



CROSS CONNECTIONS

January
2018

- **What Is Your Dream?**

We are just completing the finishing touches on the educational building renovations of our *Imagine the Future* campaign. With a renewed sanctuary, organ, courtyards and educational building, with all our debt paid, and with about half of our mission gifts given away (and some improvements in our fellowship hall already accomplished), that only leaves renewal in the fellowship hall to come. Look for it sometime in the next 12-24 months.

We collected generous pledges of \$ 4.1 million, more than our initial goal. We have already received about 90% of the pledges - even though we are less than 60% of the way into the three-year campaign.

Last Friday night, we welcomed hundreds of people to our church for our Celtic Christmas music and arts presentation. The crowd overflowed our sanctuary. People were leaning against the back wall, standing in the narthex, sitting in the courtyard and watching through the open side doors. What a wonderful evening!

Things are happening here at First Presbyterian Church.

We are building momentum - in mission, family ministry, and outreach.

So . . . what is *your* dream? How can your gifts of energy, leadership, finances and time initiate or reinvigorate our ministry or program life? What can you (and we together) accomplish to transform lives in the name of Jesus Christ?

Churches sometimes have a reputation for being cranky, for complaining, for grumbling about change, for pointing to the things and programs we lack. Thank goodness our church is not like this! I am grateful that God is instead giving us the courage and capacity to dream, to serve wholeheartedly, to move forward in Christ's name.

What is your dream?

Peace,

• **Knit, Purl, Repeat**

The Prayer Shawl Knitters invite anyone interested to come to our Saturday morning gathering on January 20. Our ministry began in 2004 and has given away 691 shawls to people who are ill, grieving, or celebrating. We meet the third Saturday of each month for fellowship, knitting and the blessing of completed shawls. Come join us or check us out at 10:00 a.m. in the church parlor. Questions? Call Marti Clapp (941) 359-8097.



Going paperless not only helps the environment, it helps FPC save money and is convenient for you. At FPC you can receive information via email in three ways:

- *News@First* is a weekly newsletter sent out on Friday. It highlights upcoming events.
- *First In Focus* is a monthly email with pictures of many of our activities.
- *Cross Connections*, our monthly publication, lets you know about activities at church and has special interest articles, "Love Notes" from members, and a calendar of birthdays and anniversaries for that month.

In addition to receiving electronic communications, you can also make your contributions electronically.

If you are interested in receiving the weekly, or monthly newsletters, or *First in Focus* via email, or if you would like to sign up for online contributions, contact Lisa Garcia at LGarcia@FirstPresSarasota.org or call (941) 955-8119.



To donate online, go to www.firstpressarasota.org and click on the "Online Giving" button on our home page.

You will designate the amount and select a fund and an optional memo. For instance, if you want to make a payment towards your pledge, you would select General Fund. You then will enter your email address and press "Continue." You will be asked if you would like to create an account or continue as a guest. If you are a member, you might want to create an account so you can set up a recurring contribution or view your contributions.

If you have selected to continue as a guest, select your checking account, savings account, debit card, or credit card (Visa, Master Card, or Discover), then enter the pertinent information, and press "Give." You will receive an email for your receipt.

If you created your own account, follow these five steps:

- 1 - The gift amount and fund will be displayed.
- 2 - Enter how often you want to give.
- 3 - Select a payment method.
- 4 - Review and process your gift.
- 5 - View and print your receipt.

Each step must be performed to complete the online giving process.

If you have any questions, call Lisa Garcia 955-8119 ext 101.

• **Capital Campaign Update**
January 2018



Fellowship Hall

- The new entrance and exit doors are on site and after several delays, are scheduled to be installed.

Administration and Education Building

- An open house for the reception area and upstairs classrooms will be held on Sunday, January 21.
- The gate and handrails have been installed at the outside steps and ramp.



