

# *First Press*

*January 2024 - Volume 72 - Number 1*



# *January*

# Ramblings *from the* Reverend

Dear friends,

For the last year or so, the Session (our board of elders) have been having preliminary conversations about how welcoming and including we are of folks who identify as LGBTQ+. We know that we have these folks in our congregation, and we love and appreciate them, but how fully they are included in the life of the church is worthy of our prayerful wisdom and discernment. On November 26 I preached a message where I addressed my own (changed) viewpoint on the issue, offered some scriptural support for my view, and spoke to Session's role in this.

At issue is the difference in wording between the current PC(USA) Book of Order (our denomination's "constitution") and what we as FPC currently abide by- which includes an addendum from the previous Book of Order.

The current language of the Book of Order, regarding ordination standards states: "(T)hose who undertake particular ministries (deacon, elder, minister) should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world." This wording allows individual churches the choice of ordaining practicing LGBTQ+ folks.

Twelve years ago, the Session at FPC chose to maintain some of the wording regarding officer (deacons, elders, ministers) ordination standards with language of the old Book of Order: "officers of the church must maintain chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage, as defined as between a man and a woman." To be clear, we at FPC also abide by all that is in the current Book of Order's statement, but include the previous Book of Order's requirements as an additional requirement.

The Session, in order to find common language to talk about this issue - before taking on the potential implications for us as a church - read two books: *What Does It Mean To Be Welcoming* by Travis Collins, and *Changing Our Mind* by David Gushee. Though Collins takes a traditional view regarding LGBTQ+ in church leadership roles, and Gushee argues for full inclusion, both authors write with winsome and pastoral hearts, and both openly engage the pertinent scriptures.

It is important for the church to understand that the Session is responsible for any decisions regarding our individual church ordination standards. But certainly, it is well and right for the church as a whole to engage in Christ-like conversation about this. We want to invite any and all interested active church participants to two Thursday night meetings to engage in this conversation: Thursday, February 8, and Thursday, February 22nd. We are asking that all participants, if possible, be there for both nights.

**We are offering these gatherings in February in order to give all of those participating in the discussion time to read both the Collins and the Gushee books that the Session has read. Reading the two books is a requirement to take part in the Thursday night discussions. We are requiring**

---

**First Press Newsletter** (USPS 197-760) is published monthly, except for June and July when combined, by First Presbyterian Church, 318 South Cedar Street, Spokane, WA 99201-7030. Periodical postage paid at Spokane, WA. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to First Press Newsletter, 318 South Cedar Street, Spokane, WA 99201-7030.

**the reading so that the conversations have a shared background of understanding. Elders will be on hand to facilitate and take notes of the conversations. Elders will share with each other what was said at their subsequent Session meetings.**

If you would like to participate in these Thursday meetings, please either sign up, using the QR code below or on Sunday morning at the Connect Center. We will be happy to order the books for you (and happy, if you are able, to have you pay for them), or you may purchase the books on your own (but please still sign up).

Having this conversation in ways that honor Jesus and each other is good and right – and something I believe we are prepared to do. I hope you will join us.

Blessings and Peace,

John

## CONVERSATIONS

6pm Thursdays, February 8 & 22

TRAVIS COLLINS  
**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE WELCOMING?**  
?  
NAVIGATING LGBT QUESTIONS IN YOUR CHURCH

DAVID P. GUSHEE  
**CHANGING OUR MIND**

Please sign up!

Please plan to attend both evenings.

Reading both books is a requirement to take part in the discussion.

## Stewardship Update

### 2023 Financial Update

We are finishing 2023 strong! 2023 is wrapping up with 91% of pledged giving received to date. If you have questions about your 2023 pledge status you can look at your directory account or call Stephanie Coy to help answer your questions.

### 2024 Stewardship Update

Since the beginning of our 2024 Stewardship Season, we have received 291 pledges committing 76% to our 2024 projected budget! Your commitment to the call of stewardship this year is truly wonderful and affirming to FPC's mission, its service and people. We are now winding down our Stewardship Season so if you are still holding onto your pledge card, now would be the time to turn it in. Our Financial Committee and Session are actively working on FPC's 2024 budget plans and we would like to have your pledge included. You can pledge online at [spokanefpc.org/stewardship](http://spokanefpc.org/stewardship), or contact Stephanie Coy at [stephaniec@spokanefpc.org](mailto:stephaniec@spokanefpc.org) or 509-747-1058 x 244.

