

2023 FEBRUARY/MARCH

THE MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH PALM BEACH



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AGAPE CLASS

The Place To Be - The Agape Class

By Betty Percy

As the class brainstormed Agape, this is what the class told me. According to Google, in the Christian world “Agape” means the love of God and the love of man for God. As the Bible teaches to love one another, Agape means to love our fellow man. At First Pres, Agape stands for many things. Agape is the name of the Sunday School class for senior adults and anyone else who would like to attend. I asked the class, “What does Agape mean to you?” Here are a few of their answers: warmth, wisdom, caring, comforting, family, prayer, faithful, friendship, giving, loving, joyful. These are just some of the words given as folks in Agape expressed what The Agape Class means to them.

Every Sunday morning following the 9:30am worship service, the Agape class of about 50 meet in the Fellowship Hall. It is a time for wonderful Biblical teaching. At First Pres there is an abundance of amazing folks who teach in Agape.

There are 6 or more retired pastors who attend our church, and they also share in the teaching: Rev. Will Ackles, Rev. Lucky Arnold, Rev. Harold Brown as well as Sheriff’s Deputy Dave Shoemaker, John Carey, Jim Laub, Greg Smith, and the current pastors, Rev. Ron Hilliard, Rev. Elizabeth Nielsen, Rev. Eddie Nabhan, and Rev. Chris Southard. We often have the special treat of getting to know our seminary interns as they also teach in our class. Class begins with “the best snacks” in the church. It is a great time of fellowship to visit and get to know

each other. As class begins, there is a special time of acknowledging birthdays, singing the favorite hymn of the birthday person. We make sure everyone knows what is going on in other groups of the church and other activities that take place on our campus.

Our most special time is our Prayer Time. At this time, we share prayer requests, learn of answered prayers and pray for each other. Prayer time and our prayer life is a tremendous part of our lives and our class.



The Agape Class also has an offering mission focus. This year we are supporting The Refuge Ranch in Okeechobee. The Ranch is a drug/ alcohol treatment facility of women. We have supported them for 2 years, sending a total of \$5,000.00 for their work with these women. At Christmas, we wanted to give a gift to each lady. It was recommended that since the ladies write home to their children a lot, we were asked to prepare a gift bag for each lady containing stationary, note cards, a sheet of stamps and fun stickers for their children. It was a fun and easy gift to give. The Agape folks enjoyed giving this gift also. We were able to give each lady 2 gift bags. There were 17 ladies at the Ranch at that time.

Here is a note from one of the women:

*Dear Friends of the Agape Class,
I am a 45-year-old mother of four. I come from a 25-year addiction to drugs. Before arriving at The Refuge Ranch, I overdosed multiple times and became hopeless and broken. Since coming to the Ranch, I have developed an intimate relationship with the Lord and reconnected with my 7-year-old daughter. God has begun showing me who I am in Christ. I hope to continue to learn more about myself and to further strengthen my relationship with the Lord. Your support has given me the opportunity to*

build a stronger relationship with my children and allow God to change my life. I am truly grateful for your support. Thanks, Sincerely Eva.



Another mission project was collecting school supplies for Grove Park Elementary School. Grove Park is being rebuilt, so the students from Grove Park are bused to Lincoln Elementary in Riviera Beach. Many, many school supplies are being used by the Grove Park students. In delivering the school supplies, Tony Zmistowski made friends with the PE teacher, Curtis Holland. He told Tony about their project of soccer jerseys for the children. We were able to give them \$1,000.00 to purchase soccer jerseys for the children.



When Ron asked for medical supplies for Cuba, Agape swung into action. The class brought a huge number of supplies for Cuba. Agape = love of giving.



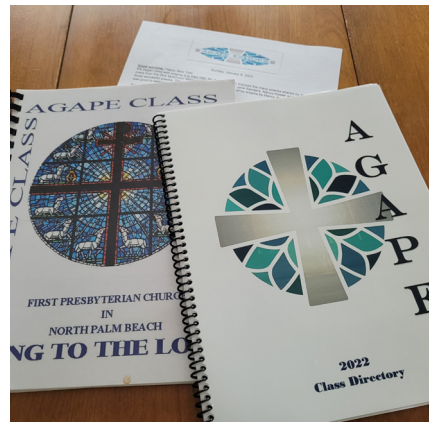
In Agape, we feel it is important that we love and serve each other, not



only on Sunday, but all the time. Our Card Ministry is so vitally important to our class members, especially those who are no longer able to attend class. Cards are sent for birthdays, anniversaries, surgeries, illnesses, and comfort for sympathy. A few of the Agape members are so diligent about sending out these cards. They are serving God in this way of caring for other.

