

First Press

July 2021

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June 27 is The First Serve Sunday!



You've been hearing about Serve Sundays and the first one is almost here – it's this Sunday, June 27! All four *Serve Sundays* feature three components: worship, education and service. The learning and activities portions, following the

worship service, are for participants of ALL ages. This Sunday's 10 AM service is centered on *prayer*, the theme for the day. Following worship, we will learn some new prayer practices and will then move to the courtyard to begin work on a prayer walk.

"The initial idea for *Serve Sundays* emerged several years ago when the church was working with Ministry Architects," said Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care Lisa Schrott. Pastor Schrott, along with Director of Faith Formation Jackie Wilhelm, planned and coordinated the activities for these four Sundays in partnership with various FPC ministries. These special Sundays also fulfill a long-term First Presbyterian goal to offer more intergenerational church options.

Please read below to learn about the specifics for each *Serve Sunday*. Remember, these programs are for people of all ages and everyone is encouraged to bring family members and friends to share in the joy!

Four Special Summer Sundays at FPC

Serve Sundays provide opportunities for worship, education and service to our church, community and world. A special invitation is offered to families with children and youth, as there will be activities appropriate for all ages.

Each Sunday there is a focus theme. Scripture, song and prayers will highlight the theme in worship. Then there is time to "learn" more about the theme, and then put what we learn into practice, the "do" portion. The "learn" and "do" sessions follow the service (except on July 25, when it will precede worship) and will be 45-minutes to one-hour long.

June 27 — Prayer (In partnership with the Board of Deacons)

Worship: Ephesians 6:18 and Romans 12: 11-12, 15

Learn: New prayer practices to incorporate in your prayer life

Do: Help us create a prayer walk in the courtyard. Join the congregation-wide Prayer Project.

July 11 — Caring Connections (In partnership with Pockets Full of Sunshine, Lay Visitation Ministry and the FPC Youth Group)

Worship: Proverbs 17:7; 18:24; 27:9 and John 15:12-17

Learn: How to connect with people you don't know

Do: Make custom cards and friendship soup to share with an

old or new friend

July 18 — International Missions (In partnership with Global Outreach)

Worship: Luke 10:25-37

Learn: About ministry and mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Do: Assemble Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes to be sent around the world.

****July 25 — Stewardship of Creation** (In partnership with FPC's Social Witness Task Group)

Worship: Genesis 2:4-9

Learn: Unique aspects of our Lowcountry environment

Do: Guided nature walk and clean-up **Worship will be in the sanctuary, we will meet before worship from 8:30 – 9:30 AM at Jarvis Creek Park Pavilion #1 (next to the playground and lake) for Learn and Do.

Reservations are not required. Invite your friends. Bring visiting family members. For more information, contact Pastor Lisa at lschrott@fpchhi.org or Jackie Wilhelm at jwilhem@fpchhi.org.

“Summer Reading”



One way God communicates with us is through books. Indeed, they can be vessels of God’s Spirit, enriching our faith and reminding us of Jesus’ teaching and how we should live. Here are three books I highly recommend and that have been vessels of God’s Spirit to me.

Especially in light of our first Serve Sunday’s emphasis on prayer (*see page 1*), I recommend *Praying the Jesus Prayer* by Frederica Mathewes-Green. Mathewes-Green is a commentator on National Public Radio programs such as *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. Using stories and in an engaging, conversational style, she explains this brief, ancient prayer, its history, its purpose as well as its profound effect on her own faith and life. Thanks to this short book, I pray this prayer more regularly, and as she attests in the book, it’s a spiritual practice that reminds us of God’s presence with us.

Henri Nouwen has written numerous beloved books on Christian spirituality and living. His *The Return of the Prodigal Son* is based on the so-called “Parable of the Prodigal Son” and Rembrandt’s depiction of that parable in his painting *Return of the Prodigal Son*. Nouwen enters imaginatively into that parable *through* the painting, exploring the feelings and experience of the younger son, older son, and father. It’s a spiritual journey that will expand your

thinking about the boundless love and mercy of God. Nouwen also provides an uncanny “Yeah, that’s me!” grasp of our fears, need for affirmation, vulnerabilities, etc., and helps us to address them as God’s beloved children.

Paul Kalinithi’s *When Breath Becomes Air* was at the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list for months a few years ago. Kalinithi, an accomplished and promising neurosurgeon and neuroscientist, died of cancer at the age of 37. The book chronicles his battle with cancer and his concurrent search for what gives life meaning. Near the end of the book you learn that he’d been an “ironclad” atheist. Yet, he was “raised in a devout Christian family, where prayer and Scripture readings were a nightly ritual,” and his journey with cancer leads him to question his atheism and eventually back to faith. It was also eye-opening to hear his experience of being a cancer patient.