Financial Update - 2023 Operating Budget		
Nov-23		
Church Only	YTD Actuals	YTD Budget
Pledged Income	1,089,732	1,119,457
Non-Pledged Income	174,682	112,928
Other Income	132,371	90,099
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,396,785</b>	<b>1,322,485</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>1,512,638</b>	<b>1,549,085</b>
<b>Income over (under) Expenses</b>	<b>(\$115,853)</b>	<b>(\$226,600)</b>

**SUNDAYS**  
*after worship*

## ACT II Communities

January 21 & 28 and February 4

### Connections: Intergenerational Community

A handful of years ago, the high school group's Westport team was beginning to feel so large the student leaders weren't connecting as intimately as prior years. One of our volunteers had the simple idea to carve out 30 minutes after dinner each night to allow for "connections." Students who didn't know each other well would simply pair up, armed with dessert and provided prompts, and spend half an hour together. Truthfully, we expected the conversations to be forced and ultimately awkward.



We were wrong!

We quickly learned 30 minutes weren't enough for their time together, so we then gave them 45 minutes- which wasn't enough! Eventually, we had to force people to come back after an hour so we could continue with all we had planned for the night. This trend continued every day after, and has become a beloved tradition over the past 4-5 years.

Not only is **intergenerational community** a value at FPC, it is also becoming widely known that intergenerational friendships are a huge blessing to all involved. Recent articles in both Christianity Today and The Atlantic have highlighted the importance, and benefits, of friendship between generations.



We hope you'll join us on January January 21, 28 & February 4 during Act II as we experiment with **Connections** as we pair you up with 1-2 other folks from FPC who are of a different generation than you. We'll supply you with coffee, tea, snacks and 4-5 conversation prompts you can pick and choose from. Our prayer is that these conversations and connections will help us live more fully into our value of believing "every generation has a gift to give one another."

### Gospel According to John

An in depth look at the Gospel. Taught by historian and biblical scholar, Bruce Gore. Join him in the Sanctuary. You can also watch video lessons by Bruce on YouTube.

**BINGO**

10	18	40	53	74
3	23	37	55	70
15	24	★	51	62
5	30	43	54	65
1	28	33	58	67

**The Gathering**  
January 14

Join us after worship for intergenerational fellowship and fun together.

# EVENTS in January

**ESTHER**  
THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD

**THURSDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY**  
January 11 – March 21

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

# MARK

Men's Bible Study  
1st & 3rd Thursdays, 9:30-10:30am  
Led by Pastor John Sowers

## CAN I ASK THAT?

**Jan 11**  
Dinner @ 5:30  
Kid's activities  
Conversation  
Curiosity  
Growth

What is Hell like?  
Does it even exist?

# Circle of Security

Parenting Group for Moms  
Room 209 on Tuesdays, 10:00 - 11:30 am  
January 16, 23, 30; February 13, 20, 27; March 12, 19

Parent Attending To The Child's Needs

**Sunday January 21**  
Dinner @ 5:30  
Intergenerational  
Fun, Community,  
and Crazy Good  
Times

It's **Bunco!** time

Save the Date  
Friday, January 26 at 11:00 am

**BELLEVUE PRESBYTERIAN CHOIR**

CONCERT & HYMN SING  
LUNCH TO FOLLOW

# Congregational Care

## GriefShare Begins Again in February

After two successful runs of the GriefShare program, FPC leaders will host another 13 week session beginning February 28, 2024. Meetings are Wednesday evenings in the Fireside Room, 6-7:30pm, and as our church's "ER for grief", all are welcome at any time. Participant books are \$20 and scholarships are available. To register, visit [griefshare.org/findagroup](http://griefshare.org/findagroup) or call Rene at the church office. For more information on joining the leadership team, contact either Luanne Jaime, [luannejaime@gmail.com](mailto:luannejaime@gmail.com), or Pastor Betsy, [betsyw@spokane-fpc.org](mailto:betsyw@spokane-fpc.org). Let the love of God and the support of a warm community minister to your grief and heartache



## A Reflection on Empathy

FPC's Stephen Ministers have been studying together a book titled "The Gift of Empathy" since October.

The authors' research affirms our instinct, that expressing empathy can build surprising bonds between people, even in a momentary encounter between strangers. Especially when someone is hurting, empathy is the most caring and helpful approach we can take. An empathetic person 1) enters the other's world and experiences their feelings with them, and 2) expresses that empathy through a gentle response—all without getting "stuck in the mud" of the other's pain.



