



CROSS CONNECTIONS

October
2020

Dear Friends,

On September 11, 2001, I was a solo pastor serving a church in New Jersey. I was discussing Advent themes with the Church Administrator when the first call came. We watched in horror as the towers fell. Then, even before we could spread the invitation, the congregation began to gather. One member arrived that evening still covered in the dust of the towers' collapse. He came straight to the church, without even going home.

When the ground shifts beneath our feet, we want to be together. We want the comfort of each other's embrace, the strength of each other's faith, the sustenance of scripture and prayer and song. And we want to open our doors to a world in need. That's why it feels so unnatural, with so much unrest in the world, not to be face-to-face right now. It can feel as though the church is not being the church, like we are giving in to fear.

But churches have been significant sources of spread for the virus. That's why we are worshiping online right now—not out of fear, but out of love. By exercising restraint in this area of our common life, we hope to show care not only for our congregation, but also for the larger communities to which we belong. Those of us who have the privilege of limiting our contacts can help to keep community infection rates down and protect those who do not have such choices.

And were we to shift to in-person Sunday morning services, they would not be the same—for those in the sanctuary, or for those worshiping from home. We would not be able to sing together or pray in one voice. We would need to be masked and to keep distance from each other. It would be a compromised experience for all concerned.

So, what can we do and do well? At our most recent session meeting, the conversation turned toward imagining possibilities. If we believe that God is even now about the work of creating, redeeming and sustaining the world, how do we cooperate in that effort? I love that in a climate of rising food insecurity, you were quick to organize for food distribution. What else do you feel called to do?

Epidemiologists assure us that outside is the safest place to meet, and we are moving into our most temperate seasons of the year. Smaller groups are safer than larger groups. What if we begin small? What if we keep our corporate Sunday morning worship online for the time being, so that everyone can participate in our service for the Lord's Day? What else might we do? We need your help to imagine the possibilities. To that end, the session would like to survey the congregation. We will want to know your thoughts about gathering for worship, and also to know what creative suggestions you'd like to offer. Labyrinth lunches? Zoom hymn sings? Small groups online or on our patios? Help us know what might meet your needs and the needs of the world. God may have planted an idea in your heart for just such a time as this.

In persistent hope,

* By the time you read this, we will have begun making the service available on Sunday mornings as early as 7:00 a.m.; you can listen when your heart is most primed for worship.

• **Stewardship 2021**



*But now thus says the LORD,
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be
with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not
overwhelm you. . .*

Isaiah 43:1-2

Sometimes currents that move in a body of water are slow, calm, and peaceful. At other times they are fast, rough, and difficult to navigate. The currents that flow through our lives, and the life of our church, also change continuously. In turbulent times especially, our lives witness to the faith that sustains us. Just as God promises to be with us, we are called to be with all who feel challenged by the events of our day.

The past seven months have been trying for everyone, and for some, they have been devastating. How do we talk about stewardship during such an unsettled season?

First, by saying, "Thank you." Thank you for the patience you have shown as we continue to discover different ways of worshiping, connecting with each other, and caring for those in our community. Out of love for each other, we have worshiped from our living rooms and discovered online classes, while still providing food and supplies for neighbors in need. We have continued to care for our church campus and affirm our staff in the midst of pastoral transitions. Thank you for all the ways that you are living out your faith in these complicated days.

Next, by saying, "We need you." If we are going to meet the challenges that the coming months will bring, we will need your prayers, your insight, your compassion, and your gifts. The goal of the stewardship team and session is to put together a budget for 2021 that is reflective of the difficult economic times. Our message is simple:

- If you are not able to maintain your current level of giving, we understand completely, and would love to support you in any ways that we can. How can we help?
- If you are able to maintain your current level of giving in 2021, we will remain deeply grateful for your commitment to God's work in this place.
- If you are in a position to help make up some of this year's inevitable shortfall, your generosity will enable our ministries to thrive in a time when they have never been more needed.

