



First Pres(s)

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Semi-Monthly Newsletter

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Summer @ FPC Fresno by Rhonda Pope

Summer 2014 at First Pres. is many things this year. Some tried and true events such as Vacation Bible School, Family Camping in the Sierras and Bubble Studies have been taking place. Some new things have also begun. For starters, we've launched our Community Building Initiative and our groups are continuing to formulate who they are what they will look like. Short term Mission Trips have happened again this summer. For some it was the first time



to go overseas and for others it was familiar but not any less exciting to see God at work in His world. Be on the look out for reports from our summer Mission Travelers.

In this issue of First Pres(s) we are highlighting Community in action. Read and be encouraged by the hands and feet of our church family going about God's work creating community in our community.



City Bible Camp Community by Terry Jaurena

I love the week that is about to be as I write. It's a week that will have already happened by the time you read this. It will be hot and I'll be tired by noon every day, but I'm confident that it will be worth it. Why? Because God is deepening the partnership, the relationships each year we do this. This will be the 5th version of what we now call City Bible Camp.



I was on vacation the year of the first one, so I missed it. Jean Chaffee, Merlene Samuelian, Karon Chambers and Joanie Martin launched it primarily with Hope Now Bible Church & Bethany Inner City Church that first year. A few years later On-Ramps Covenant Church and Youth for Christ got involved and brought with them the summer Interns from Fresno Institute for Urban Leadership. Last year Every Neighborhood Partnership joined the party, particularly to help with the teen girls program. This year, World Impact's Interns are going to be added to the mix.

It's the Body of Christ from many different parts of Fresno, engaging together in Christ's work of making disciples for the redeeming transformation of our city and our world. I love this week because I see all of our core values come together in one hot & sweaty yet wonderful week. Transformational: Relationship; Partnership; Leadership.

There will be breakfast on the patio served by a faithful crew lead by Peter Jones this year. They'll also be making sack lunches for everyone to take home with them. There will be amazing Hope Now staff and families seeking to help kids not need Hope Now services later in life. There will be an ethnically diverse worship gathering each morning and a diverse and dedicated volunteer team pouring in to kids and teens in creative ways. Moms will come and be encouraged by Godly women from Bethany and OnRamps who want to bless them. Volunteers will care for their babies so they can be free to enjoy this time. Thursday evening we'll break bread together and celebrate the week with an open house and potluck.



God will be building community this sweet week at CBC and I'm so grateful to get to be in the midst of it!



WILDWOOD CAMP COMMUNITY INTRO BY CRAIG BLODGETT

At the beginning of July a group of our high school students went to Wildwood summer camp at Hume Lake. What I really appreciate about Wildwood is how they intentionally strip away the distractions that are evident in our world. For example, the students' cell phones are taken away, there are no televisions or radio, no clocks or watches, and the camp is set back in the mountain so there is limited interaction with others in the main camp area. Every morning students spend an hour in God's Word individually and spend hours in their small group serving others, doing small group objectives, praying the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) together before every meal, and sharing with their peers about what they are learning in the Bible.

With so many of the daily distractions out of the picture, students have the opportunity to encounter our Lord and Christian community in a way they may have never experienced before. They get to put in to practice what they are taught that very day. I have asked those who went to Wildwood to share some of their experiences.

Emily Alkire: My favorite moment would have to be when the whole camp got to serve the other high school camp, Ponderosa. On Tuesday night, the entire camp of Wildwood went down to the high school and junior high camps and prayed over them during their "decision night." It was so cool to be able to know that we would be gaining so many new brothers and sisters in Christ that night. It was also fun to be behind the scenes, because these camps had no idea that we were right outside the door praying for them. The very next morning, all of us at Wildwood got up super early



and went down to Ponderosa camp to serve them breakfast in bed. We also gave them a devotional with their breakfast so that they could discuss all of the wonderful decisions that were made the night before. This was my favorite moment because it was just so awesome serving other people my age and also bonding with the people at Wildwood as we prayed and spent hours making breakfast.

My God-sighting was in my counselor that I had while I was up at Wildwood. Her name was Jessica and she was a perfect fit for my tent! She genuinely wanted to get to know me and because of that we became very close. She was able to challenge me spiritually which was so awesome. I definitely saw God working through her that week.

