherings were held around town for the women of our church to have fellowship together.

There are many continuing ministries for the adults in our congregation including: Marriage Mentors, house churches, Family Camp, college ministry, and Church in Society.

The completion of the A-1 building for Youth Ministries opened up two rooms for adult use. Room 102, the former Media Room, has been re-carpeted and is ready for use. Room 104, the former high school room, is in the midst of renovation as an adult classroom with a café. We have a wonderful committee working on making this a great room for fellowship and learning. Much has happened and continues to happen so that our hearts overflow with gratitude to the Lord.

—Mindy Franklin

Budget

I am very happy and grateful to report a bountiful and balanced 2008 financial year for First Pres. Through God's mercy and grace, your gifts and offerings, and heroic management of expenses by elders and staff, we have completed the year "in the black." Our 2008 church expenses came in below budget and we enjoyed a wonderful season of giving. This is particularly noteworthy in light of our nation's current economic crisis and the economic plight of so many churches and non-profit organizations. *Praise the Lord!* Looking ahead to 2009, Session has adopted another tight budget, virtually equal to last year's total. Many diffi-



cult choices and sacrifices had to be made by your elders, deacons and staff in finalizing the 2009 budget. A modest cost of living increase has been provided to our pastors and staff in 2009. Session will diligently monitor our finances going forward, particularly in light of our upcoming move

to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Session is committed to leading our church through prayer. Please join us in your prayers for a successful and Spirit-led year in 2009. *The Annual Financial Report can be found on page 5.*

—Ted Miller

Christian Education

Nursery/Preschool

We have many blessings to be thankful for, and they are the best kind, cute, round and cuddly! We had lots of new babies born this year with even more on the way. This has been a trend over the last several years. Our new nursery facility is *wonderful* and we are daily so grateful for the gift that it has been in creating a safe and warm environment where our littlest ones can be introduced to the Good News about Jesus.

Of course, as we predicted, the nursery is already brimming to full. We have many committed volunteers that faithfully come and care for these babies and toddlers. Because of the trend of families joyfully welcoming new children into their homes, we have experienced lots of growth in the preschool area as well. Therefore, we will be adding a class. Five years ago we had one class that served all children ages 2-5. Since then, we have split that group into 2 classes. It is now clear that we need another split. Beginning in January we will have a transition class between the nursery and the young preschool class, designated

Ministry Team Reports, Continued

specifically for 2-year-olds. That will relieve pressure on the nursery and other classes.

So, if God is tugging on your heart to spend a little time at the second service with some precious little people that need to be told about Jesus, come sign up! Our older preschool classes continue to learn about Jesus and what we do to worship Him. They also learn about the calendar of the church year and how we use the Word of God, looking toward events that celebrate the life of Jesus and the great gift that He is to us. We are increasingly grateful for the obvious care and generosity that First Pres shares with the littlest ones among us. We are looking forward to another year filled with pointing to the one and only God with praise!

—Corrie Sands

Elementary Department

The kindergarten-sixth grade children at First Pres have had another great year going deeper in their understanding of God's Word. Through the faithful service of 40 Sunday morning volunteers, children are interacting on a practical level with strong biblical truths from both the Old and New Testaments.

Kindergarten-fourth grades continue to learn from the monthly rotation cycles of Bible Knowledge, Games/Drama, Media, and Art/Cooking. Five shepherds make a nine-month commitment to be with these children every week, building relationships and helping them apply what they are learning to their lives. Rhonda Pope equips the rotation teaching teams with their monthly curriculum and Craig Hill leads the children in singing and worship at the start of every Sunday. The fifth-sixth grade class under Wendi Norvell's leadership continues to be a vital, relational atmosphere in which kids build friendships and take their knowledge and application of biblical principles to a richer, deeper level. God has also provided excellent teaching teams for our 8:30 and 11:00 kindergarten-second graders, who are dismissed from the worship services, and I praise Him for each person!

The AWANA ministry for preschool-sixth grade children is thriving

and continues to grow on Wednesday nights under the leadership of Craig and Ruth Hill. It takes over 40 dedicated men and women to build into the lives of 125 eager, excited children each week! Jim Cousins continues to provide creative, delicious dinners beforehand for our dinner crowd.

Winter camp at Sugar Pine and summer camps at Calvin Crest were great opportunities for children to make friends and go deeper with God. The summer networker ministry was chock full of activities that fostered friendships, built mentoring relationships and helped children grow in their faith. Vacation Bible Blast was just that, a blast! Our leadership teams were enthusiastic, empowered and 125 children were blessed by their ministry.

—Marcie York

Junior High

This year, the junior highs experienced a spring break mission trip to Westminster Woods Camp, and went to winter camp at Calvin Crest. We said goodbye to Kevin Conrad and Adam Brown as advisors, while saying hello to Megan McGuire and Brittney Dull, our new advisors. On Wednesday nights we studied the book of Philippians, 1,2,3 John, and Old Testament characters. On Sunday mornings we studied basic Christianity, parables, and how to share your faith, role models, and different religions. We moved in to the A1 building and have Bible studies on Wednesday nights there.

