



First Pres(s)

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1540 M Street, Fresno, California 93721 559.485.6460

www.fpcfresno.org or on Facebook - 1st Presbyterian Church Fresno
Rhonda Pope, Editor

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Are You Open to the Lord's Leading?

by Jeremy Vaccaro, Senior Pastor



On a recent Sunday I walked up to a couple after worship; I put my arm around the husband's shoulder and simply asked, "How are you guys?" It turned out that they weren't well. It had been an extremely tough morning in the midst of what is turning out to be an extremely tough season. They are struggling to

live into something that they feel God has led them to do, and it is hard ... really hard. What I expected to be a quick Sunday morning greeting, turned into an ordained conversation and prayer time. Why was it ordained? Well, it turns out they were just talking about wanting to connect with a pastor before I walked up and interrupted their conversation. God organized the whole thing, and we were all encouraged. Yet, their struggle continues.

Have you ever experienced something like that? Maybe you've been the answer to someone's prayer. Someone was asking God for help with a problem, and then you showed up with an encouragement or a solution or a listening ear. Have you experienced that? Maybe you've been the one praying, and God has provided someone for you. That person may not have realized it, but their connection with you was just what you needed. I believe that God is organizing and ordaining stuff like that all the time. I just heard another story like this from a mom whose adult daughter is far from God. While the daughter was sitting in a coffee shop, recently, a Christian person came up to her noticing that the daughter seemed troubled. That opening inquiry turned into a long conversation and a quick prayer that has the daughter stirring in a new way about God. Isn't that good? It happened because God cares about all kinds of people, and because a Christian was listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Can you think of something that the Holy Spirit has prompted you to do lately? This Lenten season, as we prepare for the great celebration of Easter, is a wonderful time to carve out time to space in your life to listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance and prompting. Every Sunday we've been raising self-reflection questions that come right out of the biblical text. Have you been taking time to think about them? My prayer is that these kinds of questions will help you to be more aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life. The more aware you are of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life, the more ready you are to hear and respond to the Spirit's promptings.

Here's the deal, there are people all around you, every day, who are going through a hard season. There are other people around you who have lots of great things in their lives, but don't have peace. Still, there are other people around you who wonder if God really exists. Are you open today to listening to the Holy Spirit and following the Spirit's lead? God can use you to bring encouragement, peace, and hope because of the incredible gift of the Holy Spirit for those who are in Christ. God can use you to point others to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God can use you.

Following the Lord's lead isn't easy, and it isn't always glamorous. The couple I mentioned in the first paragraph is learning that full well. Following God's lead can reveal some of the junk in our lives; it can shed light on the rough edges of our attitudes and behaviors; it can pull the bandage off an old festering wound that you thought was long gone. It's called discipleship. Following the Lord's lead is how we grow in our own Christian maturity, and it's how God uses the Church to advance His Kingdom.

Are you open to the Lord's leading today? He can use you.

MEET THE NEW SLATE OF CANDIDATES

Following the Lord's leading, these are the candidates our Nominating Committee are putting before us to serve as church officers. We will vote to receive this slate of candidates at a Congregational Meeting between services on Sunday, May 4, 2014. Get to know them and keep them and our staff in your prayers as they prepare to serve and lead the church.

Elders



Stuart Conrad
Clerk of Session

Marilyn and I started attending FPC in 1992 after moving back to Fresno from San Diego. I have served as a Sunday School teacher and was on the Networker Core team for several years. I have also served on Session previously, working at various times on the Christian Education, Outreach, and Worship teams.

Serving as Clerk of Session will be a new adventure for me. I look forward to connecting with all the elders and to working closely with Jeremy. I hope to support and encourage the other Session members as we work together.



Ralph York
Mission

My wife Marcie and I have attend FPC 9 1/2 years. I have been a table discussion leader for various church educational programs.

I served as a Job Developer with Hope Now for Youth for 8 years.

I am currently part of a home Bible study group and have benefitted from the prayer ministry of the church.



Ron Dull
Christian Education

I have attended FPC for 42 years, which includes Jr. High, High School, and Seekers (college) groups, Seeker Fire Crew, Seeker Folk Group, various house churches, and nominating committee. My wife of 34 years, Sheree, and I have sung in the choir for Christmas and/or Easter seasons, been on cooking/dishwashing committees for big events, been Sunday School teachers for four year olds, High School advisors, Jr. High advisors for 26 years, and worked in the nursery for 28 years(great way for a baby fix).