We will celebrate Commitment Sunday on November 4th and in the next several weeks you will receive more information, both electronically and by mail, about stewardship. Please join us, in whatever ways you can, as we witness to God's transforming power and love.

• **FPC's Mission Partnership with All Faiths Food Bank Has Begun!**

Our new partnership with All Faiths Food Bank as an emergency food distribution site is a wonderful way to volunteer and help others.

The food distribution is by drive-through with volunteers loading cars as clients circle in the parking lot during the allotted time. It is exciting to serve our many community neighbors who are receiving food.

Dave Householder, Co-moderator of the Mission and Justice Committee, is the liaison for this partnership. Bob Kirkpatrick, also Co-moderator of the Committee, is coordinating the FPC volunteers.

Please consider becoming a part of this exciting new ministry to our community!



Sign up to help at

**ALL FAITHS FOOD BANK
EMERGENCY FOOD DISTRIBUTION SITE
at First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota**

8 to 10 volunteers needed for (part or all of) the 3 1/2-hour time-frame each Thursday. Task options include sorting and distributing food, setting up, cleaning up and directing traffic.

First, third and fifth Thursdays: 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Second and fourth Thursdays: 4:00-7:30 p.m.

You can volunteer every week, once or twice a month, or whenever you are able—*for a time-span that suits you*—even help for 30 minutes is welcome!

Invite friends or coworkers to join you.

All safety measures will be in place: Masks and closed-toe shoes required for volunteers, gloves and hand sanitizer provided; masks required for walk-up food recipients

TO SIGN UP use the weblink:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0e4baeac29a1fc1-fpcall>

FOR MORE INFORMATION contact:

**Bob Kirkpatrick, rkirkhv@aol.com or (941) 761-2455
or Dave Householder, dphouse47@gmail.com or (724) 462-4235**



• **Growing Strong Together**

by Emily Weitekamp

My grandparents, Charlie and Dee Stottlemeyer, moved to Florida in 1954. Having been married in a Presbyterian church in Indiana, they decided to make First Presbyterian their home. I have always loved hearing my grandfather tell stories of the legendary softball games. Apparently, it was quite competitive among the area churches. The games were played under the lights in Payne Park, which at the time was home to the Boston Red Sox for spring training. In addition to First Presbyterian being a loving and nurturing environment for their growing family, the church also had a star softball team back then, which was a favorite hobby for my grandfather. I'm sure they had no idea that this one decision for their family—this small seed—would grow into four generations of faith and community.

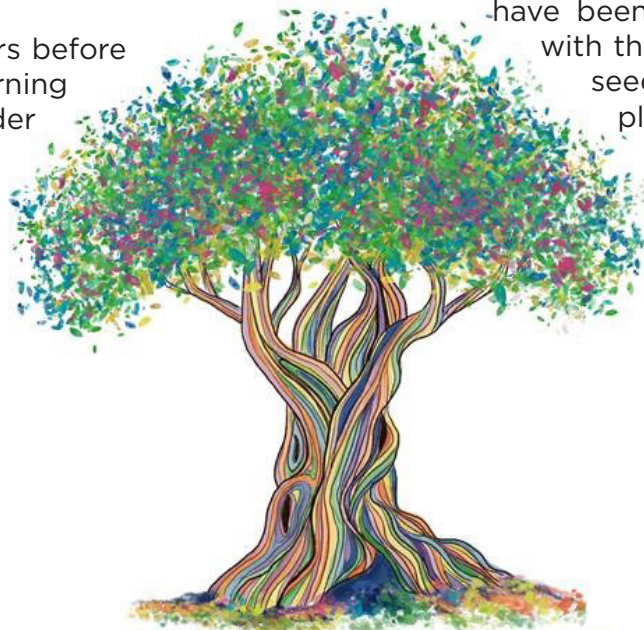
In 1960, my mother, Karen Eastmoore, attended First Presbyterian Preschool in their first kindergarten class. Many years later, she and my grandfather walked down the formerly-maroon-carpeted aisle of our sanctuary so she and my dad could say, "I Do." Over the next five years, my parents had five children. It's still a mystery to me how they were able to get all of us dressed in our Sunday best (which included frilly socks back then) and in the same front left pew by the end of the first hymn at the 8:30 a.m. service.