With the \$20,000 provided last year through the *Imagine the Future* capital campaign, we have helped five families, and are currently helping two families with significant repairs. As our volunteers do most of the work, our only expense is the materials we need for the repairs. The Fuller Center for Housing Sarasota has no paid staff or office overhead. Board members and volunteers from First Presbyterian include Daryl Aslum, Rev. Floyd Churn, Rich Dulaney, Katherine Herron, Phil Kuebbeler, Mark Martin, Larry Schaper, and John Schaub. Many volunteers are from other area churches. Most of our referrals come through churches. If you know of a family in need, please have them contact the church office.



Mission

- \$50,000 has been transferred into the Foundation of First Presbyterian Church with the interest designated for children and youth ministry.
- John Schaub has provided the following from the Fuller Center for Housing:

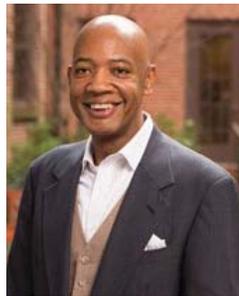
The Fuller Center for Housing in Sarasota is a Christian ministry focused on helping seniors and others with significant needs stay in their homes. Many who have been homeowners for years have found it difficult or impossible to maintain their own home. Our volunteers make repairs that allow them to continue to live at home safely and more comfortable. These repairs range from building wheelchair ramps and flooring to provide better mobility, to replacing non-functional kitchens and baths.



• **Faith Focus Weekend**

Wednesday, January 31 – Sunday, February 4

This winter's Faith Focus Weekend for our congregation and community will be Friday – Sunday, January 31 – February 4. Our keynote speaker will be **Rev. Paul Roberts, president of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA**—the only seminary in the PC (USA) with a distinctly racial-ethnic heritage. Paul preaches and teaches nationally. He is also a writer, contributing regularly to *The Presbyterian Outlook* magazine. He and his wife, Nina, have an adult daughter and two teenage sons.



Please mark your calendar now for our *College of Elders and Deacons dinner* on **Friday evening, February 2**, and Rev. Roberts' *all-church presentation* on **Saturday morning, February 3**. He will also be preaching at our **8:15, 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.** services on **Sunday, February 4**. Please make plans to join us on both Saturday and Sunday.

• **Think On These Things**



*The love of God,
unutterable and perfect,
flows into a pure soul
the way that light
rushes into a transparent object.*

*The more love that it finds,
the more it gives
itself; so that, as we grow clear and open,
the more complete the joy of heaven is.*

*And more souls who resonate together,
the greater the intensity of their love,
and, mirror-like,
each soul reflects the other.* - Dante

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.
- Isaiah 60: 1-3

• **Pastoral Development Seminar**

Wednesday, January 31 – Sunday, February 4

We look forward to welcoming back our five guest pastors continuing their seminar from last October with resource leader Rev. Jorge Sayago-Gonzalez, a Presbyterian minister and singer-songwriter, currently working as the chaplain at St. Stephen's Episcopal Day School in Miami, FL.

In the chapel at 9:00 a.m. on both Thursday and Friday, show your support of these young leaders in the church by listening to their sermons and giving feedback. Come and hear more about their faith journeys in the adult education presentation in the forum on Sunday, February 4, at 10:00 a.m.

Our guest pastors are:

Rev. Walter Canter, Pastor
Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church
Ruckersville, VA
Rev. Nick Cheek, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
Sumter, SC
Rev. Linda L. Jiménez, Pastor
Church of the New Covenant
Atlanta, GA
Rev. Krystal Leedy
Associate Pastor for Campus Ministries
University Presbyterian Church
Austin, TX
Eric Peltz, Associate Pastor
Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church
Washington, DC



• **How to Halve Your Sugar and Eat It Too!**

*submitted by Cheryl Track,
RN-BC, Faith Community Nurse*

If you keep just one New Year's resolution related to getting healthier, consider being smarter about sugar. Assuming you're like most Americans, you're eating or drinking 20 teaspoons of sugar a day! That's more than three times what the American Heart Association (AHA) says is good for you. For an eye-popping visual and motivation to cut back, try spooning that much sugar into a bowl. Yikes!