Networkers

We had a terrific summer with seven students, host families, speakers. The NET did an outstanding job praying, mentoring, and overseeing the ministry

—Craig Blodgett

Senior High

Our senior high group, the SOURCE, experienced a great year in 2008. New students and new advisors joined that group and the year was full of fruitful and relevant ministry. With a ski trip in January, winter camp in February, a mission trip to Mexico in March, graduations in May and June, a

summer full of great activities including summer camp, a bike trip, special events, or the fall semester with game nights, Santa Cruz retreat, broom hockey, and a Christmas party, our senior high students grew in faith and friendship. Mary Koon worked faithfully in the spring semester as an intern and Justin Beatty came on board in the fall. A key addition to the ministry in 2008 was the finalizing of the A1 Youth Center. Our Wednesday night Bible studies have been thriving and we are grateful to God for our partnerships with Hope Now for Youth and Bethany Inner-City Church. We are looking forward to all that God has in store for 2009 in ministry.

—Rev. Greg Ehlert

Church Care

"Maintenance and Completion" has been our mantra in 2008. Restructuring of the sound system has been completed along with interior painting that was not planned, to blend in the sound panels. Our new nursery is in full-to-capacity use.

Our youth are enjoying their new space in the renovated building on the corner. Bethany Church shares the junior high space and Hope Now makes daily use of the rest of that building. What a blessed partnership.

Now it's on to the exterior improvement of our sanctuary. Hopefully by the time you are reading this report that process will be in full swing.

We want to remember all the people who volunteer countless hours caring for our facilities. We especially recognize Charlie Shuler who spends every Friday responding to our "honey do" list and our fearless team leader, Robert Wood. Bless you.

—Susan Glover

Church In Society

CIS has had a very busy and climactic year. First and foremost some of our committee members attended the 218th General Assembly of the PC(USA) in San Jose last June. Prior to the GA, we hosted a class to educate interested congregants on how the GA works and some of the key issues that were slated to be

Ministry Team Reports, Continued

addressed.

After years of following denominational issues, the deliberations and actions of the last GA reached such an unbiblical and culture-driven level that CIS drafted a recommendation requesting session to transfer our pastors and property from the PC(USA) to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. (EPC). As you know by now, our discussions with staff, session, and the congregation resulted in church members voting 449-9 to seek this transfer. CIS earnestly solicits your regular prayers for our church leadership as they continue to shepherd First Pres through the denominational transfer process.

CIS was involved in the Proposition 8 drama, which is still playing out in California. We helped gather signatures to place the initiative on ballot, financially supported the initiative, and developed a voter guide and other information to educate the congregation on the importance of traditional marriage.

We continued our support of right-to-life efforts by organizing the “changing babies” fundraiser at First Pres, which supports the local Pregnancy Care Center, as well as educating the congregation about the parental notification initiative.

We have continued to be a resource to staff and session concerning moral issues in the culture where society needs to hear from the church. While CIS will

continue to follow denominational issues in both the PC(USA) and the EPC, we are looking forward to broadening our horizons in 2009. If you have interest in a moral or justice issue that involves the interface of church and society, I would encourage you to talk to me or other committee members, who include Francis Weaver, Vince Correll, Paul Deffebach, Jim Dice, Keith Walsh, Donald Norman, Jim Emerson, Brian Dolan, and Jeanne Dolan.

—Chris Rosik

Deacons

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:3-6 ,N.I.V.

In the same spirit, the main task of the eighteen serving deacons is to minister compassionately and joyfully to the members of the congregation in times of need. However, in order to do so, we call on you for assistance through the Harvest of Helpers insert. Last November, the Harvest of Helpers insert was included in the Sunday Worship Bulletin on two consecutive Sundays. Your response as a congregation

was heart-warming. There were a total of 103 Harvest of Helpers who responded. This army of 103 angels will be called during 2009 to assist in the areas of service identified by the responder.


The deacons’ **Meal Support Committee** will be calling upon **39 volunteers** to prepare meals for those who are sick or in need. **46 congregation members** signed up to provide food for Memorial Receptions when the deacons’ **Memorial Reception Committee** hosts a reception to usher a saint to heaven. Food will be provided on a monthly basis by **31 members**. The deacons’ **Food Closet Committee** keeps the church food closet stocked up.

There are **eleven working committees** within the board of deacons. The **Communion Committee** faithfully prepares the elements for communion on the first Sunday of each month. The **Deacon’s Corner Committee** prepares articles featuring our S.T.A.R.S. (*Seniors That Are Really Special*). The **Love INC (in the Name of Christ) Committee** links us with Christian churches in the Fresno/Clovis area to help show God’s love to people in practical and effective ways. This committee responds to requests. The **Special Events Committee** plans and hosts events such as the brunch for the congregational meeting in January. This committee also initiated the food ministry described later in the report.