When someone expresses empathy towards me, I feel understood, valued, believed, encouraged, accepted, cared for, not alone. What an extraordinary outcome! Practicing empathy on a regular basis with those around us can lead to deeper relationships, expanded perspective, personal growth, more confidence in social interactions, less pressure to "fix" things, and great joy as we make a difference in others' lives. What extraordinary outcomes!

Among many other wonderful topics, the book addresses "obstacles to empathy" within us. Even as people who believe in the loving care of God and the victory of Jesus over sin and death, we can

struggle to maintain an empathetic stance towards others—especially those closest to us. Which is your biggest obstacle to empathizing with someone in pain?

- desiring to fix the situation (which either doesn't help or isn't what the other truly wants)
- wanting to change the other person's feelings ("cheer up! Stop feeling so sad!")
- making evaluations about the situation and comparisons to others' similar experiences ("my brother had it way worse than you")

**Joining the Church Triumphant**  
Richard Runeberg died on December 2, 2023  
Dick Schmidt died October 20, 2023  
**Thanks be to God for the lives of his faithful servants.**

- internal feelings of judgment or blame, expressed outwardly (“you chose your own path”)
- disagreements about other things (“I don’t like your politics, so I can’t empathize with your pain”)
- differences in age, gender, culture, values, life experiences, etc.
- fear of emotional fatigue or burnout
- urge to share my own story (thus taking the spotlight off the other)

A prayer for those who wish to grow in empathy:

Loving God, show me who is hurting today. Help me set aside my assumptions and judgment so I can enter their world as you do. Give me your grace to honor their story, stay with them in their pain, and express your gentle love in a way they can hear. So may I shine brightly for you in this dark world. Amen.

## LAUNCH PAD

### HUGE THANKS TO THESE PEOPLE WHO HELPED LEAD KIDS ON SUNDAYS THIS PAST MONTH...

Kezia Rhodes  
 The Sitters  
 Kevin Swaim  
 The Largents  
 John Kopp  
 Betsy and Hannah Wynne  
 The Condons  
 Lesa Painter  
 The Downeys  
 Rachel Adams



### NEW SERIES! WHAT CAN I DO?

What’s your dream job when you grow up? Do you want to be a pilot or an astronaut? A teacher or a musician? There are so many incredible jobs for us to pick from! God has given each of us special talents and skills that can help us discover what we want to do. But God gives us another job, too. It’s the chance for us to follow God right now! In this series from the Gospels, we’ll read about Jesus starting out his ministry and how he invited his followers - and us - to listen to God’s voice, trust Jesus knows us, trust God’s plans for us, and include people who aren’t like us!

### NOT SO SILENT NIGHT LIVED UP TO ITS NAME!



# Serve.

“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” — John 1:14, The Message

## Update on Intergenerational Tijuana Trip

**Date:** July 3 - July 9 (could also be July 4 - July 10)

**Cost:** One can choose one of these options per person:

- \$700 out of pocket, participate in the auction, bake sale, support letter fundraisers. *FPC purchases your plane ticket with the group.*
- Pay \$300 out of pocket, participate in the auction, bake sale, support letter fundraisers. *You take care of your own plane ticket*
- Pay \$1,700 out of pocket. No fund raising. *FPC purchases your plane ticket with the group.*
- Pay \$1,300 out of pocket. No fund raising. *You take care of your own plane ticket.*

**Purpose:** Build 1-2 homes (depending on how many folks join) for a family in need. Would also spend time with the orphanage Unidos Por Siempre helping out with projects as needed.

**Time Commitment:** Fundraiser participation (if chosen), at least 2 team prep meetings (likely in April and June) to help plan, prep, and serve together before heading down to TJ.

### What's Next?

It would be INCREDIBLY helpful if you could email or text Brad ASAP (or just hunt him down at church!) to let him know your interest level. We'd love to get our team set by Mid-January if at all possible.



## One Parish One Prisoner

ONE PARISH || ONE PRISONER

A couple months back we introduced the exciting opportunity for FPC to join with One Parish One Prisoner as a new expression of hospitality. OPOP is a re-entry model that matches churches with an incarcerated person for their mutual transformation. A relationship of trust is built through letter writing and prison visits. And when the time comes, this person will find the embrace of an entire parish community who already knows them and can assist with the many obstacles to re-entry.

After receiving a great amount of interest from folks in our church, due to varying circumstances **we are still 1-2 people short of being able to move forward with a team.**

We still believe in this call and we know there are incarcerated folks waiting to be matched with a group of folks who are willing to know and support them.