How much sugar is OK? The AHA recommends that women limit added sugars to six teaspoons a day, men to no more than nine teaspoons. And don't worry, we're not suggesting you avoid doughnuts, cookies and ice cream altogether. In fact, becoming more conscious about your sugar intake will make those splurges all the sweeter.

One big benefit of a low-sugar diet is reducing our chances of developing diabetes, a chronic disease linked to the nation's growing obesity epidemic that now affects over 29 million Americans. More than one in four people over 65 have diabetes. Additional advantages of a lower-sugar diet include finding that your jeans fit better and you don't experience those sudden roller coaster mood swings.

Although people sometimes experience cravings and erratic emotions when they first cut back on their sugar intake, within about 10 days most people find that their energy increases, their anxiety goes away, and they feel much happier. The trick lies in finding a balance between enjoying short-term gratification while also improving your odds of long-term longevity. Here are 10 ways to get started:

1. Skip the Spooned Sugar - Any time you have to add sugar to something, such as your coffee or morning cereal, nix it. If you can make this one important change, then you are well on your way to drastically reducing the amount of added sugars in your diet. If hot coffee doesn't work for you unsweetened, try it iced. Try cutting back on the amount of sugar you add by just a little bit every day or so.

2. Flavor Yogurt Yourself - Start with plain 2 percent or full-fat yogurt. Skip fat-free varieties because fat slows the absorption of sugar, plus

it's satisfying and helps you feel full. Then add fresh fruits, chia seeds and/or unsweetened coconut flakes.

3. Cut Back On Cold Cereal - Many cold cereals contain way too much added sugar. Read the ingredient labels and pick one low in sugar (6 grams or less per three-fourths cup cereal) or opt for plain oatmeal and stir in some unsweetened fruit.

4. Choose Natural Sugar Over Added - Reading ingredient labels will reveal whether a product contains added sugars versus natural sugars that come from dairy, fruit and some vegetables. If there's no sugar listed on the label, then any sugar the food contains is likely to be naturally contained in the food itself.

5. Watch Out For Surprisingly Sweet Foods - Some packaged foods you'd never think of as "sweet" are loaded with added sugar. Such as baked beans. Sugar could be listed as brown sugar, dextrose or molasses on the label. Pasta sauces and salad dressings can also be laced with added sugar.

6. Don't Swill Your Sugar - Liquid calories are more fattening than we think. For every 3 ounces of cola (that's about three gulps) your risk for weight gain increases. So nix sugary sodas for water — switch to the satisfying unsweetened seltzers that now come in so many flavors.

7. Remember That Sugar By Any Other Name Is Still Sugar - You can find 56 different types of sugar listed as ingredients in packaged foods. There's sugar itself, of course, and high fructose corn syrup. But you might not recognize that cane juice crystals, barley malt, brown rice syrup or agave are also forms of sugar. What's more, don't let healthy sounding ingredients such as honey, organic raw sugar and fruit juice fool you. They also mean that sugar has been added.

8. Eat Real Fruit Instead of Drinking Fruit Juice - Most fruit juices contain three-fourths of a teaspoon of sugar per ounce. That includes orange juice: A healthy-looking 16-ounce container contains a whopping 12 teaspoons of sugar. So it's better to eat the orange than drink OJ.

(cont. on page 6)

• **How to Halve Your Sugar and Eat It Too!** (cont. from page 5)

9. Try An Herbal Sweetener - Stevia is an excellent sugar substitute. Made from leaves of a small perennial shrub, *Stevia rebaudiana*, it has a traditional history as a sweetener; herbalists sometimes use it to lower blood sugar. It's 100 to 300 times sweeter than sugar and is calorie-free.

10. For Dessert, Eat Lots of Berries — and a Little Dark Chocolate - Berries are low in sugar compared to other fruits and have many nutritional benefits. A whole cup of strawberries and a cup of raspberries each has less than two teaspoons of sugar. If your sweet tooth wants more, reward yourself occasionally with a few bites of dark chocolate. The darker the chocolate, the lower the sugar: One ounce of dark chocolate (70-85 percent cacao) contains 7 grams of sugar (versus milk chocolate's 14 grams). Not only is a small piece of dark chocolate immensely satisfying, but it is also a mood lifter and energy booster.