Like my mother 30 years before me, in 1990, my formal learning began at our preschool, under

the same roof where I learned to sing those hymns, under the same roof where I made close friends that have lasted into adulthood. After countless Sunday school classes, pageant performances, choir practices, and youth group trips—and with years away in between—I walked down that same maroon carpet with my dad in 2011 to marry my husband, Todd. We made Sarasota our home five years ago, and like my parents and grandparents before me, First Presbyterian has become our church family.

Like her "KK" and like her mother, my daughter, Charlie, graduated from First Presbyterian Preschool last May, and my son, Wells, is in the Junior class this year. For us, a huge part of the "family" feel at church has come from the love and support within the preschool community, where our strongest ties are to other families who worship with us on Sunday. I have never been more grateful for those strong friendships than in the uncertainty of the last six months.

First Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Preschool together have become a legacy for me and my family. To quote *Hamilton: An American Musical*, a favorite soundtrack in our household at the moment, "What is a legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden that you'll never get to see." We have been blessed beyond measure with the opportunity to watch the seeds of my grandparents—planted over 65 years ago—flourish into a beautiful garden that continues to grow strong.



Growing Strong Since 1947



• ***My Story of Survival and Hope***

by Rachel Martin

Most of you know me as Rachel Martin, Operations Manager of First Presbyterian Church.

Operations Manager is just one of the titles that I have; I am also a wife, mother, daughter, and aunt. I am an Elder and have been a youth leader and a chaperone. I am also a volunteer at Meals on Wheels and a judge for Odyssey of the Mind.

This year I have added Survivor to my list of titles. I am most proud of this title!

My story started last October when I had my routine annual mammogram. I was called back for a follow-up—which had happened to me before—no big deal, or so I thought. There was one spot that looked questionable, so I had a sonogram. Something still looked suspicious, so I had a biopsy. Then, on November 14, I got the phone call: “Rachel, you have invasive ductal carcinoma. You have BREAST CANCER.” The shock was absolutely unbelievable. How could this be? I am so healthy that I am boring. I breast-fed all my kids, did self-exams, and did the annual checkups. I did all the right things. How could this now be my story?

Now what? That was the day that my world changed. I was going to have to write a new chapter for my story.

First, I needed to make sure my jobs for the day were covered; Lisa and Pam, my fellow FPC administrative support teammates, were thrust into being key players on “Team Rachel.” The two of them, plus a few other dear friends, kept me on-task for the next several weeks. They went with me to doctor’s appointments, made sure I was eating and, most of all, they helped me keep my story as private as possible.

Next, I bought myself a notebook. I have a folder or a notebook for all my projects. This was no different; I started taking on this new project called Breast Cancer—I was going to win! The next months were jam-packed with doctor appointments and conversations about what was next and what my future was going to look like.

My diagnosis day was a very long day. That night when I finally got to bed, I reflected on how THIS was the day that my life changed! As I laid in bed, I stared at the ceiling hoping to just drift off to sleep. I started to pray and felt

a sense of calm come over me. The words, “You are a child of God,” just kept on repeating in my being—“You are a child of God.” And somehow, I knew that I was going to be okay. I drifted off to sleep comforted in the hands of God.

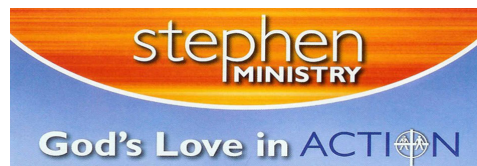
It is my nature to always find the silver lining in everything. So, the next morning, I was ready! I had my notebook and I started doing my own research and I began my story. I decided that I was going to be on a quest to get stronger because of this; not weaker. I started exercising more and eating better and getting prepared to fight. I started to plan—not just how I was going to get through this, but how my personal experience could help others. I wanted to encourage other people to do their annual screening. To advocate for breast cancer research, I will be participating in the annual American Cancer Society walk on October 17.