Agape has a long history that set the standard and example for the current Agape Class. As I think back, the teacher who really helped to form the class was Hunter and his wife, Edith Norwood. A true “back home” scholar of the Word, Hunter formed the foundation of our class. The other person who was extremely instrumental in the formation of the class today was Dave Strong. A strong man, dedicated to detail and information, he is totally responsible for the Agape Directories, the Agape Song Book and The Agape Echoes (our newsletter). As these folks set the foundation for our class, today there are current members who have taken over the wonderful jobs started by Dave. Jean Hochstetler is our Directory Editor. We currently have the Agape Directory 2022.

An important part of our class is the Agape Echoes 2, our newsletter. Each Monday The Echoes is sent out to all members of Agape and any others who just desire to be on our email list. This publication gives a summary of the class, prayer requests, updates on folks who need prayer and a summary of the Sunday’s lesson. We have a dedicated group of scribes who report the summary of the lesson. For members who are home bound and members who are our precious winter folks, the Echoes is an important way to keep all folks connected. If you want to know anything, read the Agape Echoes 2.



After worship on Sunday morning, the place to be is The Agape Sunday School Class. Everyone is welcome. We’d love to have you join us.

STUDENT MINISTRIES

Communicants Light Advent Candle - 12/4

On December 4th, our Communicants Class lit the first Advent candle together at the 11:00 am service. The students meet monthly all the way through April 30th, at which point these students will become Covenant Partners of our Church!



Pilgrim's Progress Cast Party - 12/4

After all of the hard work put into the performance of Pilgrim's Progress, we held a party for the amazing cast and stage crew to celebrate what they accomplished together. God works in many ways, and that was highlighted throughout the entire process of this production. Thank you to everyone who worked to create this play and to all those who supported!



Crew and Team Christmas Party - 12/7

What's more fun than gathering for a Christmas Party full of bright lights and ugly Christmas sweaters? On December 7th, we hosted a Crew and Team Christmas Party packed with festive games, cheerful music, and, of course, maple syrup. We are grateful to have a great night celebrating the birth of our Savior. (Pics on next page.)



Church Connect at Kings Academy - 12/13

On December 13th, we had the opportunity to represent our church at the first annual Church Connect at King's Academy. While there, we met a lot of middle school and high school students from the school and spent time catching up with students from our program.



Christmas Fest - 12/18



Leaders' Christmas Party - 12/14

On December 14th, we had the pleasure of hosting leaders new and old to come together and connect through the shared love of Student Ministry. In the spirit of Christmas, we spoke about our past experiences and what God has been doing in our own lives. It's amazing how God uses our ministry to bring us together as a community.



Crew and Team Christmas Caroling - 12/21

On December 21st, some of our student and leaders went Christmas Caroling together in the North Palm Beach area to help spread the love of Christ to the local community. We met at Bob Johnson's house and walked through several streets, singing for some members of our church family and meeting new friends along the way as we delivered the joy of the Christmas season. We are so blessed to have the ability to gather and spread the miracle of Christ's birth in such an enthusiastic way.



High School Hangout - 1/6

Although we had to reschedule our High School Extreme Hangout to March 3rd, we still had a blast through our High School Hangout and Bonfire. More than twenty high school students and leaders gathered to play fun games, roast hotdogs and marshmallows, and hear the Word of the Lord. It was so refreshing to have a wonderful night filled with many laughs and a cozy fire.



Crew and Team Kickoff - 1/11

We were so excited to welcome our students back through our doors for our Crew and Team Kickoff! Our first night back included more than 70 students and leaders, playing fun games, singing worship music, and hearing that God's story is ours as well. We look forward to seeing our students every Wednesday for Crew and Team 6:00 - 7:30 pm. We give thanks to God for the way He is working within this community and our program each week.



College Small Group

Are you in college, searching for a community in Christ? Our College Small Group meets weekly on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am. We would love to see you there!



UPCOMING STUDENT EVENTS

February 11 / 7am-1pm

Gleaning Day

Students will be picking vegetables remaining in designated farming fields to help feed the hungry in our community. We will be assigned to a field in Boynton or Delray through Cros Ministries. Exact location and crop to be gleaned is TBA. Pick up and drop off will be at The Way building. Students should bring refillable water bottle, work gloves and money for lunch on the way home. Sign up online to reserve your seat on the bus.

March 3 / 5pm-midnight

High School Extreme Hangout

High school students are invited to a night of go carts, laser tag, roller skating, arcades, and IHOP! Drop off at 5pm and pick up at midnight at the Way building. The cost is \$65. Invite some high school friends. Sign up online. Contact Kim Sanders at 772-263-1226 for more info.

