



February 8, 2011 fpconline.org

Worship at First Presbyterian

First Presbyterian Church offers four Sunday worship services: traditional worship in the Sanctuary at 8:30, 9:30 and 11:05 a.m., and contemporary worship in Westminster Hall at 10:45 a.m.

Childcare at First Presbyterian

Reserve by contacting April Kuper at 210.226.0216, ext. 232, or aprilk@fpcsat.org no later than two days prior to the event. Drop-ins cannot be accommodated.



A Gift of Love *pastor's ponderings*

BY THE REV. JIM CAPPS
INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR

Can you think of a subject more sung about than love? Some of the stirring popular songs of my younger years had titles like: "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing;" "Love Makes the World Go Round;" or "Love Me Tender." Rick Cavender and his band kicked off the San Antonio Rodeo for our KEYS group with a full concert of country and western songs. While we had a wonderful time of foot-stomping and clapping, almost every song was a sad story about failed love.

As you would expect, the songs about love are prevalent and a lot different in the repertoire of church music. "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" is a wonderful hymn talking about God's gracious love for us. Another less well-known hymn is, "The King of Love My Shepherd Is." When referencing our love for one another in my youth ministry days, I remember a song we used to sing, "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love." Then in my early years of ministry, there was a poignant song which would bring us to tears — "Love Them Now, Don't Wait 'Till They've Gone Away."

In the English, all of those ideas are expressed with vastly different meanings and settings all using the same English word, "love." The Greeks certainly had a better idea,

when they had three major words for love. One was *eros* which is that heart-fluttering, romantic, physical kind of love. Another was *phelos* having to do with the love families have for one another. By far, the strongest, most commitment-laden word was *agape*, meaning the willingness to empty oneself for the welfare of another without an expectation of reciprocation or reward. It has the idea of giving to someone for the sole purpose of affirming and building up that person.

In its purest form, agape is found in God's extravagant love lavished on His people. John Seiders and I have just preached from the Old Testament Minor Prophet, Hosea, who vividly portrays God's gracious love for the wayward, wandering people of Israel. Likewise, Paul in Romans 5:8 (TNIV) writes, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Eugene Peterson's paraphrase in *The Message* is even stronger: "But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him."

With all of this said, it is so important for us to share love with one another through actions as well as words. I'll never forget that this whole concept of "love" was a very strong and meaningful one to our daughter,

Becky, in her growing-up years. Because she wanted to make certain that she really meant it, she never used the word "love" either in conversation or as she signed a note or a card for some special occasion. When she was somewhere around the age of 17-18, I remember that her birthday or Father's Day card to me said not just, "your daughter," but "love," Becky. It was one of those memorable moments.

With the full meaning understood, it is so important within the community of faith to demonstrate love to each other and the world around us. For example, some of the people from our Prayer Ministry have put together a gift of love for the whole church family in the form of a Lenten Reflections guide for 2011. With a lot of hard work they have gathered reflections from members of our church family which lead us to the Crucifixion and the Cross and the Resurrection and the Empty Tomb.

As I finish these ponderings about love, I just heard the news that we collected 127 bags of food for CAM on Souper Sunday. Praise God for that expression of love for people who are hungry and need food!

May God bless you and make you a blessing.
Love, Jim

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 (TNIV)



Session Minutes... in Seconds

- ◆ 2010 Church Statistical Report — Accepted
- ◆ Worship Times Task Force Recommendation — Received Debate and vote to follow at March Session meeting.
- ◆ Changes to By-laws — Accepted
Session size: moving from 45 to 24, over the next three years.



BY THE REV. RUTHIE SEIDERS
FAMILY AND STUDENT MINISTRY

What is Lent?

While we are in the midst of the first season of Ordinary Time in this Christian Year, we are already making preparations for the observance of our Lenten season. The word “lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “lencten” meaning spring; the word from which we get the English verb “to lengthen” meaning the days are lengthening as spring approaches.

When does Lent begin?

Lent begins with the special service of Ash Wednesday. It includes 40 days (symbolic of Jesus’ 40 days of temptation and preparation in the wilderness before he began his public ministry) plus six Sundays (which are still celebrated as the Lord’s Day even in the midst of Lent) leading up to Easter morning.