Because of the location of the tumor near my chest wall, if I had not done my routine annual mammogram screening, I would not have found the tumor by normal self-exams. If it had grown large enough to feel, it would have become a stage 4 tumor. I was extremely fortunate that it was caught early and could be surgically removed with minimal tissue loss.

My routine annual mammogram saved my life. I want to scream from the mountain-top: GET YOUR ANNUAL MAMMOGRAM.

I have kept my story private and now I am finally sharing my story with my church family. I tried to be private about my cancer because I know how much you all love me, and I would have been overwhelmed with love and support. I am a strong person and I did not want to be seen as weak or unable to do my job. In January you all celebrated with me my 15-year anniversary as your Operations Manager. I am most deeply grateful to all of you for your support. During my treatment I only missed a few days of work. December 18, 2019, one week before Christmas, was my surgery date and I was feeling well for Christmas Eve—just six days after the surgery. I felt that keeping busy and serving God and FPC is what kept me motivated to be strong and win the fight. In February I started chemotherapy and in April I started radiation. Today I am feeling fantastic and my doctors say I am 100% healthy and cancer-free.

(continued on page 5)



Rachel's Story (continued from page 4)

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, and it marks the one-year anniversary of the beginning of my story. My message to you is this: Women, please go get your mammogram! If you are anxious, please talk to me. If you want me to go with you, all you need to do is ask.

My new title is Survivor! I think I will keep my (newly regrown) hair short, as an outward sign of this title and as my badge of honor. I now know that I have more inner strength than I thought and that "I can do all things through God who strengthens me."



• **Presbyterian Women**

The monthly PW Bible study led by Jean Luker meets via Zoom on Tuesday, October 13 at 10:00 a.m. We will begin with the first lesson in the new *2020-2021 Horizons Study Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament*. All women of the church are welcome to join the meeting. The study guide is not required to join. Deborah circle meets immediately following for fellowship and PW updates. The info to join the Zoom meeting will be published in the church's announcements on Sunday, October 11.

Mary-Martha circle meets via Zoom on Wednesday, October 21 at 10:00 a.m. for Bible study and fellowship. All are welcome to join the meeting. The lesson will be on Martin Luther and Lutheran Traditions led by Jinny Miller. The study guide is *The Protestant Reformations* by Donald K. McKim. It can be purchased online from pcusa.org and costs \$8.95 (product# 624000). Contact Elaine Barnett at ewbarnet@tampabay.rr.com to request the Zoom meeting invite.

"Falling" is a term we often use to express a sudden, disorienting, and frightful feeling that comes from bad news. After hearing of a tragic event, a doctor's terrible diagnosis, a financial loss, the failing of a marriage, or the loss of a cherished dream, there is often a feeling of helplessness. It is as if the bottom has dropped out. Other times, the feeling comes on slowly; one would describe life as just "falling apart." During these times, how comforting it is to have someone to steady you, to help hold you together, to listen, or even walk with you to the new place the "fall" is taking you. Such friends in times like these are a gift from God.

This is just what Stephen Ministry is for. Essentially, Stephen Ministers are trained to be God's hands that help hold you, the tether to help secure you, and the shoulder to cry on. Stephen Ministers are prepared to listen, give confidential care, and to take your hand when your life is falling apart.

If you or someone you know is "falling" and needs a Stephen Minister, please call the church office (941-955-8119) to speak with Margaret LaMotte Torrence (Transitional Pastor), Cheryl Track, (Faith Community Nurse), or Steven Phillips (Director of Music Ministries and Congregational Care). They can begin the process of getting you the help that is needed.



SURE

submitted by Dorothy Murphy
SURE Team Leader

Joyfully Surprised and Thankful

SURE Team Leaders George Chorba, Pat Higgins and Dorothy Murphy welcome two additional Team Leaders, Judy Kuebbeler and Ann Opdyke.