March 11 / 9am-noon

Rummage Sale, Car Wash, and BBQ Lunch

Our annual student ministry Rummage Sale/Car wash will be held on Saturday, March 11th from 9am-noon in the church parking lot. Rent a space to sell your items for \$25, rent a table for \$10. Car wash tickets are suggest donation of \$10. All rummage sale items are to be brought, set up and hauled away on the day of the event. We will not be collecting items in advance. Space may be reserved online or by contacting Kim Sanders at ksanders@firstpresnpb.org or 772-263-1226.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Snowy Day

The Christmas Season kick off for Children was our trip to Orlando that we like to call "A Snowy Day." We begin our trip riding the church bus to the Gaylord where we enjoy the amazing acrobatics of the Circus Soleil. These performers twist, turn and fly through the air with jaw dropping precision. Afterwards,



we navigated our way through the cold, frigid air of the ICE Sculptures and ride down icy slides. We always end our journey with dinner at Medieval Times as we cheered on the blue knight. What an exciting fun day for ALL!!!!

To: Ms. Cary / and Mr. Rick and Ava
From: Emme Furman

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Thank you so much for that AWESOME trip. It was so FUN!

This part was for Ms. Cary and Mr. Rick

My favorite part: I truly like the whole ENTIRE trip but my favorite part has to be the ice!

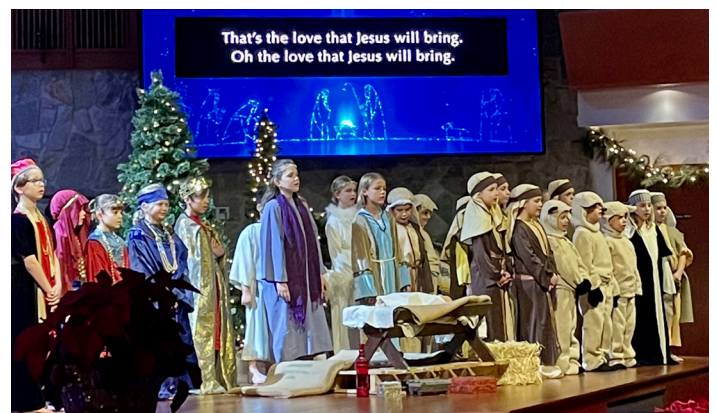
You were THE BEST LEADER I ever had. You were so fun. If I go again next year I want you to be my leader again!

For Ava

Have a MERRY Xmas!

Christmas Pageant

- NARRATOR: RON
- NARRATOR: KAILEY NELSON
- MARY: MERRILL FURMAN
- JOSEPH: GAVIN GROMMES
- GABRIEL: JACKSON WALLACE
- SHEPHERD 1: EMME FURMAN
- SHEPHERD 2: EDEN NABHAN
- ZECHARIAH: RYLAN GOODSON
- ELIZABETH: RAE ANN AYERS
- MAGI: CALLIE STRAYER
- KING HEROD: KAI SMITH



ANIMALS:
LEVI SMITH
JACK ROSE
PRICE DROZDA
REESE COCHRAN
CHARLOTTE FINCH

WISEMEN:
ELISE GABLER
NORMAN HIGGINS
LIAM DROZDA

ANGELS:
BLAKLEY HAFFORD
AUDREY GABLER
MAGNUS JOHNSON

SHEPHERDS:
GAVIN PENNINGTON
LOGAN PENNINGTON
ZACHARY WALLACE
EVIE SMITH
PENNY ROSE
MAXIMO JOHNSON
GRACE GOCHEE

Christmas Fest

Families enjoying the LIVE NATIVITY at this year's Christmas Fest.



Annual Family Camping Trip

This year's family camping trip took us to the Lake Kissimmee State Park. This spectacular campground is full of beautiful oaks and friendly resident animals. Florida's heritage comes alive with living history demonstrations of the early Florida cow hunters in the 1876-era cow camp. Some of the wildlife seen at Lake Kissimmee include white-tailed deer, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, turkeys and armadillos.

We were all blessed to bring in the new year with some "old" families along with some new. This year our families enjoyed activities such as hiking, rock decorating, movie under the stars, and New Year's Eve talent show which included some amazing Dad jokes.

I HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US NEXT YEAR as we travel to Myakka River State Park December 29-January 2nd. Let me know if you would like one of the spots that we have reserved.



Vacation Bible School: Save The Date!