What is the history of the use of ashes in the Scripture?

The use of ashes as a symbol of mourning or repentance goes back deep into the Old Testament. Some of the more common passages with which you may be familiar include Queen Esther’s uncle Mordecai, sitting outside the palace after hearing of the plot to kill the Jews. Mordecai puts ashes on his head as a symbol of his mourning over the impending death of his people. (Esther 4:1) Also in exile, Daniel pleaded with God to rescue Israel by putting on sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9:3) The king of Nineveh, after Jonah finally got there to deliver the prophecy God gave him to give the people, got up from his throne and literally sat in ashes as a means of repenting before Almighty God for the sins of his people. (Jonah 3:6) In the New Testament, Jesus referred to two cities that rejected his teaching and said that if Tyre and Sidon had witnessed the mighty deeds, they had witnessed they would have put on

Celebrating the Christian Year...LENT

sackcloth and ashes in repentance and not been destroyed. (Matthew 11:21)

What is the history of the use of ashes in the church?

If we were to look back into church history we would have to go back to the time around 960 A.D. to find records of the use of ashes in worship, though as far back as the 6th century ashes had been used to mark the sign of the cross on a person’s forehead who was preparing for baptism to show repentance of sin. By the 12th century, the church began the practice of burning palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday to use as ashes for Ash Wednesday. This was to remind Christians that Lent leads us to Palm Sunday — the day of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb who would take away the sins of the world.

For many centuries, new converts to Christianity were baptized and received as members on Easter Sunday and so the practice of setting aside the 40 days of Lent developed as a way to prepare the catechumens for baptism. Eventually, the whole church joined in the Lenten journey to walk alongside their new believer brothers and sisters. As that Easter baptismal practice waned, the emphasis of Lent shifted to more of a meditative time to consider the journey of Christ to the cross. Lent came to be a time when people would acknowledge their own sin that sent Jesus to the cross, as well as their mortality, were it not for the resurrection joy of Easter morning.

What is the history of the use of ashes since the Reformation?

During the Reformation, there were many things about which Martin Luther, John Calvin and the other reformers took issue with the Roman Catholic Church. The emphasis of the Reformation of sola scriptura (only scripture holds authority in our lives), sola gratia (we have been saved by grace not by works) sola fide (we receive salvation by faith alone, no indulgences needed) and

sola Christus (our salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ) served to draw these “protesters” back to the essentials of the Christian faith. In so doing, they rejected many of the ancient practices which had become more of an encumbrance or hindrance to true worship for the people.

When did this and other practices begin to come back into the life of the church?

With the completion of the Common Lectionary in 1970 and the reforming works of Vatican II in the Roman Catholic church, there began to be increased dialogue among Protestants and Catholics to reclaim some of the ancient spiritual disciplines, knowing they are no longer for show or personal gain, but to draw one closer to God during different seasons and rhythms of the Christian year. This has led to more attention to spiritual disciplines, seasons/concerts of prayer, periods of fasting, a heightened use of color and visual, Advent and Lenten journals for personal discipleship and celebration of a Seder meal during Holy Week.

In addition, churches experience an intentionality in the observance of “secondary” holy days like Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord, Transfiguration Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Pentecost. Part of the intentionality of the worship on these days has been the use of light and candles, the choice of music, ashes, darkening rooms, drama, draping in black, flowers and processions, renewal of baptism vows and celebrating the Lord’s Supper. These are not meant as a distraction but as enhancements to the uniqueness of each special day as it highlights a different aspect of God’s grand narrative and specifically the gospel story of Jesus’ life, ministry, death and resurrection.

Our observance of Lent will begin with a service for Ash Wednesday where you will



Wednesdays January 12–April 6

Intersection is a time for our church family, young and old, singles and families, youth and leaders, to come together and explore ways our lives intersect with one another and with the good news of Jesus.

We listened to the feedback from those of you who attended our fall six week Intersection and have made the following changes to the schedule:

5:00-5:45 p.m.

NOTE: All Children's Choirs
Rehearsal

5:00-5:30 p.m.