The **Sunshine Committee** ministers through cards/notes to individuals who are sick, bereaved, or celebrating the birth of a baby. The **Transportation Committee** provides rides to and from church to individuals not able to drive. The **Congregational Care Committee**, has assisted members with caring health needs. We are indeed grateful to you since you increase our serving capacity and also personalize the service. (If you are in need of any of the services provided by the deacons, please call the church office and ask for assistance.)

2008 FPC Annual Financial Report (Ted Miller’s report is on page 3)			
	Budget	2008 Actual	2009 Budget
Administration	\$44,645	\$53,461	\$47,230
Adult Nurture	\$38,400	\$20,126	\$35,600
Deacons	\$2,150	\$1,155	\$1,850
Capital Tech Fund	\$0	\$0	\$0
Worship	\$43,475	\$43,218	\$42,830
Christian Ed	\$70,000	\$51,008	\$63,000
Church Care	\$105,000	\$111,320	\$109,720
Evangelism	\$30,850	\$18,454	\$26,300
Missions	\$139,200	\$138,663	\$136,200
Ministry Equipping	\$2,500	\$1,775	\$2,250
Personnel	\$813,137	\$804,153	\$825,142
Totals	\$1,289,357	\$1,243,333	\$1,290,122
2008 Revenues	\$1,309,704		

Per Capita	
G.A.	\$ 6.15
Synod	\$ 5.17
Presbytery	\$ 15.68
Per Member	\$ 28.00



Ministry Team Reports, Continued

Last year the seeds were sown for a pilot program entitled the Shepherds Ministry under the **Shepherds Committee**. The Shepherds are members of the congregation who mentor and provide personalized attention for a period of time to protégés, church members who are going through a difficult situation. The assistance could be praying together, frequent phone calls, or one-to-one visits. Currently we have six shepherds guiding and upholding seven protégés.

During 2008, the concept of a food ministry was approved by the Session. This ministry will serve families with children at Lowell and Webster Elementary Schools, and it involves many individuals and other church ministries along with Bethany Church. (Merlene Samuelian described the ministry in an article entitled "Neighbors aRe Us" in the *Challenger* for December 2008.) This ministry is a prime example of collaboration within and outside the church to serve the families in the community surrounding the church.

This year, the deacons developed a Five-Year Plan to keep our focus on praising God and serving the congregation. The Five-Year Plan is a document that is passed on to provide direction during transition times and to ensure continuity of service. It has also helped us to refine our services to the congregation.

The centerpiece of the deacons' ministries is our ministry to the S.T.A.R.S. We started 2008 with a total of 52 Seniors That Are Really Special and from July through November 2008, the deacons made 179 visits, 136 phone calls, sent 53 cards and served 12 communions. Four of our S.T.A.R.S. went to be with the Lord this year.

Many thanks to Rev. Lana Roberts and Rev. Paul Armstrong for their spiritual guidance. Thanks also to the church staff for their support, and to all the members of church for their assistance and participation.

—Gloria Watts

Equipping Ministries

He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher

to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ—Ephesians 4: 11-13 **The Message**

The Equipping Ministry Team hopes and wishes that all those in the Body of Christ would be equipped in some way, big or small, to find a place of ministry at our church. Every single person in this church has gifts that are needed. A Place For You is not only the motto of our church but also a mission statement of sorts. If God is nudging you in some area, *trust Him!*

This year we continued to work on the Church Community Builder web-based program. All are encouraged to take time to look at this wonderful online tool online that allows people to post calendars, e-mail each other about events, and to see what is going on in the life of the church. Just go to www.firstpresfresno.org and click on the community login button.

We thoroughly enjoyed our ministry fair in September, which allowed all of you to catch a glimpse of some of the many areas of ministry there are here at First Pres. It was so much fun to be together and get a chance to see all that God is doing in and around our church!

We continued our ministry of doing exit interviews with the deacons, elders, and nominating committee members who are ending their time of service. The Equipping Team also continued to help train the new incoming elders and deacons and are currently working on the upcoming elder retreat in February.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess

his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13: 15-16 **The Message**

—Julie McGuire

Evangelism

The Evangelism Ministry Team spent many hours in prayer and discussion throughout 2008 in an effort to determine God's will in planning an effective evangelistic effort at First Presbyterian. These prayer and discussion sessions, among other positive results, brought us together as a team and enabled us to pursue effectively the major projects and programs that we worked on during the year.

The most time-consuming of these programs was the redesign of the FPC website, which was begun about mid-year and is still under construction, although close to implementation. Many hours were spent debating the appearance, format, content, and structure of the new site, which is a major source of information not only for current members, but for visitors, potential members, and those searching for a relationship with God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

A fresh and vibrant web site is just one example of how churches today are using modern technology to do God's work. At this point we are delighted with the result of our efforts and those of a team of design specialists that has been working with us. The design effort is being finalized as this is written, content is being added, and we expect the newly-designed site to make its debut sometime in January.