STELLAR SHINE JESUS' LIGHT
JUNE 12-16

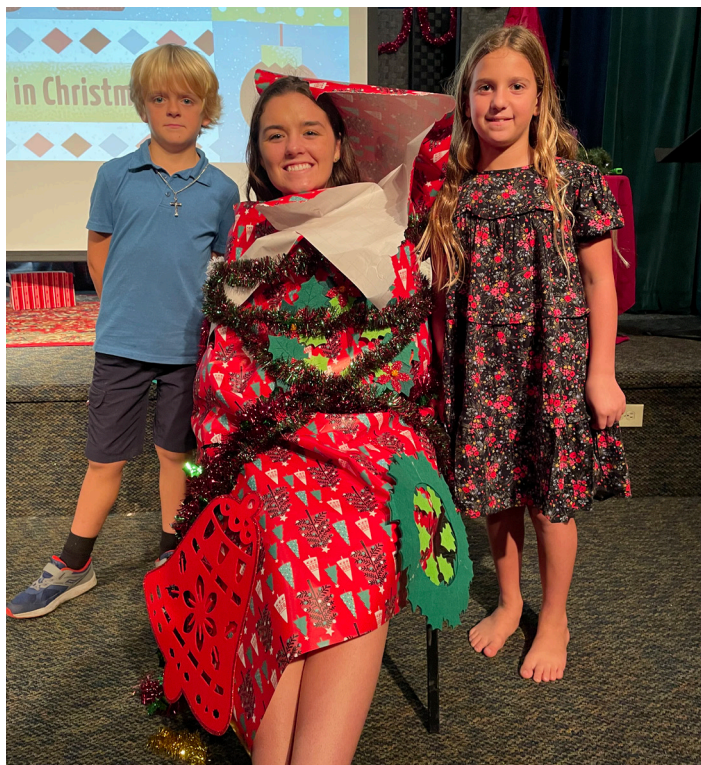
REGISTRATION BEGINS: MARCH 5TH
VISIT: WWW.FIRSTPRESNPB.ORG

Kids Sunday Mornings

There are two kids services each Sunday:

AGES K-5: THE GROVE @ 9:30 AND THE GROVE @ 11:00
LOCATED IN FELLOWSHIP HALL
COME TO ONE OR BOTH! EACH SERVICE WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER.

AGES BIRTH - PRE-K4: THE ORCHARD @ 9:30 & 11:00
LOCATED IN THE PRESCHOOL



What's Happening In Club 45?

If you are in 4th or 5th grade, Club 45 is for YOU! In January, we started our new lesson series, "Valuing Your Values". This series explores principles for living the way Jesus wants us to live.

On February 8th, we will have our 5th annual "We love the 80s" Valentine's event. You can come dressed in the style of the 80s and enjoy games and activities designed around that era. Practice your "Moonwalk" for the contest!

If you are in 4th or 5th grade and have never given Club 45 a try, check it out Wednesday nights, 6:30 - 7:30 in Hawkins Hall.



Kingdom Connection

The Kingdom Connection kids have begun learning about seven great promises made by God to His children. These lessons are a "broad brush stroke" of God's covenant, his agreement, to rescue those who trust in Him, beginning with the promises found in the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis, and extending through to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth in the book of Revelation. Some of these great promises are conditional; however, most reflect the faithfulness of God to redeem His people despite our sinful ways.

We will also memorize key Scriptures for each lesson to remember God's promises. Our theme verse for the semester is, "The LORD is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made" Psalm 145:13b. Every other week the children will have the opportunity to recite their memorized verses to earn Bible bucks. At the end of the semester, they can cash them in for special prizes from

our “store.” The kids love this incentive! We are looking forward to a great semester!

Ms. Trish and Ms. Sarah

K’Motion

Pajama movie night:



Painting prayer rocks as we learned at how God listens to our prayers wherever we are:



A Special Note To Our Elder Jane Sanders

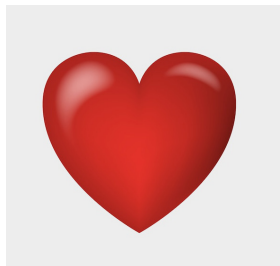
Last month we celebrated Jane Sanders at the Serenity Tea House, as celebration for her many years of service on the children’s ministries committee. We have so enjoyed her dedication and tender care of the children in our church and community. Although her service as elder has come to an end, Jane continues to serve on the committee and shower us with her wisdom and guidance. Thank you, Jane!



SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES

Greetings from JoAnn Hayes

Coordinator of Senior Adult Ministries



February 14 is Valentine's Day. It is a day on which we think about love, those who love us and those we love. When we walk into stores, we find shelves of heart-shaped candy boxes, pink and red decorations, and all sorts of things that are to direct our thoughts to love. As we consider what it is to love and be loved our thoughts ought to turn to God. In I John we read; "We love because [God] first loved us." (I John 4:19, NRSV)

God is the author of love. When asked about the greatest of the commandments Jesus said; "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it:

'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39, NRSV) Jesus also told us that we are to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (Matthew 5:44, NRSV)

And this love is not just for Valentine's Day, it is for every day. Friends, let us show God's love every day and everywhere.

Ellen Reed

Ellen Reed recently retired from singing in the choir. She sang in church choirs most of her life and was part of our church choir for 32 years. She sang 2nd soprano next to her good friend, Barbara Platner. They were the senior members of the choir. Thank you, Ellen for sharing your gift with all of us at FPC.