Youth Choir Rehearsal

These changes address the need to try to start a little later, to have all of the choirs at the same time, to continue with the fellowship aspect of serving dinner family style as well as the after dinner worship/devotional time for us to be all together as a church family. There is a place for you to serve either on a dinner serving team or sit with friends over a shared meal.

Intersection Continues!

5:30–6:30 p.m.

Family Time Dinner Hour

Served family style

Dinner cost

\$4 per person, 4 yrs. and up
\$20 cap per family

5:45 p.m.

Children return

from choirs join us for dinner

6:10 p.m.

Worship/devotional time
followed by dismissal to classes

February 23

Theme: Oscar Night/Academy Awards

Menu: Chicken Parmesan, Buttered
Spaghetti, Green Beans. Rolls
Vegeterian Alternative—Eggplant
Parmesan (provided by parents)
Ice cream cups/cookies

March 2

Theme: Big Hair Night

Menu: King Ranch Chicken, Rice, Beans,
Cornbread
Vegeterian Alternative—King
Ranch Mushroom
Ice cream cups/cookies

6:30–7:30 p.m.

Age Appropriate Classes
and Activities

Preschool

Tadpoles

Elementary

Masters Hands

Middle School

LOGOS

Adults

Good Sense \$eminar

Christian approach to financial
planning. Led by Bobby and Becka
Byrd and John Carter

Jonah

Come join us as we take a new
look at the ancient words about
Jonah and God's grace. Led by
Rev. John Seiders

The LIVING Word

Discover Jesus as "The Living
Word" and who makes the
impossible, POSSIBLE! Led by
speaker Kathleen Whitten

Come to Intersection!
A place where our church
family comes together.

KEYS Adults invite you to...

Celebrate President's Month! Tom Jackson, an internationally-known living historian, will present "Theodore Roosevelt and His Vision for America" Friday, February 18, at 11 a.m. Spend some quality time with a true American hero, Teddy Roosevelt, the only U.S. President who won the Medal of Honor and the Nobel Prize. The program includes, in Roosevelt's own words, his beliefs on the value of knowing the Bible; why a person should

attend church; and on good citizenship, character, patriotism, etc. After lunch, make plans to stay and play bridge.

Know the latest on what's going on in Bexar County! Join KEYS Adults Friday, February 25, at 11 a.m. to hear Judge Nelson W. Wolff give a mini *State of Bexar County Address*. Judge Wolff is a San Antonio political figure and has served Bexar County in the Texas House of Representatives and the

Texas Senate. He is a former Mayor of San Antonio and has been a Bexar County judge since 2001, and we are most fortunate to have him speak to us. After lunch, plan to stay and play bridge.

Lunch (\$7) follows the events and the reservation deadline is Tuesday before the program. Call the church office at 210.226.0215 to RSVP or Pat McCleary at ext. 226, for more information.

Got vitamins? Please help contribute to the needs of FPC's Medical Mission Trip to the Yucatan

Please help contribute to the needs of FPC's Medical Mission Trip to the Yucatan. Donate new, unopened adult and children's vitamins (no gummy vitamins, please) for our medical team to take with them (late March). Items also needed are diaper cream (A+D ointment), analgesic (Thera-Gesic) cream, tolnaftate/antifungal creams (Desenex, Lamisil, Tinactin) and cough/cold products (Robitussin). Opened and/or prescription medication cannot be accepted. Please drop donations in the Missions office at the church. Contact Alyssa Payne at 210.226.0216, ext. 242, or alysap@fpcsat.org. Thank you for your generosity and help.

Serving at Haven for Hope

Last week, FPC members John, Townsend and Robert Durbin; Hal Zesch; John Strong; and Alyssa Payne spent a few hours volunteering in the Family Life Center of Haven for Hope. The team opened up the Children's Play Room, the Reading Room and the Teen Room. The Children's Play Room is an area where young kids can come and play with their parents using games, toys and computers. The Reading Room offers kids the chance to receive tutoring and an opportunity to read and tell stories to volunteers. The Teen Room is reserved for residents 13 years and older and serves as a safe haven for the teenagers to come and play video and computer games, as well as pool or foosball.