Taken from AARP Healthy Living, 11/2017

• **Suncoast Blood Bank**

Thank you everyone who got screened and donated to SunCoast Blood Bank last month. 17 units of blood were collected! The next blood drive is Sunday, April 8.

• **Mark Your Calendar:**

GriefShare resumes Friday, February 2, 10:00-11:30 a.m. for 13 weeks. You can now register online at griefshare.org or call the church office at (941) 955-8119.

• **Shake It Up with February - May**



If you love food and fellowship, don't forget to sign up for the next Salt Shakers. Groups of six to eight people get together once a month from February through May for potluck dinners or lunches. Sometimes a group will choose to meet at a restaurant. This is a fun opportunity to get to know others within your church family. Complete the form and drop it in the offering plate or turn it in to the church office. The last Sunday to sign up is January 28. Bon Appetit!

If you have a question, please call Diane Bittner at (941) 755-2268 or Marcia Schaper at (941) 922-5245.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Please check:

I am willing to host the first potluck and organize a date with your group.

I am willing to host a following potluck.

• *A Heart Warming Celebration*



A fantastic and happy mix of children, parents, volunteers, teachers, and church members all gathered to celebrate the climax of the Brentwood Blessing Tree project at a special holiday dinner on December 17.



More than a dozen families with 53 children, who are students at Brentwood Elementary School and their siblings, were the recipients of Blessing Trees presents of toys, clothing, and grocery gift cards, as well as individual stockings for each child.

Upon arrival, each family had a group photo taken and created an attractive frame to hold the photo. The young guests then had a choice of activities like building a jumping jack, decorating Christmas cookies, creating snow flakes, participating in a bean bag toss competition or playing balloon volley ball.

After a delicious dinner, it was caroling time, with enthusiastic audience participation. The occasion closed with a gift presented to John Weida, principal, and Patty Folina, assistant principal of Brentwood Elementary School for furnishings in the reading corner of the school's

new media center. The source of the gift was First Presbyterian's share of the Pentecost offering which is directed to help children and youth with additional gifts from individuals who took reading corner stars from the Blessing Trees.

Alyssa Hunek, music teacher at Brentwood and Sarah Leonard, a Brentwood teacher for 23 years, were among the staff who expressed their delight with the excitement of the children and their families and for the church members who offered such an incredible event.

Principal Weida observed that with so much that is wrong in the world today, it is gratifying to see people coming together to do something right for others. He also mentioned the phenomenal impact of the church volunteers who come into their classrooms. The teachers love the supporting help they give.

The steering committee of Invest in Children, the organizers of the Brentwood Blessing Tree project, wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to the members of First Presbyterian Church for the opportunity to be blessed in such a significant way during the Christmas season.



• **New Member Bios**

submitted by Mary Elle Hunter, membership committee



Martha Erickson who has been in Sarasota for the past six years is one of the new members joining First Presbyterian in the November 2017 class. Although she has lived in “many wonderful places,” she calls New England her

first home.

For most of her life, Martha has been involved in the hospitality industry, from concierge to front of the house and in other roles as well. She also owned and operated her own catering company for ten years in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Martha has a daughter, Darcy, who is married to Shane, and she dotes on her miracle gem of a grandson, Logan. They reside in Vermont, so she says she doesn’t get to see them nearly enough.

Her passions are numerous. She enjoys the arts, cooking, gardening, reading, and has recently picked up the joy of “playing with paint.” She welcomes the chance to give something back, and here in Sarasota she has been impressed with the range of volunteering opportunities offered, such as the ones with which she has become active - Family Promise, Girls, Inc., and the Sprout Truck for All Faiths Food Bank.