Join Our Women's Small Group

Our group meets at 9:30 every Thursday morning in the Fellowship Hall. We are starting a new study in two weeks. Join us for studying God's Word, fellowship with other women in our church and refreshments. Contact JoAnn for more information.

Boat Trip On The Loxahatchee River

In March, we are planning a trip to Jonathan Dickenson State Park for a Boat Trip along the beautiful Loxahatchee River. Our adventure will be narrated by a licensed Captain as he relates the history and wildlife of the river.

Date & more information to be announced.

Breast Cancer Support Group

Did you know First Presbyterian Church has a breast cancer mentoring program?

I was diagnosed with breast cancer 5 years ago.

Woody and I were new to First Pres at the time, and I didn't know anyone well enough to tell them. I was volunteering in the church office one morning and was going in for surgery in a few days and wanted to share it with someone on staff. Liz Walters was the person God "nudged" me to share with. That's when I found out First Pres has a breast cancer support group and Liz was in charge of it. She had a spreadsheet of the women at our church who had breast cancer and wanted to mentor someone who was going through treatment. There were over 20 mentors on that spreadsheet and I didn't know any of them. I chose Carolyn Weda because she had been treated for the same kind of cancer I had. I was so fortunate to have found a wonderful mentor and a new friend. This support group is still one of the ministries of First Pres. Call me if you have breast cancer and would like to talk to someone who has already "walked in your shoes." JoAnn Hayes 561-308-9206



Above: Some of the members who serve on the Senior Adult Ministry Advisory Board

Below: December "Out to Lunch Bunch" at the Seminole Inn in Okeechobee



Calendar of Events for February and March 2023

Please RSVP to JoAnn Hayes at jhayes@firstpresnpb.org or 561-308-9206

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FEBRUARY OTLB – OUT TO LUNCH BUNCH

Friday, February 10th at 12:00pm
Cucina Cabana, NPB

FEBRUARY SENIOR ADULT DINNER & PROGRAM

Friday, February 24th at 5:30pm
Cost for dinner is \$13/person
Speaker/Program: Presented by FPC Music
Directory Jay Arnn

MARCH OTLB – OUT TO LUNCH BUNCH

Friday, March 10th at 12:00pm
Bone Fish Grill, PBG

MARCH SENIOR ADULT DINNER & PROGRAM

Friday, March 24th at 5:30pm
Cost for dinner is \$13/person
Speaker/Program: Presented by Rev.
Elizabeth Neilson

FINANCIAL FOCUS

Faith & Finance

Another Christmas is over and, if you are like most people in the United States, the credit card bills associated with all of these purchases (those planned and the impulse purchases because of the great sales) will come pouring in. And, unfortunately, many people will not be able to pay their credit cards fully for months to come, paying astronomical amounts of interest, which makes those sale items no longer so attractive.

In the book, "Beyond Blessed" by Robert Morris, he states that "spending money you don't have is a form of stealing. It's stealing from your future. And from your family's future. You're reaching into the future and robbing yourself of choices. Robbing yourself of freedom of peace. More significantly, it's theft from the impact God planned for you to have for His Kingdom."

The only way to stop accumulating credit card debt is to stop using credit cards unless you have saved enough money to pay them off when the bill comes in.

It's not just at Christmas when we overspend. We see our friends and neighbors purchase new cars, bigger T.V.s, wear designer clothes, get boats, or take amazing vacations, which gives us an unquenchable desire to have the same things, even when we can't afford them. This is called covetousness in the Bible. The 10th commandment, as written in Exodus 20:17 says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Jesus Himself stated in Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." According to Colossians 3:5, coveting is actually a form of idolatry because it is looking to something other than God for your sense of significance and fulfillment. It is giving the person whose goods or situation you covet a power over you that only God should have. The Holy Spirit should determine when and how you spend your money. (When is the last time we prayed before purchasing an item to determine if we should get it?)

The opposite of covetousness is contentment. Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" The key to contentment is to understand that no possession, no achievement, no position and no person on this earth can fulfill the deepest longings of our hearts. Only the Lord can do that. We can be content rather than covetous. We can live in gratitude and generosity rather than in resentment and striving. The peace and security of having God's love, fellowship and presence frees us from the continual cycle of comparison, coveting and craving.

Paul exclaims in 1 Timothy 6:6, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." The reason for this is it frees God to move into our circumstances and change them for the better. More importantly, contentment positions us for a life of eternal significance and impact; a life that lays up great treasure in heaven rather than in things on earth that rust and decay.

Here are a few worthy goals for this new year: 1) to learn to be content with what we have; 2) to make and follow a budget so we control where our money goes; include in the budget savings each month for Christmas so we do not go into debt in December; and most of all, 3) Love the Lord with all our hearts and seek Him first.

