

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

**THREADS
THAT
BIND**

**LONGEVITY
AND LEGACY**

DESPITE A PANDEMIC

SUMMER 2021—VOLUME XLI—ISSUE 2

What's Inside | CONTENTS

- 3 Pastor's Corner
- 4 Despite a Pandemic
- 5 Threads That Bind
- 6 Women Gather to Pray
- 7 Klon E. Matthews Scholarship
- 8 A Benefit Concert

From the Editor | GOD IS GOOD—ALL THE TIME

Summertime is shining in FoCo. City Park Pool splashes with energy while hikers hoof it up to Horsetooth. Drivers cruise through city streets and construction zones. After 15-, 16-, 17-months of navigating COVID protocols, FPC reopened for in-person worship. Now church bells ring, melodies fill the sanctuary, and children run and play on the lawn on Sunday mornings. Slowly this summer, we see life settling into sunshine and optimism—we can see the light! God is good!

Although it's easy to say, "God is Good" when things are going right, faith tells us it doesn't stop there. The truth is, God is good—all the time. Even when we endure a pandemic, even when we are diagnosed with Cancer, suffer infertility, or lose a loved one, even when we lose our job, our home, our marriage: God is good—all the time.

FPC lived the "God is good" mindset by supporting our mission partners and reaching out to our community throughout the pandemic. At the same time, women in our congregation found new ways to gather in prayer. And, students made plans for the future with the support and encouragement of FPC's scholarship fund. What's more, Vacation Bible School and the All-Church Picnic are back on the calendar and coming soon!

Despite a pandemic, regardless of challenges and changes of plans, God's goodness radiates at First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins—all the time. Thanks be to God!

—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
531 SOUTH COLLEGE AVENUE
FORT COLLINS, CO 80524
(970) 482-6107
WWW.FIRSTPRESFC.ORG

MINISTERS | THE CONGREGATION
SENIOR PASTOR | COREY NELSON
EDITOR | CATHY RICHARDSON

PUBLISHING GUIDELINES | THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via email to crichardson@firstpresfc.org. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
FORT COLLINS**

PASTOR'S CORNER

LONGEVITY AND LEGACY

Hello Friends,

You don't have to spend much time around here at FPC before you hear me or someone else mention that our church is coming up on its 150th anniversary in August 2022. I know that's still over a year away. Still, longevity and legacy say something important about who we are as a congregation and who we are as a historic presence in our wider community. Fun fact: we are a year older than the City of Fort Collins itself!

As we prepare to celebrate this historic occasion, we want to consider both how to give thanks for the past and the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and how we discern and live into the vibrant future that God has in store for us. Miriam has gathered a great team to help organize and oversee these efforts — though they will be reaching out to the rest of you to help, so let us know if you're interested in being involved.

In the meantime (and I know you weren't expecting math to be involved here), that means this August, we will celebrate our 149th anniversary and officially begin our 150th year of ministry. We will start this year off with a bit of a bang, and I'm excited to share some details with you here.

During worship on Sunday, August 29, we will reflect on "Love" as the final Fruit of the Spirit from our summer series. The Sanctuary Choir will be back to lead us, and the sermon will help us look ahead to some of the ways that I believe God is calling FPC to embody and express love in the months and years to come. After worship, we will have our annual all-church picnic out on the front lawn, so bring your



appetite and enjoy the extended fellowship with one another.

That same evening at 6:00 p.m., we will host a free benefit concert for our mission partner, The Matthews House, right here on our campus in the NW parking lot. Sponsors (including our own First Presbyterian Foundation and the Bohemian Foundation, along with other business and community partners) are underwriting the cost of the event so that every dollar raised that night goes directly to The Matthews House. The concert will feature the award-winning Northern Colorado sensation Gasoline Lollipops. I know it's a funny name, but they sold out the opening concert of the Spring Creek Garden series last month and played at Red Rocks last year. We anticipate a big crowd enjoying electrifying music in support of a great cause.

This concert is another example of how we are expanding our presence in the wider community, leveraging our congregation and campus assets to help serve the common good and the greater good of all of our neighbors. As always, I'm so grateful for the generous and compassionate ways that all of you continue to support and serve through our church and make this possible. We are blessed to stand on a strong foundation, 149 years in the making, and blessed to now be a blessing for others. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us next!