Alpha continues to be an effective program to attract and assist in the spiritual growth of new believers as well as church members. We hosted one of our largest classes ever in the spring and a smaller but no less enthusiastic group in the fall. We are currently in the planning stages for another Alpha class, to begin in February. Thanks to Tina White for her attending to the many details of implementing this program.

Front yard signs were once again



Ministry Team Reports, Continued

made available to anybody who wished them, to be placed in front of our homes to announce Easter Sunday and Christmas Eve services at FPC. We have been distributing these signs for several years now, and they can be seen during the Easter and Christmas seasons in front yards throughout the greater Fresno and Clovis area. Skin Mead continues to make certain that these signs are available to all who wish them.

As in the past, all sermons are uploaded to our web site for any visitor to download and listen or save. This process will continue when the new web site is implemented. Additionally, CDs of the sermons are made available for those who would rather listen or distribute our sermons to others in that format. We also make available CDs of some of our Adult Nurture classes, especially those which tend to last for multiple weeks.

The Evangelism Ministry team consists of Stuart Conrad; Greg Ehlert, our staff advisor who has been instrumental in pointing our efforts in the appropriate direction; Dave Kimball; Skin Mead; and Tina White. We look forward to continue to serve the congregation and others in 2009.

—Dave Kimball

Missions

There's a faithful group of folks who take seriously their task in our body to care personally for our mission partners, to help all the members of the body grow in what they know about missions in general and our missionaries specifically and to see that you all have opportunities to be personally involved in some kind of mission service whether here in Fresno or elsewhere in the world.

In addition to elders Mark Ruiz and Steve Skibbie and mission director Terry Jaurena, this group consists of Tricia Armstrong, Buzz Bursleson, Cindy Sterling, Adrienne Kimball, Pam Sells, Joy Rosik, Margo Deniston, Marsha Wilson, Phil Crantz, Karon Chambers and Sarah Lloyd.

We need to thank the Equipping Team for helping us to focus on our job this year as we prepared for the Ministry Fair they organized in September. It spurred on some creative juices and

birthed a World Wide Wheel of Opportunity that we'll use again. We invited folks to spin a wheel and then to do whatever they landed on. It had things like: Attend a Local Ministry Banquet, Read a Mission Book, Watch a Mission Movie, Take the Perspectives Course, Go on a Short Term Mission Trip, Pray for a specific missionary, agency or location, Volunteer for a One-Time Commitment or Volunteer for a Longer Term Commitment.

And really, that's what we do all the time: invite, encourage, urge, recruit and pray that all of the members of our body would be growing in what they understand about God's heart for all the peoples of the earth and taking seriously the call to be involved in His work in this world.

Another fruit of the Ministry Fair is that we finally put photos on the mission map which is located in the patio area. It helps you put faces to places of our mission partners and we hope it spurs you to pray for them and their work. To God be the glory!

Caring for missionaries got really personal at the end of 2007 and into 2008 when Bob Osborne was diagnosed with lung cancer and he and Linda had to stay here in Fresno rather than go to Ereske so that he could receive treatment. We went to work praying and caring for them and God answered so graciously by setting him free from cancer, helping him to heal quickly from knee replacement surgery and then sending them back this fall as houseparents for the Torchbearer's Bible School in Erseke. To God be the glory!

We were delighted to pray for folks who traveled from our body to serve for short term service. Peter Witt's opportunity to serve medically in North Korea was an amazing open door. The largest group of Fresnans ever participated in the Alongside Discovery summer learning and mission service experience. We are thankful for the faithful commitment of the Franklins to lead and serve in this ministry along with others and look forward to the fruit it will bear in the lives of those who participated. A small but

mighty team went to Erseke this summer to work on another section of the Camp/Bible School roof. Thanks for sending them out, praying for them, and then listening to their stories when they returned. To God be the glory!

We've enjoyed a number of visits from missionaries this year. People come literally from all over the world to attend our Mission Team Meetings, and we love it! We've enjoyed visits this year from folks who serve in China, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Laos, Albania and even all the way from Sacramento. To God be the glory!

The Angel Tree Program blessed many families again this year, some of whom gave gifts and helped make the party happen as well as those who came and who received those gifts. We're so grateful to God for Kathie Hartsell who has faithfully been the Angel Tree Coordinator since 2005. That's four years of consistent leadership and service! She's releasing that role now, so we're praying for who will take on this task in 2009. To God be the glory!

The Alternative Christmas Gift project was enjoyed by 51 of you this year, releasing to God's Kingdom work a total of \$7,809.00. To God be the glory! We welcome any who want to join our team in 2009. It is a grand adventure!