I have said no to serving as an officer in the past (maybe against God's will) because I wasn't interested in being involved with the "Politics and Red Tape" of ministry, but only about serving the kids. As Jr. High kids are getting bigger, faster, stronger, I am less able to beat them in pool wrestling, spider and snail hiding, running, and I have never been able to beat any of the Harabedians in dance. I

still find it fun (this is my youth ministry advertisement for those thinking about it) to try and beat them though, and make sure they get out of bed on Mission trips with a duck call or Santa Cruz earthquake, or see the joy and amazement on their faces when they split a chunk of firewood with a maul, chop down a tree with a chainsaw, or share Jesus with an inner city child...but I think God is calling me to a new season.

I have previously left the wisdom of making important church policy decisions for kids to others, and but now I think it's time for me to be a part of that process. I'm hopeful to provide an extra piece to a team who already has given of themselves, to children, for God's glory.



Jim Cousins
Nominating Committee

I came to FPC in Feb. 1975. I have been involved in Seekers, Jr. High, Trainees and Enablers/Networkers, Dawn Treaders, ushering, making meals, nominating committee, Elder and Seek Christmas Trees.

I am hopeful for growth both for the church and myself. Growth for me means trusting and depending on God's leading.

We, my husband, Frank and I have been attending FPC since 1994. We transferred from Chicago and it was suggested to us that FPC would be a good fit for us as it has similar traditional styles of worship. We walked through the doors and immediately felt at home and still do to this day.

In my term as officer I am hopeful to bring some different ideas to strengthen the community of FPC. I hope to see how things are run and learn as much as I can. Above all I hope to listen to what God is saying and do what it is He would have me do. I am humbled to have been nominated. Thank you.



Laura Magnee
Adult Nurture



Tarry Rolf
Buidling/Grounds

Deacons



Tina Beatty

I have been at FPC since I was 9 years old, and have been actively involved in many areas of the ministry of the Church. Growing up, I attended and served in leadership of the youth groups, and as a youth I supported the Trainee ministry by providing childcare. I was very involved in Seekers, first as a child of advisors, then as a college student and finally as an advisor. While in college, I was sent as a Deputee from Seekers to Mt Shasta where I met my husband Jeff, and went with Alongside Ministry to Scotland for a summer. My heart for Missions has grown as I led the Angel Tree Project for many years and helped with other Mission projects.

I was involved in Trainees/ Networkers as a child, in college as a volunteer, served as advisor and on the Core Team. I was actively involved in the Seeker Christmas Tree Lot. I've been involved in Children's Ministry for most of the years I've been here – working in the nursery, teaching Sunday school, and serving on the ministry support team.

I first served as a Deacon while I was in college, and then again with Jeff when our children were very young. While serving as an officer, I hope to grow in my faith, learning to lean on Christ more. One of my gifts is caring for others; I hope to learn how to do that better and in different ways. One of my goals for the Church is to work on being intentional when it comes to inter-generational ministry.

Diana and I have been attending FPC 18 months after moving to Fresno from Virginia. We joined in January 2013. I sing in the choir, am part of the Link Crew and also am part of a house church/small group. Diana volunteers in the church office.

I hope to use my gifts of mercy, relational and mechanical skills in practical ways to serve our congregation and our community and foster their spiritual growth



Denise Melton

I have been attending FPC for about 25 years. Our 3 children grew up in the church. My husband, George, and myself were involved throughout the years in many children's and youth group activities. We taught the 4 year olds during the Sunday School hour, helped to coordinate the children's program for the "Sunday Night Live", and hosted many summer Bubble Studies and Jr. and Sr. High School youth activities. I served in Children's Ministries as a Superintendent. I have especially enjoyed and found very rewarding serving on the summer

Networker Core Team for several years. George and I were a part of a House Church for many years. That was a time of growth in

my faith and make life long, loving friends. I now enjoy attending the Women's Evening Bible Study. It allows me to meet and pray with other women from our church and I am amazed at how much I continue to learn and grow in Christ and my faith.

I am excited to see how God will use me to serve our church as Deacon. I pray He will use my gifts to best serve with a loving heart. I hope to meet new people of all generations in our church. I pray this will be a time to continue to grow and learn in my faith with Christ.



Erin Matlak

My husband Steve and I and our family have been regularly attending FPC for a little over five years. I have enjoyed getting to know FPC folks at many of the women's conferences and family camping trips, through several years of working in the nursery and then in the preschool classes, at Saturday morning quilting times, working on the Challenger Newsletter Team, in the Easter Choir, with the church library and helping with AWANA Truth and Training. One

key connection for us has been our house church. It formed organically among other new families the first year we came to FPC, early 2009.