Why I Decided to Become a SURE Team Leader

Judy Kuebbeler

“I have become a SURE Team Leader because I believe in the actions that SURE is doing to make positive changes in Sarasota. I hope to engage others to help our effort.”

Ann Opdyke

“Since receiving and accepting a personal invitation from a member of First Presbyterian Church to attend a Nehemiah Assembly several years ago, I have been keenly aware of the injustices in Sarasota and the importance and value of SURE. I have kept up with the ongoing work of SURE and feel challenged to do more than attending a few meetings and supporting SURE financially. I want to answer God’s call to do justice by being active in SURE as a Team Leader representing First Presbyterian Church.”

SURE’S New Associate Organizer Shares Her Thoughts

*“My name is **Taylor Marzouca** and I’m the new SURE Associate Organizer. I was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, and graduated from Allegheny College with a BSc in Global Health Studies, where I also minored in Community and Justice Studies. I’m the youngest of five sisters, played tennis for most of my life, and love cooking and baking for others. I’m very excited to be working with SURE and I’m looking forward to meeting everyone soon.*

I chose SURE because I believe in people and I believe in their stories. I believe that ordinary people can work together to decide what kind of world we want to live in. I support relationships which allow us to see one another as neighbors—people who matter and should

be treated with dignity and respect. These relationships are what allow us to reclaim our local systems to reflect that neighborly love. I don’t think I really chose SURE. . . I think God chose SURE for me and I’m grateful every day that God did.”

SURE Listening Meetings

SURE Team leaders conducted five meetings during the month of September where valuable conversations were shared and relationships were built.

Affordable Housing

This summer plans were discussed for influencing the city’s budget hearing process to encourage commissioners to prioritize funds for families making less than \$42,000 per year.

Criminal Justice

Twelve SURE congregations were represented in a virtual meeting with thirty community leaders and State Attorney Ed Brodsky. The committee’s interest was in reviewing the current juvenile citation program and creating a like adult civil citation program.

Attorney Brodsky agreed to have an outline regarding these requests ready to speak and present at the Community Problems Assembly on October 5.

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS ASSEMBLY

VIRTUAL GATHERING

Monday, October 5, 6:00 p.m.

**EVERYONE IS INVITED.
SURE MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED
TO ATTEND.**

**ZOOM Link will be provided in the
News@First Friday, October 2**



• Invest in Children

by Jinny Miller

Since the beginning of our mission partnership with Brentwood Elementary School in 2016, we have witnessed quite a transformation in a variety of ways at the Title 1 school.

- Their rating by the State has moved from a C to an A!
- The physical building has been updated with a beautiful media center (furnished with funds from our Imagine the Future Campaign), a new cafeteria, a new logo, and fresh fluorescent green paint.
- New volunteers (30 from our church) have been welcomed with open arms
- Love and joy continue to abound!

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic we have suspended our volunteer program until a safer time, but we continue to support Brentwood in other ways. Our gathering of supplies and the gift of a “Welcome Back” staff breakfast made a difference as Brentwood prepared to begin the school year under new and different circumstances. The following letter from Principal John Weida and Assistant Principal Holly Brody expresses their appreciation . . .

Dear First Presbyterian Members,

The staff at Brentwood Elementary want to sincerely thank you for your bringing fun, warmth and excitement to our first official day of school with teachers, August 24. This day helped to reconnect our staff from what has been a long and sometimes lonely hiatus.

We know many of you contributed supplies to classrooms and monetarily to supply a delicious breakfast, not to mention the well wishes during this very stressful time. Teachers were thrilled to walk into the cafeteria with a beautiful display of supplies and a perfectly packed breakfast box.

A special thank-you to George and Merle Chorba, Jinny and Ron Miller and Lorraine Foltz for their coordination and delivery of these spectacular gifts. We know how much behind-the-scenes work it takes to make this all happen. We are very grateful to be the center of such generosity.

Please know how much we appreciate all you’ve done and continue to do to support Brentwood Elementary. You’ve helped to rebuild our small community by extending your community to include us. Thank you again for your hard work and generosity. We are humbled by your kindness.