—Mark Ruiz

Personnel

Again we have had a year with few changes in staff. In October, Jill Brackett married Matt Coppler. Jill, our former receptionist, had a gift of making people feel good about phoning our church. Her friend, Crista Magnee, learned well from Jill and is now our receptionist/staff support person. We welcome her to our staff. The position of a receptionist is important, since often this is a person's first contact with our church.

Our staff continues to excel in responding to any member with health issues, pending surgery, death in a family, loneliness, depression, etc. Our four pastors, deacons, staff members, Chaplains Bob and Rosemary Avery and others are always ready to meet with any person in time of great need. This gift of visitation is certainly one of the many

Ministry Team Reports, Continued

strengths of our staff and congregation. We are grateful for our faithful staff, and I would encourage each of us to thank our staff for their service whenever we have the opportunity to do so.

—Phil Crantz

Prayer

Prayer is the life-blood of our church and the key to our personal development in Christ. There is no way to capture even a fraction of this dynamic conversation in this report but there are ways for you to connect to ongoing prayer ministries within the life of First Pres. Here are several opportunities.

We have seen God move miraculously in our midst recently as we have prayed expectantly for healing, mercy and salvation. Praying for one another

should be one of the most natural acts within the Body of Christ. The goal of the Sunday morning prayer ministry time is to address more intentionally the prayer needs of our body at First Pres while modeling consistent prayer in our most visible gathering.

We invite you to step forward after any worship service and engage one of our prayer partners or pastors in a time of prayer or praise. You could also do this in the pews with a trusted friend. It is tragic to think that people might come to church and leave with the same burdens they walked in with. Let's encourage one another to commit to deep and regular prayer as we celebrate our worship life together.

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anoint-

ing them with oil in the name of the Lord. James 5:14, N.I.V.

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. James 5:16, N.I.V.

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ Galatians 6:2, N.I.V.

The Prayer Team once again sponsored the "Who will Stay Awake With Me?" prayer Vigil which began immediately following the Maundy Thursday service, and ended on Good Friday at 3 p.m. The sanctuary was transformed into a quiet, self-guided, spiritual journey based on Philippians 2:5: "Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus."

We provided seven Prayer/Activity Stations positioned in various Sanctuary locations, and included opportunities for Prayer, Confession, Private Talk with one of our Pastors, Communion, and Reflection. Approximately 70 pilgrims participated this year, and our prayer is that you will be able to set aside an hour of your time in 2009 as a response to Jesus' question: "Will you stay awake with Me?"

Pastor's Prayer Partners is about eleven years old and continues to pray faithfully during each worship service in the Prayer Room. During that time, prayer is offered inviting the Holy Spirit into our worship time, praying for the pastor and message and lifting up the needs of the congregation. The team also steps into the sanctuary at the end of each service to pray for any that might have a prayer concern or praise.

Prayer Partners have a quarterly breakfast/prayer meeting full of worship, sermonette and prayer for our staff. It's important to know that our pastoral staff and full-time program staff do attend and very much appreciate the sacrifice of time and energy that our PPP's take on. Our PPP's not only pray on Sunday through the services, but daily over the prayer requests shared by various staff members. Thus our campus is constantly being prayed for!

Pastor's Prayer Partners always welcomes new prayer warriors. Would you consider serving in this vital ministry in

Current Church Officers

Scott McCallum Clerk of Session

Gloria Watts Moderator, Memorials Co-chair, Shepherds

Session Elders

Deacons

Class of 2009

Stewart Conrad Evangelism
Mindy Franklin Adult Nurture Chair
Brian Roberts Prayer Chair
Jana Rolf Christian Education Chair
Mark Ruiz Mission Chair
John Ellenberger Worship Chair
Robert Wood Church Care Chair

Class of 2009

Audrey Deal Congregational Care, Corresponding Secretary
Bob Parkman Transportation
Jan Parkman Meal Support Chair
Daphne Saul Meal Support
Bob Wagnon LOVE Inc.
Francis Weaver LOVE Inc.

Class of 2010

Roxanne Cousins Worship
Phil Crantz Personnel Chair
Tina White Evangelism
Chris Rosik Adult Nurture
Janelle Grunberg Christian Education
David Kimball Evangelism Chair

Class of 2010

Kathy Hamlin Memorials
Walter Saul Special Events
Carol Rudolph Communion Chair
Marilyn Bokemeier Communion
Roger Taylor Deacons' Corner
Karon Chambers Special Events Chair/Vice-Moderator, Shepherds

Class of 2011

Du Pertuis, Dennis – Nominating Committee Chair
Granata, Charity – Adult Nurture
McGuire, Julie – Equipping Chair
Miller, Ted – Finance Chair
Predmore, Scott – Christian Ed.
Skibbie, Steve - Mission

Class of 2011

Kimberly De Wolf, Memorials Co-Chair
Carol Dice Sunshine
Pauline Kliever Secretary/ Communion
Don Scrivner Food Closet
Ben Shaver Love, INC
Bev Tomasevich, Meal Support

Ministry Team Reports, Continued

2009? Contact Jim Herbert at 226-4558 for more information.