Year End Giving

We sent out our Annual Contribution statements on January 6th. Please review yours carefully and let Gayle Coughanour know of any discrepancies you might find. In 2022 the church received 8,629 contributions totaling \$2,694,974 from 607 families to the general and designated funds

December 31st marked the end of the 5th month in the current fiscal year, since our church finance year is August 1 - July 31. December is always the month where the Church is blessed with the most contributions. As we enter into December, in my role as the Administrator, I usually think it will be unlikely that we meet our December budget goal, and yet our God and our people are faithful and always come through. Through December, the Church received \$949,000 in general funds against a budget of \$887,000, a 7% increase, which is great news. The not as good news is that last year for the same time frame, we had received \$982,000, a 3.5% decrease. The Church management is ever mindful to keep our expenses within our established budget, and we are doing exactly that.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

English Classes For Adults!

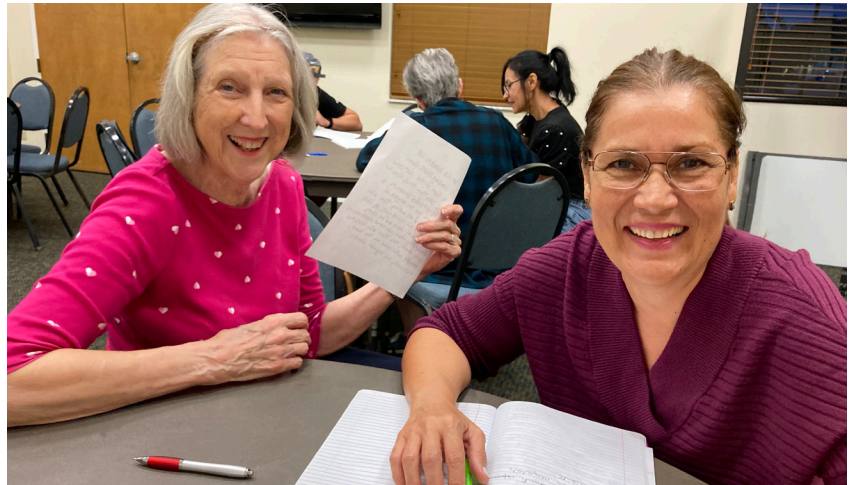
These signs on the church front lawn welcome newcomers to our church campus to make new friends and practice conversation in English. First Pres members are welcome, too, to this volunteer opportunity that takes only one hour a week, requires no preparation or training, and takes place right in Fellowship Hall!

Volunteers need no special training or background—just a desire to help adults of all ages learn to communicate more easily. It is an easy, relaxed way to obey the Scriptures, as in Hebrews 13:2 which tells us, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers,” and Romans 12:13 which says, “Practice hospitality.” Through simple conversation, we can help people feel welcome; people who may be struggling to simply be able to talk to someone.

Participants have come from many countries—Brazil, India, Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Lithuania, and now some wonderful people who have had to flee Ukraine. We’ve had special nights when participants bring party food from their varied countries, creating fun feasts. You’ll really enjoy meeting these people, and your help would be greatly appreciated

The group meets on Wednesday evenings from 6-7:30 pm under the guidance of Emily Content, a church member who is a qualified teacher of English to speakers of other languages.

To ask questions or volunteer, call Emily at 561-727-0696 or email her at emilycontent@instituteace.org.



ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

Wednesday Men's Lunch Living The Life Of A Disciple

Men of all ages are invited to come together every Wednesday, **starting February 1st**, for an hour lunch from 12-1pm in Fellowship Hall. There's a suggested donation of \$10 for lunch. While we eat, we'll be digging deep into the topic of how to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Every Thursday morning at 7:30 a.m. for about an hour, 30-40 men gather for a great breakfast prepared by our chef Ken Coleman and a few volunteers. One of the men give a devotional followed by prayer and share time. All men are invited to attend. For one week in December (this year it was on December 15th) they invite R.J. Hanley school children to perform a few songs for the men and enjoy a free breakfast. Sally Privett played carols on the piano that they all sang to and John Linden arrived as Santa.



Prayer & Healing Services

Do you know people in your life that need healing? Emotional, physical, relational, spiritual? Invite them to come with you to one of our Prayer and Healing services! In 2023 we will hold these services at **12:15 in the chapel on February 12, May 14, August 13 and November 12.**

Have you experienced healing? Come and share your story and your gratitude to God as an encouragement to others! Cards in the narthex list the dates and times and can be used as invitations for family, friends, and neighbors who might be interested in coming. Our services are designed to be welcoming and comfortable for all people.

Lenten Prayer Retreat

Would you like to enter into the season of Lent with purpose? Join us for a morning of prayer on March 11 from 9-12 in the chapel. We will pray and read scripture together and listen for what God has for each of us.