**Email Brad ASAP if you can be the person to help this ministry move forward.**



“I received an amazing letter back from Leroy that brought tears to my eyes. I have never been so moved by any letter, from anyone. My eyes and heart are opening to a whole segment of our society which I have only regarded with fear in the past.”  
- Sarah, parish team member



# Advent Missions Reflections

We, as the FPC Mission Team, wanted to share feedback and sentiments of those involved in our annual Advent Missions. But we also want to make sure to say THANK YOU to each of you who gave your time, talents, and treasure. Because of your commitment and generosity hundreds of kids enjoyed a new toy on Christmas via the FPC Toy Store, hundreds more received warm clothes through Mission Community Outreach Center, and dozens of our neighbors at Alberta House had a visit from Santa with a much-needed gift item!



"Thanks to the First Pres. staff & volunteers, our parenting & pregnant students felt welcomed, celebrated, and proud. Those who attended were so impressed with the quality of toys available and the convenient shopping experience. Many of our students also utilize the Christmas Bureau and Toys for Tots to provide for their families, but those programs sacrifice choice and quality in order to meet high demand and maximize volume. Having a personalized, autonomous shopping experience they could afford enabled our students to maintain their dignity and respected their judgment as parents." - Tracie Fowler, Social Worker at Lumen High School.



"The Community Toy Store has helped support many of our most at-risk students. Through this amazing event you have helped support students in their difficult and unique situations of single working parent homes, escaping homelessness, out of work guardians, and families in trauma. Through your continuous support of our school, you have impacted the lives of many students and their families." - Sierra Campbell, Counselor at Grant Elementary. Toy Store partner.



The Mission Community Outreach Center (longtime FPC mission partner) held their "Christmas Children's Joy" event recently and were able to serve and bless hundreds of kids with clothing, coats, underwear, socks, and books! Your generous contributions over Advent went a long way in helping make this event such a success for MCOC.



On a recent Sunday night the Huber & Wynne's (along with some neighbor friends and Santa & Mrs. Claus Shoemaker) small group threw a Christmas party for the residents at the Alberta House a few blocks from FPC. Kids ran around the City Gate dining room as hams and potatoes were prepped. Carols were led by Chris and Julie and were joined, impromptu, by a resident on violin! Santa Curt spent time with each person sharing meaningful conversation, laughter, and handing out the gifts you all so generously provided for our neighbors. It was a beautiful night of hospitality, fellowship, and Christmas joy!



# First Pres Christian School

Wow, we can't believe how fast the 2023-2024 school year has been flying by at First Presbyterian Christian School! Our staff and our student enrollment has continued to grow since the first day of school. Having teachers with strong professionalism, humor, and a love for Jesus continues to bless our school with thriving classrooms!

Our Priority Registration for the 2024-2025 school year will be opening on **Wednesday, January 17th at 8:00am**. You qualify for priority registration if you have a child who already attends the school; if you are regularly involved with First Presbyterian Church or a ministry thereof; or if you are involved with the Barton School. We bet that list includes your family! Please invest in a new school year where your child is nurtured academically, spiritually, and socially. Our small class sizes offer the chance for each student to be loved and seen exactly as they are, beloved of God and uniquely created. Visit our website ([fpchristianschool.org](http://fpchristianschool.org)) to register!

We invite you to see this environment in action at our annual Open House on **Wednesday, January 24th**. Visit in the morning (10:00am-12:00pm) or evening (5:00pm-7:00pm) as your schedule allows. We would love the chance to show you the incredible classroom and enrichment activities we will be offering to **preschool through fourth graders in 2024-2025**. Our little school has a big heart, and there is room here for your child to flourish next year.

If you are particularly interested in our kindergarten and first grade programs, please join us for the **K-1 Interest Night on Wednesday, January 31st, at 6:30pm**. This crucial age range lays the foundation for a strong start in school, and our school excels in helping students transition to the classroom environment in a loving, structured way. Meet our teachers, visit our classrooms, and learn more about our curriculum. We would love to answer all of your questions!