Martha observes that she has finally followed her heartstrings by becoming a member of First Presbyterian. The warmth and care of pastors Glen and Kelly, as well as the wonderful FPC family attracted her like no other community has done before. She has finally opened herself up to receive all the blessings that have been bestowed on her, and she looks forward to learning, giving and loving her new church family.



Susan Sanderson is one of the new members joining First Presbyterian Church in the last class in 2017. She and her husband, Steven, have been frequent visitors to the Suncoast for the last several years. Now in their retirement,

they feel blessed to call Sarasota home for the winter months, avoiding the severe Minnesota winters.

Susan and Steve retain a home in Northfield, MN where they attend the First United Methodist Church of Christ. They have two adult sons, and a two-year-old grandson, all of whom are residents of Lake Tahoe in Nevada.

A variety of work experiences in the areas of human resources, social services and youth development kept Susan busy during her career. Susan’s most recent position was as a counselor at a middle school, where she participated in the creation of a successful program to raise high school graduation rates for Latino students called TORCH (Tackling Obstacles and Raising College Hopes) in the school district. The program currently serves middle school and high school students who are low income, minority and first generation college-bound.

Since coming to Sarasota Susan has volunteered on a regular basis with two-year-olds at Children First, providing Head Start programming, and also has volunteered in a second grade classroom through the partnership of First Presbyterian Church with Brentwood Elementary School. Although she enjoyed her ten years with middle schoolers, she has learned that early intervention is extremely important.

Susan’s hobbies include yoga, quilting, biking, playing pickle ball, and reading. She also belongs to two book clubs - one in Sarasota and the other one in Northfield.

After visiting a number of churches in the Sarasota area, Susan and Steve feel fortunate to have found First Presbyterian, where they appreciate attending the contemporary New Song service. And she comments that it just so happens that the church is within walking distance of their Sarasota home!

(cont. on page 9)

• **New Member Bios** (cont. from page 8)



Nathan Simpson joined First Presbyterian Church in December. He and his five-year-old son, Troy, became Sarasota residents two months ago. For the last twenty years, Nathan has split his time between Thailand

and northern Idaho.

Several recent changes led him to return stateside for perhaps a longer period of time than the initial plan of one year in Sarasota. He has already begun to feel that Sarasota is the place where he and Troy should make home.

Nathan's chief passions are the outdoors and the study of psychology. His early years were spent in California, and contributed to his love of the sea, as well as the mountains, the woods and manual labor, such as carpentry and landscaping.

Recently in Thailand he helped maintain an orphanage as a handyman and groundskeeper, and at the same time, taught in a local school. Service is another of his interests that brings him pleasure in life. In his desire to feel useful, Nathan has worked in a variety of jobs, from outdoor labor to office jobs, and also as a teacher overseas in many different situations

Nathan was raised in a Christian home, and his first church experience was at First Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California. He has always known Jesus as an important part of his life. He describes himself as having been a rebellious youth and brought back on the right path by the loving and ever-watchful God.

In his teen years he was active in a Quaker church in Idaho, and then remained nondenominational since then. Nathan feels very comfortable back in the Presbyterian fold, as he seeks a church experience in which he can learn, grow and serve and supply Troy with a stable and loving environment with good church leaders and teachers. He particularly enjoys the order and reverence in the 11:00 a.m. traditional service.



• **Presbyterian Women Activities**

All church members are encouraged to donate items to fill shoe boxes for children at Mission Peniel in Immokalee, FL. All items should be age appropriate for children up to 12 years of age and fit in a shoe box. Items can be left in the church office before Tuesday, February 6 or join PW in the fellowship hall at 10:30 a.m. on **Tuesday, February 6** to fill the boxes. Items for the boxes can be a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, wash cloth, small towel, shampoo, deodorant, comb, hair brush, hair accessories, hand and body lotion, socks, t-shirts, underwear, pencils, pencil sharpener, colored pencils, markers, activity books, small games, card games, small puzzles, small stuffed animals, books, sunglasses, a craft kit, blunt scissors, crayons, and coloring books. Items for babies would include sippy cups, snack bowls, teething rings, pacifiers, rattles, powder, lotion, baby shampoo, wipes, socks, onesies, bibs, little shirt and shorts outfits, and soft toys. Donations of shoe boxes are also appreciated.