Please contact Pastor Elizabeth if you have questions:
561-622-8818, x. 104
enielsen@firstpresnpb.org

Town Hall Meeting

Everyone is invited! On March 12th, at 9:30 am and again at 11:00 am, the leadership of the church will hold a "Town Hall" meeting in Fellowship Hall. Once a year we like to give a review of what we have accomplished in the past year and the strategies and plans for the future. You can attend either meeting and worship at your preferred service all in the same morning. We hope to see you there!

Women's Circle

All women are invited to attend the monthly Women's Circle, a time of fellowship and of learning. We are currently in a series on how different ages are being affected by the changes taking place in this world.

In January, Kimberly Sanders, our Student Ministries Director, spoke about how teenagers are affected. On Tuesday, February 21st at 10 am in the chapel, Rev. Southard will talk about the changes for young people in their 20's and 30's. On March 21st, the speaker will discuss the changes for people in their 40's - 60's. Please join us.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you know how to knit or crochet or would like to learn? All are welcome to join our Prayer Shawl group, which meets together every 2nd Monday of the month in the upstairs church library. Headed up by Colleen Volstad, this group gathers together to make handmade shawls which are given to those in need of prayer or healing. Of course, the shawls are prayed over by the group before they are given out. This past month, four prayer shawls were given out. Here is a picture of Jenny Wallace, one of the recent recipients of a prayer shawl.



Preschool Registration

Preschool Registration is open for the 2023/2024 School year for children ages 2 -4. Contact the Preschool Director, Diana Wise, at the church to speak to her about enrollment or to answer any questions you may have.

New Members Class

Have you been attending First Pres and are now interested in becoming a member (Covenant Partner)? We would be thrilled to have you join us at our next New Members Class, which is a three-week series on **Sunday, February 12th, 19th, and 26th**, hosted by Pastor Suds Southard. There are two class time options - 9:30am or 11:00am - so you can attend both class and your preferred worship service.

Communion Table Flower Donations

Every Sunday, we have two beautiful fresh bouquets of flowers displayed in worship near our communion table. After the services, these flowers are then made into smaller bouquets and delivered to various people in our congregation - those in the hospital, in need of prayer, or even celebrating a birthday or anniversary.

These flowers are made possible by our wonderful donators! The cost of the flower donations is \$100, which pays for the two bouquets. With your donation, you can give a dedication message, which will be printed in the bulletins and displayed on the screens in between our services. It's a beautiful way to honor a loved one or special occasion, and to give glory, recognition, and thanks to God.

If you are interested in donating the funds for the flowers on a Sunday morning, you can sign your name next to the designated date on our Flower Donation poster, which is hanging in the lobby of the Sanctuary. Or, you can email Kara Avila, or call her in the church office.

2023

FIRST PRES WOMEN'S
1st Friday Book Club

Join us the first Friday of each month from 9:30-11:00am in the Fellowship Hall.

	<p><i>Death on the Nile</i> by Agatha Christie Friday, January 6</p>
	<p><i>The Outside Boy</i> by Jeanine Cummins Friday, February 3</p>
	<p><i>Where The Light Fell</i> by Philip Yancey Friday, March 3</p>
	<p><i>Under the Tulip Tree</i> by Michelle Shocklee Friday, April 14</p>
	<p><i>The Scarlet Pimpernel</i> by Baroness Orczy Friday, May 5</p>

GLOBAL MISSIONS

Partnerships in Cuba!

By Rev. Ron Hilliard

It has been three years since a group from First Pres traveled to visit our global partners in Cuba. On January 11, 2023, a group of five people from the Global Mission Team at First Pres traveled to Cuba, along with over



200 pounds of medicine and children ministry supplies which were donated by our congregation. Our Cuban mission partners were so thankful for your generosity. The team visited with

our two groups of partners in Cuba. Jim Laub, Jodi Rykse, Annabelle MacIntosh, Jared Ayers and Ron Hilliard spent the first two days of the trip reconnecting with our Presbyterian partners in the Matanzas Presbytery. We met with a group of four Presbyterian pastors and had a great conversation about the joys and hardships of being a pastor in Cuba! We also spent a day with the Gethsemani Church in the rural town of San Jose de los Ramos.



We met their new pastor, worshipped together, visited friends in the community, and ate a meal together. It was a wonderful reunion with long time friends! The following day we traveled to Havana where we spent three days with the leaders from the New Pines churches. The New Pines Church is starting new churches in key cities, training leaders, and making a difference in their neighborhoods. Each Cuban New Pines Church has a

partner church from the U.S. People from each of the partner churches joined with the pastors from the New Pines churches for a time of reconnecting, vision casting, and building relationships. First Pres is shifting our partnership with New Pines and will be supporting and encouraging a new church that is starting in the Guanabacoa neighborhood of Havana. Pastor Ulises, and his wife, Elizabeth,



are wonderful servants of God and we enjoyed getting to know them better. The church in Guanabacoa had its first official worship service on Sunday, January 15th and we were privileged to attend. Over 100 people were there to celebrate what God is doing in this neighborhood. Our group from First Pres returned home grateful to be a part of what God is doing in Cuba!