Peace,
Corey

DESPITE A PANDEMIC

FPC STAYS OPEN AND WELCOMING TO MISSION PARTNERS DURING COVID

While the pandemic confined us to our homes and left the church campus a quieter place, we were still able to aid our mission partners and community organizations in providing essential services to vulnerable populations over the past 15 months. Here are some of the organizations that could meet safely on our campus to coordinate and provide much-needed resources and relief to families in our community.

McBackpack

For over a decade, FPC has provided space for this program to pack and distribute supplemental food to Poudre School District students and families who otherwise would not have enough food over the weekend. For the 2020/2021 school year, they were able to pack and deliver 12,412 food bags to 575 families at 46 schools. This spring, they averaged packing 371 bags a week to distribute to families.

“We at McBackpack truly appreciate our ongoing partnership with First Presbyterian Church. We are grateful for the space you provide for us, financial gifts over the years, and the service of many dedicated volunteers from the congregation. We also appreciate your flexibility and accommodation throughout the course of the pandemic that allowed us to continue operating. We couldn’t do it without you!” — Susan Lind, McBackpack Operations Director

Feeding Our Community

“Launched in April 2020, Feeding Our Community is a meal program that provides free meals to households at risk of food insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. High-quality meals are prepared by locally-owned restaurants and distributed through community partners, including staff and volunteers from local nonprofits, affordable housing, mobile home communities, and local schools. Feeding Our Community helps ensure that restaurants keep staff employed, food insecurity is addressed, and our

community is strengthened during the COVID pandemic.”

They are currently still distributing an average of 200 meals a week from FPC. “Feeding Our Community relies on the generosity of dozens of people and community partners. It takes a great effort to make and deliver over 150,000 meals during a pandemic. We’ve needed to adapt regularly and balance the needs of so many stakeholders. Our partnership with First Pres creates a safe, welcoming, consistent location to distribute meals from each week. We couldn’t do it without your support!” — Sara Maranowicz, Community Programs Director at the Bohemian Foundation

Crossroads Safehouse

As one of our mission partners, Crossroads reached out in need of a large space to train new staff amid strict social distancing and gathering restrictions. We offered them Shepardson Hall, which allowed them to comply with state and county guidelines to meet in-person safely, and provided them with the technological needs they had for the training.

The Matthews House

The Community Life Center for The Matthews House’s focus is to meet families where they are, knowing that it looks different for each family, whether facing homelessness, mental health issues, domestic violence, poverty, or simply needing additional access to resources in order to thrive.

Over the summer of 2020, The Matthews House was able to safely offer enrichment programs for kids ages 8–16, for parents who wanted their children to participate in free summer programming. They also hosted a computer programming camp for 3rd-8th graders through Tech Corps. Due to the school year being so difficult for students, they expanded their school support programs,

including Homework Helpers, and opened space for students to practice an instrument.

But students weren’t the only ones to benefit from this organization. In case management services, The Matthews House served over 800 individuals in approximately 250 families this past year. Their K–12 educational programs served approximately 120 students, and their adult English classes served around 20 students, plus their children. By partnering with Pinnacle Consulting, they provided meals to about 240 people during their Drive-Thru Burger Bash last September and distributed frozen turkeys and large bags of non-perishable food to 125 families during their Turkey Drive-Thru event for Thanksgiving.

“While many of our clients met with us virtually during quarantine, First Pres offered us rooms large enough to safely social distance in, but still maintain some human connection! FPC offers multiple rooms that we use as meeting space with clients. Those rooms offer a refuge, if only for an hour or two, where parents and caregivers can meet with a staff member dedicated to helping them meet the needs of their family. In those rooms, clients have filled out life-changing applications for jobs and new housing, made resource connections to take their family closer to stability and self-sufficiency, and cried tears as they shared their triumphs and hardships with a trusted ear.” — Natalie Vacha, Community Life Center Family Services Director

It’s a beautiful reality that not even a pandemic can stop us from being a Christ-centered, open and welcoming church on the move. We didn’t just keep the lights on the past 15 months, but through our partnerships with organizations like these, we were able to help touch our neighbors and city in a time they needed it most.

—Kimberly Shober

Threads that bind

As an Elder at my previous church years ago, I remember feeling that I had a front row seat into God's work at the church. As Director of Caring , I have now realized I also have a VIP seat here at First Presbyterian Church!