All three books are available online (e.g., amazon.com), and you may drop by my office at the church if you’d like to take a peek at them. I hope you’ll read them, asking the Spirit to use them to speak to you and to deepen your faith in the Lord.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Will

FPC Global Missions — News from Nicaragua

From Kent Grimes

The COVID pandemic continues to be an issue throughout since vaccines are not available for most people. Unemployment is widespread and the lack of income has compounded the poverty issue. First Presbyterian Church has not been able to send mission teams to Nicaragua since 2018. In 2019 this was because of political unrest and the last two years because of the pandemic. So the virus has impacted FPC’s ministries in the country—but our outreach continues in a different form. Our Nicaraguan friends share photos and stories with us and, of course, we continue to pray for each other.

The House of Hope continues to provide a safe haven for women and their children. Since the 18 adult residents have no need to travel from the campus and food can be brought to them, the effect from COVID has been minimal. The public schools in Nicaragua have not closed. Transportation for the students was an issue for a little while, but it resumed and the children have been able to get to school for some time. The one-day-a-week prayer gatherings of approximately 100 women at the House of Hope have been suspended. Instead, there are ten groups that meet weekly throughout Managua. Going to where the women are has been very positive. The total attendance at the ten groups frequently totals 700 women, far more than were able to be



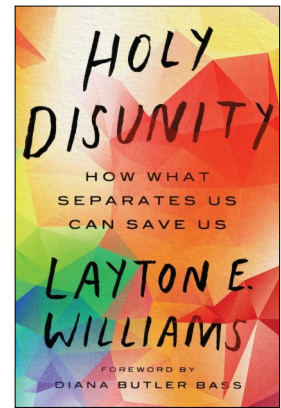
First-year students using their new desks.

Continued on page 3

July Book Study on Developing More Authentic Relationships

A message from Pastor Lisa Schrott

*The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in. Isaiah 58:11-12*



It is no secret that we are living in a country that is polarized with respect to so many areas of life, especially politics. These deep divisions cause breaches in our community, neighbor against neighbor, family members who can't speak to each other. How can we live into the call from the prophet Isaiah to be "repairers of the breach?" Our faith can provide avenues for healing and for redemption.

"It is not unity but relationship to which we are called in this moment, and with that in mind, it is possible to hold onto our convictions and one another." Rev. Layton Williams

Join me for a four-week discussion on the book *Holy Disunity: How What Separates Us Can Save Us* by the Rev. Layton Williams. Rev. Williams posits that rather than seeking unity on divisive topics, what if we see our primary calling as to seek an authentic relationship with God, ourselves, one another and the world around us. And that means actively engaging those with whom we disagree. *Holy Disunity* is available for purchase at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

We will meet in person and via Zoom on Wednesdays in July: July 7, 14, 21 and 28 at 4:30 PM. To register for this book discussion, complete the form at: <https://fpchhi.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/160/responses/new>.

FPC Global Missions — News from Nicaragua *(Continued from page 2)*

transported to the House of Hope campus.

The Presbyterian Christian School (CCP) is doing well. There are 380 students in K—11th grade, which is the highest in the public school system. The students and their parents are responsible for transportation to the school in the outskirts



Ninth grade students talk with their PE teacher.

of Managua, with many of the students walking to school.

For others, their parents drive them. Last year, when the pandemic began, students stayed at home, resulting in the campus being closed. During this time the dedicated staff went to many students' homes, seeing several students over the course of a day. Now things have returned to normal.

Bus driver Harry Callejas, who is also a translator, and an extra team member, has completed his educational requirements and was ordained as a pastor several years ago. Harry's dream had been to form his own church, which he was able to do. The Mt. of Olives Church, meeting in rented space, has 18 adults who attend regularly along with a wide range of children. The last two years, with support from FPC, the church had a Christmas party for more than 100 children.

We miss seeing and being with our friends in Nicaragua. Because the number of COVID cases there continues to be high with no clear vaccination plans, we can't be sure when we will be able to travel there again. Please continue to hold our Nicaraguan friends in your prayers.

July NEWSLETTER

Recognizing the 2021 Confirmation Class and High School Graduates

On Sunday, June 6, FPC honored two graduating seniors, Elliott Jones and Tyler Traut (pictured below left) and welcomed three new members to the church — confirmands Channing Coulter, Kacie Tharin and Tyler Traut (below right). What a celebration it was!

In the photo on the right (standing left to right) are Tyler Traut, Channing Coulter & Kacie Tharin.

In the photo on the left (standing left to right) are FPC Staff Member Jackie Wilhelm with seniors Elliott Jones & Tyler Traut.



We Need Your Extra Recycle Bags!

Do you have extra cloth grocery bags you don't use? The Work In Progress Sunday school class transports food to food banks in Jasper County. The folks who use these food banks need bags to carry their food home. Drop off bags at church: in the workroom during office hours; and hang them on the coat rack in the narthex on Sundays. Please be sure to launder the bags before donating them!



*June 6 photos above courtesy of
Kate Robinson Photography*

Pastors

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