• Love Notes



To: First Presbyterian Church

Thank you all so much for that delicious breakfast for all of us at Brentwood Elementary. It has definitely been a stressful and anxious time for us and to have such a nice breakfast was very much appreciated.

Many blessings!
Brentwood Staff

Dear First Presbyterian Angels,

Thank you so much for the wonderful and thoughtful breakfast on August 24. Our staff is so grateful for your church’s dedication to supporting us both in and out of a pandemic.

I’m sorry we couldn’t all send you a letter telling you how loved and appreciated you are. We have to minimize what we all touch!

Thank you for touching our hearts during a “touch less” period.

Love,
Brentwood Staff

• **Birthdays**

1	Cheryl Barnes	15	Karen Eastmoore	28	Kaitlyn Armstrong
	Cullen Sabin		Phil Kellogg	29	Jim Harding
	Justin Wilmot		Petra Tingstrom		Sadie Khuu
	Julio Travieso		Martha Erickson		Jenna Davis
	John Hutchens	16	Kaitlyn Delaney		Gabriel Jiva
	Bill Burggraf		Jean Raskin		Ted Kline
2	Anita Brass		Keeley Kennahan		Sloane Knudsen
	Betsy Anderson	17	Natalie Marsh	30	Cecily Gifford
	Maryann Stuart		Whitney Webb	31	Lisa Garcia
	Barry Davis	18	Kent Miller		Bode Knudsen
3	Yvonne Dumas	19	Tim Hallinan		
4	John Fisher		Gena Smoot		
	Ryan Blitz		Matt Swick		
	Roxanne George		Annie DeLuca		
5	Marsha Fischl		Sherry Storms		
6	Larry Schaper	20	Shanon Weedman		
	Pamela Lamb		Rene Corcoran		
	John Yost		Rama Nilsen		
	Jeremy Johnson	21	Sandi Soper		
	Bob Kirkpatrick		Kaitlin Harding		
	Marissa Tingstrom		Andrea Householder		
7	Jerry May		Sandy Callahan		
9	Edith Phillips	22	Joshua West		
	Susan Dean		Lauren Turner		
	Vera Winship		Jerry Bernier		
10	Doug Smoot	23	Pat Woody		
	Erin Duggan		Kota Dean		
11	Erin Dean	24	Laura Kennedy		
12	Phil Kuebbeler		Christopher Rivera		
	Charlie Morris		Rick Foltz		
13	John Harman	26	Wills Young		
	Brianna Castillo		Fiona Sutton		
	Stephen Cole		Andrew Copa		
14	Savannah Pullman	27	Margaret Noble		
	Devin Gulliver		Thomas Martin		
	Quinn Gulliver		Joe Callan		
			Andrew Harrington		



**Blessings from
your church family**

• **Anniversaries**

1	Alan & Fran Lawrence, Sr	24	Dave & Joanna Luebs
9	Clarence & Maureen Jones	26	Daniel & Tracy Gonzalez
10	Michael & Tammy Taaffe		Seth & Sunny Westerberg
17	Lou & Sue Spigel	27	Paul & Molly Cole
18	Bob & Ellen Forbes	29	Bret & Claire Huber
	Jim & Pam Harding	30	Jill & Joe Hougland
	Jason & Ashton Smith, Sr		
19	Martin & Lisa Sabin		
21	Bob & Nancy Rodriguez		
	David Low, Sr & Sherry Storms		
23	Allan & Ryan LeBlanc		
	Jeff & Michelle Rencher		
	Glen & Anne Bell		



Cross Connections

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www.FirstPresSarasota.org

Return Service Requested

• **Dial Hope**

Dial Hope is a daily devotional program, founded by the late Dr. Roger Kunkel, former parish associate of our church. For encouragement and hope, every single day, please dial 941-955-8929 or go to dialhope.org.



Cross Connections is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota, Florida, Volume 38 Issue #10. Please submit articles for the next issue by October 15, 2020. Articles submitted are proofed and edited.