Every week, I connect with people, find out about the struggles they are going through, and then add them to prayer lists. We offer three ways that people can choose to share their prayer concerns that reflect different confidentiality comfort levels. The most confidential request is shared only with the pastoral care team (myself and pastors Corey Nelson and Glenn Perica). Most requests are shared with the leadership of the church (officers and staff) so they can hold the concern in prayer. For those seeking prayer support from the whole church, we have a public list that is included in the weekly bulletin and eNews.

Managing these prayer lists, I have been amazed by God's work. I get to see the power of answered prayer through my own typing! It is simply amazing. Even when people pass into Glory, I still find it a blessing because I am assured that they have been called home to our Savior.

I recently experienced how obvious God's work can be. I was talking on the phone with one of our members who is struggling with some health concerns. Their long journey of medical issues has not resulted in the kinds of answers to prayer that we hope for.

While we were talking, my phone buzzed with another call. I finished the conversation by saying we would be "covering them in prayer." Then I returned the other call to find one of our Deacon leaders had a prayer quilt available for someone who needed it most — literally, physically, to cover that person in prayer.

I don't always know how God is trying to direct me, but that one was so obvious! One of our small groups met to tie the strands of the prayer quilt and pray for our church family member. This person truly cherished the prayer quilt and the love and prayers it represented.

It is such a blessing to see how God does so much more than we realize. Through the walls of a church building, through so many of you who call this church family, we experience community through intercessory prayer... or tying a prayer quilt.

Ephesians 3:20-21 says "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be Glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

—Renée Brunsting



WOMEN GATHER TO PRAY

ZOOM GROUP OFFERS LOVE, SUPPORT, AND FRIENDSHIP AS WELL AS PRAYER

The great poet and hymn-writer William Cowper (pronounced “Cooper”), 1731-1800, wrote “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” in 1774. The lyrics of this hymn encourage Christians, particularly as they undergo heavy trials. The global COVID-19 pandemic has been one such trial for us. Not merely an “inconvenient, short-lived blip” affecting very few people, the consequences of this virus have touched everyone. In my case, I’m grateful the Lord reminded me of specific phrases of Cowper’s hymn that have provided a measure of comfort to my soul. The lyrics of the fourth verse serve to illustrate: “Judge not the Lord by feeble sense. But trust Him for His grace. Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.” Therefore, when I view this pandemic as an example of God’s “frowning providence,” I can rest assured that God—even though He may seem absent at times—is still with us, as “He hides a smiling face.” Scripture tells us that He is working in all things to bring about our ultimate good, including the hardships we encounter. (Romans 8:28)

Many of the drastic changes to our community life caused by the pandemic, though necessary to increase public safety, abruptly blindsided us. For example, the CDC advised everyone to cease gathering with anyone other than the members of our household. As a result, many of us grappled to cope with all the changes we faced. We wanted to restore some sense of stability into our lives.

Online forms of communication like Zoom quickly became important avenues for us to reduce our feelings of isolation and to remain connected with others beyond the walls of our home. We looked for something positive or “a silver lining” during these Zoom sessions amid this trial.

To this end, a new group for FPC women was formed online, “Women Gather to Pray on Zoom.” We meet every Friday during the noon hour to uphold and encourage one another in prayer, including the various needs of our congregation. Since the group began May 1, 2020, Nancy Smith has served as our primary facilitator during our discussions of Scripture and some different devotional materials. Initially, Nancy presented some works of Frederick Buechner, Henry Nouwen, and Catherine Marshall. In discussing Catherine Marshall’s book *The Helper*, we delved into the study of the Holy Spirit. As we considered His activity in the lives of believers, we were encouraged as we recalled experiences in our own lives when we felt an extraordinary measure of the Spirit’s help. Often, the Holy Spirit made us especially sensitive to His work in our lives during times of trials and difficulties.

Madgett Dunger and I (Rhonda Blinne) led discussions from the Gospel of John. In John 17, the women discussed Christ’s High Priestly Prayer, as He prayed not only for the disciples but for all of us who came to believe in Him after His resurrection. Christ prayed that we would model love for one another even during difficult times. In John 16, the Spirit was promised that would lead us into all truth. In this way, the women prayed in what Scripture refers to as “being in spirit and in truth.” The promised love for “one another” came forward during these sweet times of intercession, not only for each other but for those outside our group.