—**Brian Roberts**

Worship

Worship and Music

One of our greatest honors as Christians is to worship our Lord. We worship in a variety of styles at First Pres but strive to do so authentically and in a manner worthy of our Lord. We are deeply grateful for our talented music staff: Bill Barbour, Carol Dice, Connie Ellenberger, Krista Moore, Daphne Saul, and Walter Saul. We have an abundance of musical riches at our church and feel incredibly blessed!

One year ago we welcomed Krista Moore as our new director of Kids Praise Singers. The children love her and she has been teaching the children to love Jesus through music. Full Court Pres presented a musical entitled “Acts Alive” that Daphne and Walter Saul composed. It was a great success! Both children’s choirs sang at Hope Manor in December.

The Brass Ensemble provided music frequently through-out the year and contributed special music for Easter and Christmas.

Carol Dice reports that the Joyful Ringers welcomed some new members this fall and have room for more! They played numerous times for First Pres services and also for the Salvation Army, Fresno Rescue Mission, Silvercrest Retirement, and Christmas Tree Lane. They “praise God for the abundance He’s given us and have learned to use our resources more wisely. We appreciate the support and interest from the congregation.”

The Chancel Choir has had a great year! Several new singers joined us for the regular season and for the Easter Choir, and nine joined the Christmas Choir! We have a wonderful time in rehearsal and in praying for one another. In December, the Chancel Choir performed on the inaugural concert for “Soli Deo Gloria”, conducted by myself. I was extremely proud of our choir of “volunteers.” They work diligently to be more than “just a church choir” and truly praised God with excellence!

In addition to their regular musical offerings throughout the year, the Chancel Choir provided special music for Easter services as well as Christmas Eve. It’s a pleasure to work with them and to make beautiful music! We also rejoice that we were able to purchase new banners for our sanctuary marking the Christmas Season.

The 32nd Messiah Sing-Along on November 30 was a great success! The church was absolutely packed and we sang God’s scripture in joyful celebration. The “Soup-along” team provided a delicious meal following the music. This event is a wonderful way that we reach out to our community through song. It’s delightful to present this fabulous music as a gift to others. So many express their appreciation that we continue this great tradition every year.

I am truly grateful for the many volunteers who join together to enhance worship. We also have an abundance of musicians in our congregation who have blessed us in special music for offertories, and for Easter services and the Christmas Eve orchestra. We are appreciative of each member of the music ensembles, and of parents of the littlest singers who faithfully bring them to church to rehearse and sing to Jesus.

We also appreciate the sound technicians, power point operators, ushers and greeters, prayer warriors, behind the scenes decorators, those who record our services and download them to CD’s and the website, those who help set-up and take down banners and risers, fix burned out lights, and especially you, members of our congregation, who join us in worship! Soli Deo Gloria! (only to God’s glory!)

—**Dr. Julie Carter**

Worship Arts

In 2008, we had some BIG changes to the technical equipment in the sanctuary. These changes are all with the intention of enhancing our worship through better communication of sound and visual images. By reports from many members of our congregation, we were largely successful in the following:

1) The “Sound Enhancement” project was completed. From start to finish, it can only be termed a labor of love that began with a heart of exceptional generosity. The team who worked so tirelessly on this improvement (David Abdo, Randy Reed, Robert Wood, and Daniel Durst of MGA) gave freely of their time and talents. As a result, the clarity with which we now hear the word, both spoken and sung, has blessed many.

2) For those with newer hearing aids, our newly installed “induction loop” assistance system can send the signal from the sound board directly into hearing aids equipped to receive its signal. We will continue to use our other listening assistance system for those who still need it.

3) Our ancient projectors were no longer reliable for use in worship services—eight years in technology terms equates roughly to the Mesozoic Era! They have been retired, possibly to another, less strenuous use, and new projectors were installed. What a difference—brighter, clearer images and words all contribute to better visual communication.

In the area of passion and authenticity worship, one highlight must be mentioned: the “cardboard testimonies” that gave a number of our folks the opportunity to share, proclaim, and celebrate what God has done in their lives. Giving testimony to God’s goodness and work is worship and fellowship all bound into one. It brings us closer together *and* gives glory to our savior and redeemer, Jesus Christ. What joy!

We are thankful for *all* of the people who participate in the several groups that lead and enhance our worship services every week, throughout the year. All in all, there are about 30 volunteers who serve on both worship teams, in the areas of sound, power point, and by recording and making sermons available on CD’s and online.

Thank you, also to all the elders and deacons who serve communion on the first Sunday of each month. In the same way, we appreciate our worship elders, Roxanne Cousins and John Ellenberger, and thank them enthusiastically for their able leadership in 2008.