The Annual PW Gathering of Peace River Presbytery is at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church in Punta Gorda, FL on **Saturday, February 17**. The theme is "Christ, Our Rock." Registration is from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. with continental breakfast. The event begins at 10:00 a.m. with the banner procession, business meeting, installation of officers and worship service followed by lunch. The \$12 registration fee covers breakfast and lunch. Please call Mary Webb (941) 758-6035 or the church office (941) 955-8119 no later than Tuesday, February 6 to register for this event. Also, please indicate if you want to car pool from the church. Burnt Store is not accepting any late registrations. Come have a fun morning and meet other PW women!

Save the date: Annual PW Peace River Presbytery Spring Retreat at Dayspring Episcopal Conference Center in Ellenton, FL on **Monday, March 12 and Tuesday, March 13**. You can attend one or both days. Watch for more information in the next *Cross Connections* and Sunday bulletins.

• ***Sabbatical: A Time for Renewal and Refreshment***

by elder Elaine Barnett, personnel committee

A call from God to ministry as a pastor of a congregation is a call to an all-encompassing life-style that involves using the gifts of preaching, pastoral care, administration, leadership, hospitality and vision-casting at an almost 24/7 pace. Through the years the concept of Sabbatical for persons serving a congregation has gained a deep level of understanding. Sabbatical allows the pastor or other staff member to step away from regular duties and responsibilities in order to take time for refreshment and renewal. In 2019 Glen Bell, our pastor/head of staff, will be taking a three-month Sabbatical to pay attention to his need for physical, mental and spiritual renewal. This is part of the comprehensive plan for sabbaticals every six years for our full-time professional staff, adopted by the session last year.

Glen, along with a Sabbatical Task Force, will be developing a plan for that special time his life and the life of First Presbyterian Church. The hope is Glen can receive a grant through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program. This grant is designed to do just what the name implies- provide funding for a pastor to be able to step back from day-to-day church service in order to experience a time of renewal and reflection. Most of the grant will fund the expenses for Glen's travel and time away. Part of the grant will go to the congregation to partially fund expenses for the congregation related to the Sabbatical. Meanwhile, a small group made up of Raynette Lignos, Kay Dunn, and Barbara Chase will be working along with Glen and the session to complete an application for a Lilly Grant.

Glen and the grant application group has selected the over-all theme of "Unexpected Beauty." He will plan for a time to rediscover the beauty of nature, the quality of personal relationships, and the knowledge-enriching experience of travel. No doubt he will use this time of refreshment and renewal to explore the many ways God surrounds him, his personal family and the FPC family with beautiful scenery, relationships and grace. Glen, along

with Anne, hopes to be able to travel to some of the beautiful and spiritually inspiring cathedrals and gardens around the world.

In the academic world, a Sabbatical is a time that often produces a "product" like a book or lengthy research writing. In the church world, the time of Sabbatical is simply having the gift of time to rest, relax, pray and experience God's unexpected beauty and grace.

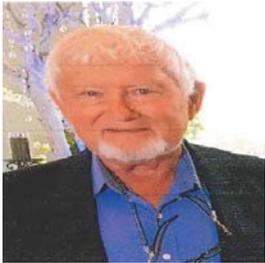
As time goes on the Sabbatical Task Force will create and publicize a plan for life here at FPC during the time that Glen is away. There are many models for how that can happen, being mindful of the on-going mission and ministry of the congregation, along with the responsibilities of the other members of staff and leaders.