February is Global Missions Month

Each year, First Pres spends time focusing on our Global Mission Partnerships and celebrating what God is doing around the world through the Global Church. On February 12, we will have the privilege to having Pastor Sasan Tavassoli share in worship about what is happening in the church in Iran. And during the month we will hear from several of our mission partners via video, have discussions about the impact our partners are making in their communities, and gather to pray for the Global Church. You will also have the opportunity to support several of our global partners through praying and giving to the work of ministry that is taking place. Supporting the global church and pastors is an important focus of First Pres and we are grateful for the privilege of partnering with churches and pastors around the world.

Global Missions Partner Update: Antonio and Ruth Reyes - Merida, Mexico

First Pres has been supporting the Reyes family since 2008, but they have connections to our church family much longer than that. In the late '90's, Antonio was a student in Will Ackles's class at the seminary in Merida, Mexico. Antonio loved Will's teaching, so in 2001, Antonio moved temporarily to Shoreline, Washington to be part of the training program of the church that Will Ackles pastored. The trainee program was a little like the intern program at First Pres, but many of the participants were not planning on becoming pastors; they became lay leaders in their future churches. Trainees came from both the U.S. and other countries, lived with church families, shared their experiences with them, and developed skills for ministry. Will and Nancy Ackles continued friendship with Antonio, and later Ruth once they were married. Will retired from pastoring and together with Nancy, they moved to Juno Beach and became part of our congregation in 2016. They were so happy to find that First Pres had a relationship with Antonio and Ruth, too!



Antonio earned his master's degree and the couple have three children. He not only pastored the Verbo de Dios Church but also planted four churches and is the head of the Yucatan Presbytery synod in Merida. In 2016, Ruth was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. In Merida, it is difficult to get quality medical care. Ruth was told she could get a needed treatment from a private practice if she could come up with a certain amount of money immediately. They came to us with their need. In God's providence, Will was in Merida at the time, as he sometimes teaches classes at the seminary, so he was able to get money to her from his personal account which First Pres then reimbursed him for. We are happy to report that Ruth's cancer is in remission.

In the beginning of December 2022, Nancy Ackles visited with them and reported the following:



The first thing to report is that they'd love to welcome a team if anyone would like to come down for a visit.

Just name the date, and they'll be ready to show folks around. Will and I plan to be here in February and March, so that would be a fine time for a visit, but any time is good.

Second, their church, Verbo de Dios, is emerging from the pandemic in good shape. They lost some members, but others have joined. About half of the people currently attending weren't part of the church before the pandemic. Antonio says they have 180 chairs set up, but sometimes they need to add 40 or 50 from their spares.

Two of the four church plants, one in Merida and one in Sitpach, are doing well. They were nearly ready to become fully self-supporting before the pandemic hit, have had some setbacks, and are moving forward again. The churches in Dzitya and Noc Ac have not fared as well and are struggling.

Antonio is head of the synod now and has a really interesting project going to get a copy of a book on a pastoral ministry to every one of the 216 pastors in the synod and then hold a monthly Zoom call for all who can attend to discuss the book, a chapter a month. Within his presbytery, Antonio is now responsible for pastoral care of the pastors.

Ruth carries most of the load in caring for the three children (ages 9, 10, 14). She worked for twelve years in a Christian bookstore that has now closed, so she's taken on the task of creating a replacement bookstore. She's also starting a reading club for teens in the church.

Antonio and Ruth would love to welcome visitors from First Pres. They enjoy the Zoom calls with Ron and the other church planters and would enjoy another time when all the planters could get together face-to-face.



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FAMILY NEWS

BAPTISMS

On January 22nd, we celebrated three baptisms:

Colt Jamieson Volstad, son of Kyle and Nichole Volstad, grandson of Ken and Colleen Volstad
Nash Kaleb Nathaniel Volstad, son of Kaleb and Traci Volstad, grandson of Keith and Laura Volstad
Ford Keith Heisler, son of Kevin and Katie Heisler, grandson of Keith and Laura Volstad

Psalm 127:3 – “Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him.”

Proverbs 17:6 “Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”

MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED

Pray for the families of those who have lost their loved one recently:

Gail Littlefield’s grandson, Tyler Mathison, passed on December 3rd.

Richard “Dick” McKinnon passed on December 23rd. He was the beloved husband of Priscilla McKinnon. They have been members of First Pres since 1986. He was a faithful supporter of the First Pres children’s ministries.

Phil 1:21 – “For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”