—**Rev. Lana Roberts**

Necrology Report

We lovingly hold in memory those members who have gone on to be with our Lord:

Dorothy Marie Emmert
02/10/2008

Edward Munger
02/11/2008

Leta (Jackie) Ellis
02/12/2008

Roselle Kemalyan
02/20/2008

Doris Glenn
03/22/2008

Carl Nichols
03/27/2008

Ruth Blohm
05/30/2008

Bonnie Ruether
06/03/2008

Ruby Jones
06/11/2008

Vera Feaver
07/22/2008

Dorothy Hamilton
08/26/2008

Karen McDougald
10/27/2008

Rev. Louis Evans
10/29/2008

Dorothy Puerta
11/02/2008

Carl Zscheile
12/21/2008

George (Bob) Jones
12/22/2008

Nominations For Church Office

Our Nominating Committee prayerfully submits the following nominees as future church officers.

Elders: Jamie Franklin (Missions), Lisa Goodell (CE), Dean Lloyd (Church Care), Ian Mynderup (Worship), Jay Pope (Adult Nurture),
Deacons: Julie Barrows, Debbie Haman, Billy Jane Houston, Joanna Mcnight, Anita Ulner

Nominating Committee: Becky Adams, Kimberly DeWolf, Ron Dull, Michael Lynn, Skin Mead, Lori Meadors

—Dennis DuPertuis, Chair

Elders

Lisa Goodell (Christian Education)
Lisa started to attend First Pres in 1990 at the invitation of John; they were married here the following year. The couple has a sixth-grade daughter named Lindsey. Lisa is a full-time resource specialist with Kerman Unified School District. The Goodell family has grown spiritually through the inter-generational First Pres community which provides a strong emphasis on missions, prayer and youth. Lisa has been active in many areas including Albania mission teams, prayer ministry, deacons, Sunday school teacher, and hosting Networkers. As a Christian Ed elder, she prays that she can encourage staff as they seek God in order to bring kids of all ages into a deeper walk with Christ.

Dean Lloyd (Church Care)

Dean and Paula Lloyd joined First Pres when they were married in 1969. They have two daughters, Sarah and Anna and two grandchildren, Jonathan and Maryann. Dean has previously served as a deacon and elder and is willing to serve again as he says it is a great opportunity to serve God through being a servant leader to the church.

Ian Mynderup (Worship)

Ian and his wife Kelly came to First Pres and found the traditional service they wanted. They felt at home and never left. Ian and Kelly have two children, Caleb and Grace.

Jay Pope (Adult Nurture)

Jay was born in Los Angeles, raised in Sanger, and has also lived in Philadelphia, Santa Barbara, San Jose and Kentucky. He graduated from Westmont College and Fuller Theological Seminary and is now a member of Fresno Pacific University's faculty as well as a staff therapist at Link Care Center in Fresno. Jay is married to Rebecca (Reeves) Pope, and they have four children: Jackson (7); Quinn (5); Garrison (3); and Avery (1).

Deacons

Julie Barrows

Julie has attended First Pres for 23 years. Julie and her husband, Daniel have been married for 22 years and have three children, Nathaniel (19), Morgan (17) and Elijah (15). She has been involved in different aspects of children's ministries for about fifteen years and is looking forward to serving as a deacon.

Debbie Haman

Debbie is a retired elementary teacher. Debbie and her husband Jim have been members of First Pres for about eight years. They have two daughters, Julie, and Leslie Leslie is married to Todd. They also have two wonderful granddaughters, Natalie and Brianna, with a third grandchild on the way. As a deacon, Debbie hopes to bless and serve the congregation with her time and energy.

Annual Sunday Worship Attendance

Year Attendance

1998:	30,285
1999:	29,843
2000:	29,838
2001:	28,414
2002:	28,256
2003:	27,335
2004:	29,146
2005:	29,030
2006:	29,557
2007:	27,837
2008:	28,752

Nominations For Church Office, Continued

As a servant, she is certain she will be blessed in return.

Joanna Mc Knight

Joanna has been a member of First Pres since moving with her family from her hometown of Memphis in 1966. As a mother of three and grandmother of six, she enjoys volunteering as a Master Gardener and painting in oils. Many years ago she served as a deacon and is excited about our church's commitment to serving the downtown community.

Anita Ulner

The meaty teaching and authentic worship found at First Pres kept Anita here from her first visit in the summer of 2004. It has strengthened her almost-lifelong spiritual journey, which began as a child. She looks forward, with a grateful heart, to serving as a deacon. The rest of the week she has the privilege of teaching sixth grade in Fresno Unified.

Nominating Committee

Becky Adams

Becky experienced such Christ-centered and faithful leadership in this church. Now it is an honor and a challenge to help seek new leaders to replace those whose terms of service have come to an end. She will do her best to seek God's leading to those who will respond, and she asks for the congregation to pray for the nominating committee.