To help you learn more about sabbaticals there is a review of a book in an article entitled "How I learned to love the question "What Will Make Your Heart Sing?" in *The Presbyterian Outlook* you might enjoy reading. Here is the internet link: <https://presoutlook.uberflip.com/i/907507-winter-books-dec-4-2017/28?>

Glen and the task force writing the grant application ask for your prayers as they go about the task of writing plans that will make Glen's heart sing and, in turn, help the congregation also experience a time of renewal. The co-chairs of the grant writing task force, Raynette Lignos (raynette406@gmail.com) and Kay Dunn (kdunn09@gmail.com) are interested in your thoughts, ideas and questions about this special time in the life of Glen and our congregation. As the plan develops there will be regular communication with the members and community of First Presbyterian Church.

• **Meet Rev. Dr. Vic Ford, New Parish Associate**

by Pam Schweizer, assistant to pastors



We are excited to welcome Rev. Dr. Vic Ford as a new parish associate at First Presbyterian Church. He brings a wealth of experience, insight, and genuine care as a minister, writer, teacher, and therapist.

Vic was born and raised in Bermuda. He has fond memories of his upbringing there and relishes return visits. Before moving to Florida, he lived in San Diego for more than 30 years.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Sir George Williams University in Montreal; a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Presbyterian College, Montreal; a Doctorate of Ministry from McCormick Seminary, Chicago, and a Master of Family Therapy degree from United States International University, San Diego. Vic is the author of *The Jesus Secret, Seven Steps to Unconditional Love*, which can be found on smashwords e-books, and two additional unpublished works, *Chesara* and *Somewhere Along the Way*. Vic works as a psychotherapist and loves helping people grow, especially in the challenging growth experience of marriage.

With a Presbyterian minister as his father, Vic has known Jesus from his earliest memories. After moving to Sarasota, he found First Presbyterian when he read an editorial by Glen Bell in the local newspaper. The article spoke to him. In Vic's own words, "I liked how his (Glen's) brain worked, so came to see for myself—and stayed."

Vic was formerly on the staff of Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church, San Diego, where he served as Director of Healing and Wholeness Ministries. He loved this ministry and was a leader in teaching and staffing nineteen groups that met weekly. He enjoyed helping men and women to grow spiritually.

Now a part of the First Presbyterian family, it is Vic's desire to teach classes and run groups aimed at spiritual growth. He enjoys assisting with worship leadership, and is available for preaching and some pastoral care if and as needed.

Vic plays golf occasionally, writes books for fun, and tries to stay healthy. He used to fly and sail in San Diego. He builds model ships, swims when it is warm, and plays pool volleyball. Vic and his wife, Debra are frequent ballroom dancers and play pickleball. Deb is a designer—one of the best Vic knows—and is starting her own business. He also credits her as a great adviser to him.

Vic has four adult children—an attorney, a special needs teacher, a businessman, and a businesswoman. He has four grandchildren and two adult step-children; an artist/model and an organic farmer. He is proud of them all.

Be sure to greet Vic and look for ways to welcome and support him in his new role here as a parish associate.

stephen
MINISTRY

Christ caring for people
through people.

**SOMETIMES
LIFE CAN BE A
STRUGGLE**

***Loneliness...Loss...Divorce...Illness
Spiritual Emptiness...Depression***

STEPHEN MINISTERS ARE HERE TO HELP

If you would like a Stephen Minister to call on you, please contact the church office (941-955-8119) to speak with Pastor Glen Bell (x108), Pastor Kelly Fitzgerald (x106) or Stephen Ministry Leader Steven Phillips (x124). Visit our link on the church website: <http://www.firstpressarasota.org/stephenministry.html>.

• **SURE Events**

God of our hearts, may your living and active word pierce deeply into our souls where it can call forth from us love, faith, unity and action.

- Prayer of Melissa Bane Sevier,
PW Horizons Bible Study



On Tuesday, November 28 the SURE team met with Virginia Donovan, chief probation officer, 12th District Court, to discuss civil citation. Officer Donovan stated Sarasota will never be at 100% compliance and requested the reasons for this be shared with the congregations comprising SURE. When asked why 64% of eligible kids in Sarasota receive a civil citation and 36% do not, she was emphatic in her response: When a child encounters a misdemeanor violation, sometimes a civil citation is not issued because of several reasons: the child does not admit guilt; the parent will not give consent to cooperate; graffiti is gang related; the child has committed physical battery against the parent; or it is a misdemeanor involving sexual exposure or other sexual related activity.