**PRIORITY REGISTRATION**  
SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025

PRESCHOOL (AGES 3-4)  
KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 4TH GRADE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
Christian School

OPENS JANUARY 17

509-747-9192 [www.fpchristianschool.org](http://www.fpchristianschool.org)



WHERE CHILDREN LEARN TO LOVE GOD TO LOVE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**OPEN HOUSE**

Wednesday, January 24, 2023  
10:00-12:00pm  
5:00-7:00pm

LEARN MORE [www.fpchristianschool.org](http://www.fpchristianschool.org)



**STEM NIGHT**  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS

**JANUARY 18, 2024, 6:30PM**

A FUN (AND FREE) EVENING FOR  
PRESCHOOL-3RD GRADE FAMILIES  
FEATURING MOBIUS SCIENCE CENTER!

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
318 S CEDAR ST  
SPOKANE, WA 99201  
509-747-9192

DESTINATION: SOLAR SYSTEM  
PLANETARIUM SHOW

KEVA PLANKS ROBOTICS AND MORE!



**Thank You!**

Thank you to all the volunteers who made this Advent Season possible. From decorating to volunteering at all the events, we couldn't have done this without you.

A special thanks to Kevin & Jennifer King for the poinsettias, Vicki & Cliff Johnson for the live tree, and Mitch Swenson & crew for delivering the tree.

# PRAXIS WINTER CALENDAR

2024

## EASTER PROJECT DATES

- 1/7 Prep Meeting #1
- 1/21 Prep Meeting #2
- 1/28 Pancake Breakfast
- 2/11 Bake Sale
- 2/19 Prep Meeting #3
- 3/10 Auction
- 3/23 Building Day
- 3/30-4/6 In Tijuana!
- Watch for Report Sunday Dates in April!

## ➤ JANUARY

- 10 PRAXIS GOES TO RUBBER CHICKEN!
- 17 SPAGHETTI NIGHT 6:30-9
- 20 SKATING @ THE ICE RIBBON
- 24 PRAXIS 7-9
- 31 PRAXIS 7-9

## CONTACT INFO

LYDIA  
509-747-1058 EX 161  
CELL: 619-458-5304  
LYDIAP@SPOKANEFPC.ORG

KEZIA:  
509-747-1058 EX 175  
CELL: 509-844-2579  
KEZIAR@SPOKANEFPC.ORG

# EASTER PROJECT FUNDRAISERS

Join us and support our Tijuana Team!



## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

JANUARY 28 8:30-10 AM  
TICKETS \$7

BAKE SALE

FEBRUARY 11

SILENT AUCTION

MARCH 10

# ✦ SHIFT CALENDAR ✦

## JANUARY 2024

✦ 09 6:30-8:30 TUESDAY FIRST SHIFT BACK!

✦ 16 6:30-8:30 TUESDAY SPAG NIGHT

✦ 20 SATURDAY ICE SKATING

✦ 23 6:30-8:30 TUESDAY SHIFT

✦ 30 6:30-8:30 TUESDAY SHIFT

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN HELP AT BARTON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL?

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE TUTORING

10:00-11:30AM  
Friday, January 5 2024  
Barton English Language School of First Presbyterian Room 212

# Coming Up

- Jan. 11**      *Can I Ask That?*
- Jan. 14**      *The Gathering: Bingo*
- Jan. 18**      *FPCS STEM Night*
- Jan. 21**      *Act II*  
*Sunday Night Bunco*
- Jan. 24**      *FPCS Open House*
- Jan. 26**      *Bellevue Hymn Sing*
- Jan. 28**      *Act II*  
*EP Pancake Breakfast*

## Contacts

(509) 747-1058

### Pastoral Team

John Sowers (250)  
Betsy Wynne (253)

### Administration

Stephanie Coy (244)

### Worship/Music

Derrick Parker (307)

### FPC Christian School

Tracy Blue & Shawna Harris (120)

### Family Ministries

Ryan Schmall (163)

### Childcare/Nursery

Ryan Childers (164)

### Middle School Ministries

Kezia Rhodes (173)

### Intergenerational Ministries

Brad Hauge (252)

### Preteen Ministries

Lydia Halma (161)

### Young Adult Ministries

Jourdan Cornell

### Adult Ministries

Brenda Norton (243)

### Newcomers Ministry

Sue Reidt (241)

### Communications

April Egly (245)

### Barton English Language School

Becky Rempe (212)

**Deacon Prayer Line: 747-1050**

### Office Hours

M-Th 8:30am-4pm and Fridays 8:30am-1pm

Office will be closed Jan. 1st

### Sunday Worship Services

Online and In-person Sundays at 10am



**First Presbyterian**  
Church of Spokane

For more information about ongoing programs, visit our website  
at [www.spokanefpc.org](http://www.spokanefpc.org) or pick up a brochure at the church