The group enjoyed spending time with the children, as well as some parents who were in attendance. One of the mother's in the play room, which has four children, with one on the way (and the father currently in jail), even asked for prayer after discovering the First Presbyterian Church volunteers. The time spent this night seemed to bring great joy to both the families and the FPC team. Our church can volunteer monthly in the Family Life Center at Haven for Hope, so keep an eye out for future opportunities! To donate time, e-mail Alyssa Payne at alysap@fpcsat.org.

Summer mission trip to the Dominican Republic, June 11-18

This year's trip is scheduled for June 11-18. The team will once again build latrines, run a VBS program and spend time visiting and ministering to local families in their homes. Our long-running partnership with the La Meseta community will be officially closing in a few years, so this will be one of the last opportunities to participate in this trip! Why not make this your year to go?! Submit an application and a \$200, non-refundable, deposit to secure your spot by March 1. Total cost of the trip is \$1450, and there are plenty of opportunities to raise funds. Three mandatory preparation meetings will be held prior to the trip. If you are interested in getting more information or an application, please contact Alyssa Payne at alysap@fpcsat.org or 271-2742.

Ash Wednesday Worship Service — March 9, at 6:45 p.m., in the Sanctuary

LENT, continued from page 2

see that the colors have been switched from the green of Ordinary Time to royal purple, signifying repentance and humility. At this special service we will offer the option of imposition of ashes as a symbol to remind



us of our sin and mortality, as well as an invitation to the Lord's Table, where we will celebrate with broken bread and poured-out cup as we remember God's remedy for the

consequences of our sin through Jesus' saving work on the cross on our behalf. During this service, the Alleluia banner will be recessed from the sanctuary as we fast from the use of "alleluia" during the season of Lent.

The Prayer Committee has developed a journal of Lenten Reflections filled with thoughts and words from members of our congregation to be read throughout the Lenten season in your own times of personal devotion. The Children's Choirs are already working on their Palm Sunday offering in worship and the palms are on order for use in our celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry. Holy Week will be filled with multiple worship and fellowship experiences from a Seder meal,

Maundy Thursday Communion, Good Friday Tenebrae services, a Saturday morning children's Easter program and a glorious resurrection celebration beginning at sunrise on Easter morning. As the Alleluia banner is processed back into the worship spaces, the pastors, the choir and musicians will lead us in hope-filled worship that the tomb was empty, while we proclaim together in one voice, "Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!"



MO Ranch All–Church Family Retreat June 17–19

The theme for this year’s all-church family retreat at MO Ranch is Wilderness MOments. Have you ever felt like God was calling you to do something you weren’t qualified to do? Have you wondered about the symbolism and meaning behind the Passover meal? Have you struggled with wishing you could see God with your own eyes? How do you deal with the temptations of allowing the things, the cares and responsibilities of this world to crowd out God’s place as first priority in your life?

Complementing teaching from the Old Testament accounts of the journeys of Moses and the Israelites will be lots of time set aside for fun activities — both free time and organized fun. Come away with your church family, build upon friendships and develop new relationships that will help you feel even more connected to this wonderful Family of God that is First Presbyterian Church. Feel free to invite friend who may or may not have their own church home.

Adults of all ages and stages are encouraged to sign up today. Families with young children may enjoy the intimate environment of the Manor House with other families, while families with elementary students and youth can enjoy the spacious rooms of the Wynn and Flato lodges. Empty nesters, single adults and older adults can enjoy the privacy of their own rooms in Pheasant Run. And Young Adults can take advantage of their own “retreat within the retreat” by staying in Guest Lodge, down by the river, all to themselves for fellowship in between programming times (be sure to check out our new pricing policies for young adults!).

For those who would like to make the most of the weekend, we invite you to get off work early on Friday, pack a picnic lunch and come enjoy the river and the beauty that is MO Ranch. A light supper will be provided that evening at the river for all those who arrive early. Then, Friday evening, we will take off our shoes as we approach the holy ground of the burning bush and listen to God’s call to Moses, and Moses’ many convincing proofs of why he was not the right person for the job!

Saturday morning we will look at the consequences of Pharaoh’s refusal to obey God’s commands and take a close look at the Passover meal where there are clues hidden to the ultimate deliverance of God’s people from sin in the Messiah. Saturday afternoon, in an optional elective time, we will look at the provision of the law and the confrontation of the people giving in to the temptation to worship — something they could look at instead of waiting on God.