On Wednesday, December 13, the SURE team met with Sheriff Knight and officers Lt. Scott and Major Paul Richard to discuss civil citation. From their prospective, in Sarasota County the program is accepted and being implemented by the officers.

The beauty of being involved with SURE is we are comprised of 19 congregations. It is not expected that network and team members attend all meetings. Our faith guides us to have committed representation at meetings.



Active SURE Network Member Bob Kirkpatrick has been appointed to the Affordable Housing Steering Committee.

On Friday, December 8 the SURE team met with Don Hadsell, director, Sarasota office of Housing and Community Development to discuss and receive updates regarding relevant issues.

On Tuesday, December 12, Dorothy Murphy spoke on behalf of Affordable Housing before the county commissioners, Venice Administration Building. She expressed concern regarding the slow process in zoning changes and questioned the reason for this delay between the commissioners and planning department.

Also on December 12, Ryan McBride, Bob Kirkpatrick and another member of the Affordable Housing Steering Committee met in Tampa with Michael Anderson, a consultant from Portland, Oregon to discuss his proposed agenda for meetings with city and county commissioners on January 11 and 12 in Sarasota. The subject will be Housing Trust Funds, revenue tools to fund affordable housing and services.

IMPORTANT JANUARY PUBLIC HEARING

Please plan on attending this hearing on **Wednesday, January 17**, at 9:00 a.m., Sarasota County Commission Building. This is likely where we will get our first push-back from those in the community who are opposed, for various reasons, to affordable housing. It is vitally important we have a large turnout. Our faith calls us to demonstrate our unity and action.



• **Birthdays**

2	Marilyn Bulkley Pat Feeney Melissa Lowery Cindy Jean	15	Allison Wright Michael Daly Danielle Daly Dick Teckenbrock Darla Gulliver Laura Morris	28	Janice McLeod Jill Fegan Tyler Reasoner Emily Cain Judi Treffinger
3	Beverley Lilly	17	Bradford Nees	29	Brett Catlin Carrie Mills Lynette Taylor
4	Barbara Chase	18	Barby McKown Patty Haupt Tracy Bretoi	30	Leigh Ann Webb Sam Hall Victor Garraus
5	Kay Mathers Jane Messimer Rod Rhoades	19	Lisa Saba Dave Muir Taylor Hill	31	Tom Andrews Steve Knopik Thomas Carter
6	Kyle Kellogg Mary Ellen Miller	20	Francesca Muir Sara Boudarga Jacob DiDonato Van Baker		
7	Sarah Moore Jen Smith Jean Emery Ellen Hayes	22	Donna Ferguson Hayes Frandsen Thom Dederer		
8	Jeannine Counts Bob Rodriguez Rick Bagwell Alex Morrison	23	Dylan Interval Tom Jirus		
9	Barbara Woods Don Stahl	24	Amanda Morris Brynne Radcliffe		
10	Vincent Becking Pat Jirus Steve O'Rourke	25	Steve Moore Phil Hohmann Jean Hall Jerry Bedford		
11	Kristen Kelly Bill Wishart Harry Steltmann	26	Cindy Millar Lois Moebus Jami Kellogg Betty Hastings Alina McDonald		
12	Buck Fry Jessica Burnham Marti Cleland Sally Furtick Gerald Moody	27	Juliette Williams		
13	Keaton Van Nostrand Greg Courter				
14	Elaine Rice				

• **Anniversaries**

3	Bill & Sindy Burggraf
7	Paul & Julie Klick
8	Kim & Chris Whitford
13	Tom & Velma Allen
20	Bill & Elaine Rice
23	Bill & Jean Fulton
28	Jim & Jane Minton



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Cross Connections

First Presbyterian Church
2050 Oak Street
Sarasota, FL 34237-7093

(941) 955-8119

www.FirstPresSarasota.org

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