I hope to help meet the needs of the church body and in so doing bring more unity and connectedness to this body. I desire that the Lord will be glorified through our church and that my involvement as a deacon will a part of the expansion of the Kingdom of God, here in Fresno.

I, Patsy, grew up in Fresno, graduated from McLane High School and Fresno State, where I studied Theatre Arts and Secondary Education. After our children Ryan and Annika were born, I had a PreSchool in my home. Now that we are both retired we are figuring out the rest of the story! We fill our time with our children and grandchildren, an interest in long distance running and a new adventure...training for a 100 mile bike ride! Finding a place to serve at FPC is a blessing.



Greg and Patsy Tallman

I, Greg, grew up in Redwood City and came to Fresno State to play baseball in 1968. After realizing that Fresno State baseball was serious, I decided to become a serious student instead! I got my degree in English and Spanish as well as a teaching credential which I did for 3 1/2 years. After doing sales for short time, I found my career with AT&T. After 34 years with AT&T, I retired last year and have been enjoying time with Patsy and our children and grandchildren. Our family, our faith, exercising and recently long distance biking are what fills our time. We look forward to serving Him at First Presbyterian!

Nominating Committee



Dan Kehler

My wife Susan and I have been members of FPC since 1983. We have two children, Amanda and Adam. In the past I have been involved with the worship team, nominating committee as well as serving as an elder.

I am looking forward to seeing who God will choose to be a part of our church leadership and what He will accomplish through them in the coming year.

I was born and raised in Fresno. Went to Bullard and Fresno Christian High Schools. Graduated from Fresno Pacific with a BA in Social Science. Worked as a youth pastor and worship leader at the Legacy Church in Fresno and then at Pasadena Christian Center. Graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary in 2005 with a MA in Theology.

The day before I started seminary was Sept. 11th, 2001 and like most Americans I was deeply moved by that day's events. It ultimately led to my decision to leave vocational ministry for the Fire Service. October of 2005 I was hired as a firefighter for the Fresno Fire Department where I currently work.

Stacy and I have been married for 16 years and have 3 children (Bella 10, Gabe 8 and Sammy 6) and a rather large Rottweiler named Kona. We live in Old Fig and believe we don't go to church, we are the church.

I am both honored and excited to serve on the Nominating Committee and look forward to building closer relationship with the people who make up our church.



Koby Johns

I grew up at FPC, moved away for many years and have been back since 2004. I have served in many areas, most recently I have been the co-coordinator for our Nursery for the last six years and served on the Nominating Committee three years ago. What I hope to be a part of while serving on the Nominating Committee is to grow in new and old relationships while serving on this team as well as watching the Lord move and direct us in finding fresh leadership for the next year.

I have attended FPC since 1981. My wife, Pam, and I were dating when she invited me to attend a Sunday morning service. Not long after that first visit, she and I were invited to begin working with the church's junior high students. Within a year or so following our initial involvement with youth, we were working with Seekers, the church college-age students. Those first two opportunities to connect with the life of our church remain my most memorable and ones for which I remain very grateful. I have also served as an deacon, elder, on two nominating committees, prayer partners and summer Networkers.

Serving our church is always a privilege and a unique opportunity. I hope to support our ordained pastors and the dedicated salaried individuals who contribute to the vitality of our church body. It is my desire to serve faithfully, as unto Christ, so that my work might glorify Him and magnify the efforts of our devoted clergy and lay ministry leaders. I plan to bring laughter to each task and to spread the joy of our Lord broadly and generously.



Michele Cooper



**Gary Sells
Deacon Rep.**



Jim Hebert

My family joined FPC. in 1992 following our move to Fresno the prior year. Our family has been involved in the life of the church in many different ways over the years and most recently I have been privileged to serve as an elder on your Session and have been involved in the Pastors' Prayer Partners ministry. The Nominating Committee is a wonderful opportunity to discern who the Lord is calling to serve our church as officers in the coming years and I trust God's direction through the process we will follow.



Laura Spongberg

I started attending FPC in 1992 when I moved to Fresno. I've been involved with Missions, Equipping, and served on Session for 3 terms. I've been part of Women's Ministries, Christmas Choir, and I sub for Bells.

I hope that on Nominating Committee we really search for God's will and find new leadership to raise up. FPC has such a strong Lay Leadership tradition and we have a great many untapped young leaders that I'd love to help find a way to serve.

A very big **THANK YOU**
for the wonderful support I received after knee replacement surgery. I am so very grateful for meals, visits, cards and calls.
Susan Glover