Kimberly DeWolf

Kimberly and her husband John have been attending First Pres 20 of the 21 years they have been married. Fifteen of those years they have been members. The couple came at the invitation of a long time college friend, Paul Brumm. Kimberly has been involved in a variety of ministries including children's and women's ministries, deacons, and choir. She has taught Sunday school, coordinated vacation Bible camp, has been on various women's retreat planning committees, and participated in Bible study groups.

Ron Dull

Ron has been attending First Pres. since

1971, and accepted Christ that year with the youth pastor, Will Ackles. Ron and his wife, Sheree, have four children, and have been working with nursery age, preschoolers, and youth since they were married in 1979. They both work in the public education system. The couple is currently working with junior high at First Pres. Anxious but also excited, Ron is looking forward to hearing what God has planned for the leadership of our church.

Skin Mead

Skin has been a member of First Pres for over twenty years. How time flies! He's been an elder for Worship and an elder for Evangelism, and was heavily

involved in the "Above and Beyond" campaign. He serves as a member of the Worship and Praise team, and is married to the beautiful Andrea Elizabeth Francis Allen Mead. He looks forward to being on the nominating committee.

Lori Meadors

Lori is the mother of three girls and is married to Paul. She taught fifth grade before becoming a stay-at-home mom. She came to First Pres to work with the high school group as a Networker and has been attending since 1997. Lori counts herself lucky to be surrounded by a wonderful church body and is excited that her girls are getting to know Jesus!

Membership Report

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Membership Jan. 1	850	862	881	896	906	916
Membership Dec. 31	862	875	896	906	916	807
Gains:						
Letter	24	14	6	12		3
Professions	26	6	27	3	13	7
Reaffirmation	4	20	8	18	13	29
Reinstated	4	2	1			1
Losses:						
Death	9	11	12	13	14	13
Transfer	11	8	8	6	2	5
Inactive Roll	24	10	1	1		129
Erased	0	0	6	1		1
Ordained	2	0		2		1
Marriages*	4	4	2	6	11	7
Funerals	10	14	15	7	12	17
Baptisms				11	4	9
Infant and Children	7	10	7	10	3	7
Adults	3	2	0	1	1	2
*By First Pres ministers						

Deadline Information

The deadline for the March

Challenger is February 20 at 5:00 p.m. It will be mailed out **March 4.** Please call Daphne Saul (252-4064) or leave in newsletter box in church office.

The deadline for "A Place for You" is each Monday at 5 p.m.

Please submit announcements to Cheryl Eaker (485-6460) or staff@fpcfresno.org and put Cheryl Eaker's name in the subject box.

First Pres Challenger

January 2009

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First Presbyterian Church

1540 M Street, Fresno, CA 93721-1277



The Ministry Team

Rev. James Evans, Senior Pastor
Rev. David Abdo, Executive Pastor
Rev. Lana Roberts, Associate Pastor
Rev. Paul Armstrong, Pastor to the Congregation
Rev. Thomas Parsons, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. H. Spees, Pastor-At-Large
Bob and Rosemary Avery Chaplains
Craig Blodgett, Assistant Youth Director
Dr. Julie Carter, Coordinator, Worship and Music
Greg Ehlert, Youth Director
Susan Glover, Administrator
Terry Jaurena, Mission Director
Corrie Sands, Birth-Pre K Children's Director
Marcie York, K-6 Children's Director

Newsletter Staff:

Editor: Daphne Saul

Editorial Board: Karin Cook, David Kimball, Paula Lloyd and Bobby Temple

If you would like to send an e-mail to any staff member at First Pres, please address it to: staff@fpcfresno.org and include the name of the staff member in the subject box.

First Presbyterian Church

1540 M Street

Fresno, CA 93721-1277

559-485-6460

Fax: 559-485-1538

Return service requested

For Your Information

LifeSpring Church

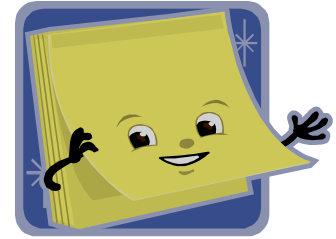


LifeSpring Church is seeking donations of new or gently used items for its soon-to-be new church home at Locan School in southeast Fresno.

Items we are seeking include: cribs, changing table and rocking chair for nursery, sound system, toilets, urinal and basins for bathrooms and refrigerator and, yes, a kitchen sink for the kitchen!

LifeSpring will also be holding several clean-up days and would welcome volunteers!

Contact Pastor Rich Latta at rplatta@yahoo.com or 859-9662 for further information.



Special Sunday Schedule January 25

8:30-11:00 a.m. Children ages 2 through 7 come to the Art Room for breakfast and activities, thanks to the Pink House.

8:30 a.m. Ages 8 through adults meet in the fellowship hall for brunch and the Annual Congregational Meeting. Cost is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.

10:30 a.m. Joint worship service in the sanctuary.

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