We are currently going through the book, *Disciplines: A Book of Daily Devotions 2021*. We are directed to see our lives as God sees them. While we often see people based on their

outward appearances, God sees them from their hearts. When we pray from God’s view, we can better pray for those things that are of eternal importance and not just a series of disconnected “requests.”

Mary Fran Asmus noted her experience of getting better acquainted with other group members had fostered her truly loving each participant. She recognizes and appreciates each member’s uniqueness and contribution to the group, the church, and the advancement of faith in our community. Like others in the group who have experienced the loss of close, loved ones, Jo Barley indicated that COVID has compounded her feelings of isolation and loneliness, resulting from the many lingering months of social distancing. Similarly, Carol Alford has been lifted up and strengthened by the group with their love, support, and encouragement during moments of sadness, loss, and disappointment. Both Jo and Carol, like many of us at different times, agree that our group has been a “Light in the Darkness,” providing loving, godly encouragement and prayer support through friendship. We are reminded of Proverbs 27:9, which says, “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.”

Please consider joining us as we seek to glorify the Lord, and as we unite to uphold one another. Contact me for more information, rhonda@blinne.org.

—Rhonda Blinne



KLON E. MATTHEWS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS 2021 FUNDS TO FPC STUDENTS

As a life-long public school educator and administrator—and a Presbyterian, Klon Matthews was devoted to the youth of FPC. Over 20 years ago, his wife Eileen established the Klon E. Matthews Scholarship program through the FPC Foundation. Since then, the scholarship fund has distributed over \$20,000 to college students in our congregation! This year, Bailey Bottoms and Aidan Ellison were each awarded \$1000 from the Klon Matthews Scholarship fund.

Bailey (below left) says, “I applied for this scholarship to help my family pay for my schooling. It has been such an incredible weight off of our shoulders to have some extra help! I could not be more grateful for this incredible honor. It is so wonderful that the scholarship committee found me fit for this award. I will be a sophomore at the University of Wyoming this fall, majoring in speech pathology with a minor in honors.

“I have been a member of First Presbyterian for a majority of my lifetime, and I have been surrounded with nothing but love. The members and leaders of this church have been so welcoming and warm-hearted towards me and have helped me develop my relationship with the Lord. I am eternally grateful to this church and will be for the rest of my life!”



Aidan (below right) says, “I am honored and grateful to be a recipient of the Klon Matthews Scholarship. As a lifelong member of FPC, this scholarship means a great deal to me. I started singing in the choir here at the age of four (a year early because Mrs. Crawford felt sorry for me, always waiting for my sister to finish rehearsal), and I sang in youth choir through my sophomore year when the choir was disbanded. FPC gave me my first performance and music opportunities which have become lifelong passions for me. I learned the importance of service and learned that I could use my passions and talents to serve others and my church community.

“Some of my favorite memories include being a storyteller for our preschoolers at VBS, acting in many, many Christmas pageants, and singing with my sister in our children’s and youth choirs, first with Mrs. Crawford and later with Mr. Crawford.

“I will attend Bennington College in Vermont, where I will double major in acting and film production.”

Congratulations to Bailey and Aidan! Your church family is enormously proud of you, and we wish you the greatest success in your educational endeavors.





Periodicals Postage

PAID

Ft Collins, CO 80525

USPS No. 562110

531 S. College Avenue | Fort Collins, CO 80524
(970) 482-6107 | firstpresfc.org



To be removed from future mailings from First Presbyterian Church, please email crichardson@firstpresfc.org or call (970) 482-6107.

'THE MESSENGER' (U.S.P.S. 562110) is published quarterly by First Presbyterian Church, 531 South College Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80524. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Collins, CO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to 'THE MESSENGER', First Presbyterian Church, 531 South College Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80524. The publisher of this periodical reserve the right to edit all material submitted.

FPC presents Music with a Mission
A BENEFIT CONCERT
for The Matthews House
featuring
the award-winning, NoCo band
GASOLINE
LOLLIPOPS



SUNDAY, AUGUST 29 · 6PM
Admission is FREE · 100% of donations go to The Matthews House

Sponsored by



FPC
FOUNDATION



BOHEMIAN
FOUNDATION



MAXEY
TRAILER SALES & TRUCK FITTING



THE
genesis
PROJECT

and other community donors