Saturday evening, after a fun-filled afternoon of riverfront fun, a delicious dinner and an all-camp activity, we’ll show the wonderful animated movie Prince of Egypt in the Main Auditorium.

We’ll conclude our weekend with a time of teaching in the morning, looking at God’s provision of food while the people continued to wander in the wilderness and then join together for worship on the mountain as we join Moses and Joshua looking over into the Promised Land.

Don’t miss this opportunity to become more connected to the wider church family — invite a friend and sign up before Tuesday, February 15. For further information, please contact Jennifer Quintero at Jenniferq@fpcsat.org or Rev. Ruthie Seiders at ruthies@fpcsat.org.

Let’s GO to MO!

University Ministries News



BY SCOTT FLEMING
DIRECTOR

You’ve noticed there’s a little less room to park. You’ve seen them roaming the halls aimlessly. You might have even seen them sneak into worship a few minutes late on Sundays. That’s right! Our college students are back from winter break! It’s hard to believe that we are already a month into the spring semester in University Ministries! Our weekly on-campus ministries have resumed and continue to build strong bridges in students’ lives that enable them to glorify God even in the midst of college life. We gather every Monday at the University of the Incarnate Word for THE FIRE, which meets in the student center at 8:30 p.m. THE WELL meets Wednesdays at Trinity University in The Tiger’s Den at 8 p.m.

But even with these weekly gatherings, we’ve realized that our ministries are being called to reach out even further. There is

something new about to happen in the coming months for U-Min, and we need your help! We will be starting a University Ministries class for our college-aged students Sundays after the worship services. Lunch will be provided as our students get to know each other and other members of their First Presbyterian Church family. We will have the opportunity to worship and learn together in many ways through this class.

So, not only do we ask for your prayerful support, but what we also need from our FPC church family are volunteers. We are asking classes, Life Groups, circles of friends and individuals to sponsor and serve lunch on a Sunday of your choosing. We need people who want to show our students that they are welcomed and loved. If you or your group is interested in volunteering your time, love and support, please contact Scott Fleming at scottf@fpcsat.org or 271–2723.

THE FIRE
Mondays, 8:30 p.m.
The Student Center @ The Univ
of The Incarnate Word

THE WELL
Wednesdays, 8 p.m.
The Tiger’s Den @ Trinity Univ



Imagine life differently.

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
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FPC Adults Spring Trip Painted Churches Friday, March 25



7:30 a.m.–6 p.m.

Enjoy the spring countryside and visit the beautiful country in Fayette and Lavaca Counties where hopefully we will see some blue bonnets and other wild flowers. These rural gems appear simple and plain on the outside, but their interiors are aglow with painted symbols. They were all beautifully decorated on the interior by the parishioners and for the better part of 100 years enjoyed only by them. These churches are now impressing visitors with the accomplishment of past generations. They have been “masterpieces of rural art.”

Cost is \$68 — includes charter transportation, morning coffee, lunch at Sengelmann’s Dance Hall, visits to five painted churches, driver gratuity and guides: Susan and Henry Holloway. Contact Pat McCleary at 210.226.0215, ext. 226, to reserve by March 15.

Report from Stewardship and Finance Committee January 2011

<u>Operating Fund Budget</u>	<u>Actual YTD</u>	<u>Budget YTD</u>	<u>\$Variance</u>
Total Revenues	\$466,700	\$527,930	(\$61,230)
Total Operating Expenses	\$243,188	\$249,789	(\$ 6,601)
<u>Total Benevolences</u>	<u>\$ 21,656</u>	<u>\$ 10,404</u>	<u>\$11,252</u>
Net Income/Loss	\$ 201,856	\$267, 737	(\$65,881)

If you have questions, contact the Finance Office at 210.271.2755 or any member of the Stewardship and Finance Committee.

Inclement Weather/Emergency Closing Policy

In order to receive the latest up-to-date information about the closure of the church or the cancellation of its events and services, please visit the home page of the church website or call the main phone number of the church (210.226.0215). If staff is not in the office, the automated-answering system will have an audio message detailing the activity status of the church.