During my week at Wildwood I took away many things, but the thing that stood out the most was service and sacrifice. We served a lot during the week and it caused us all to sacrifice something whether that's time, sleep, or breakfast. But through our service, we had to learn to be unified. We had to do many things together as a camp, and that meant that we had to learn to be unified in whatever we did.

Something to Share: As a church, we need to be unified not only as a local church, but as a national church and a global church. We need to stop "competing" with other churches

and instead unite as one in Christ. He smiles upon us when we are united so why not work to be one as a church?

Anne Deffebach: I had so many great moments at Wildwood, but I'll only mention a few. I thoroughly enjoyed the night when we went down to Ponderosa and Meadow Ranch (the jr. high camp and other high school camp) and prayed for those campers while they were hearing the gospel in their chapels. Another one of my favorite moments was when my tent and one other girls tent went kayaking on the lake in the middle of the night. We sat in our boats in the middle of the lake and looked up at one of God's most profound and magnificent creations, the stars, while laughing hysterically and enjoying each other's company.

A God sighting of mine was the counselor I had. Emily Alkire and I went to camp as individuals, so Hume provided a counselor for us. We were the only campers our counselor Jessica had that week so we spent a lot of time together and we had so much fun. All three of us really bonded and we had multiple deep conversations in which I really found God speaking through Jessica. She helped me to understand things deeper and really convicted me in my faith in God to lead me to spiritual growth.

What I took away from the week was the realization that the church as a whole is very divided. Unity in the Christian church is essential because if non-Christians see us treating each other poorly, they won't want to be part of it.

Something I'd like to share is how whenever I go to camp at Hume I have several epiphanies that give me huge growth in my faith. One of my epiphanies this week at Wildwood was the concept that we get the choice to accept Jesus into our lives. The God of the Universe gives people, who He has complete power over, the decision to allow Him to work in us. That notion has helped me to understand better just how awesome and merciful God is.

Janae Harabedian: My favorite moment was when our pawn spoke to us at the very end of camp. She spoke so convincingly.

I saw God in the staff. They were a lot of fun but you could tell they were there for God.

Kelly Evans: My favorite moment was the belly flop contest. The participants did great and it was so entertaining!!

During our quiet time I experienced God working in me through Ephesians 4, which I was memorizing. I knew He was reminding me to do all things with a grateful heart and to remember that without Him, I can do nothing.

I took away a necklace that says "out of gratitude." This reminds me to do things out of gratitude to God. I also received a bracelet that reminds me of honesty purity and integrity. We talked about these core principles and what it means to be a Christian and follow them. I also learned that unity in the church is not an option, that others will see us and

and either want to know God or have nothing to do with Him. We have an obligation to God as His disciples.

I would share that Wildwood is amazing and is always growing me stronger in my faith. I was convicted, humbled and led back to God in areas of my life where I was ignoring Him. I loved it and wish more people had experienced that week of awesomeness with us.

Chantelle Schneider(counselor): The week at Wildwood was both spiritually challenging and lots of fun. It's hard to choose a favorite moment. One of the group activities gave us a vivid picture of our desperate need for God's help. I enjoyed listening as the students debriefed this activity and made personal applications.

My God sighting was our night game required us to trudge all over camp to complete various tasks. The students were tied wrist to wrist in groups of 20+ for this entire activity. Despite moments of frustration, impatience and

GROWING COMMUNITY THROUGH INTERNSHIPS INTRO BY CRAIG BLODGETT

As a Youth Director, one of my favorite parts of my job is helping raise the next generation in discovering who they are in the Lord and how He has wired them. This summer we had two incredible interns, Rachel Hamlin and Zak Knepper working with our high school students. It was exciting and encouraging to be in ministry with them. I'm grateful for the way they dove into teaching, leading events, and connecting with students.

I truly appreciated that both Rachel and Zak have a heart's desire to learn and grow. During their summer as interns at FPC they learned more about who they are and who they are not. Not only did we discuss the High School ministry programs but we read about and discussed leadership topics. We prayed for one another and every student in the program. We encouraged one another in our walk with the Lord and shared the gifts we saw in each other as we served together. We grew and discovered more of who God created us to be as we were in community together. I've asked Zak & Rachel to share their experiences this summer.



Zak Knepper: My favorite moment is probably every opportunity to hang out with the high school guys. From playing Frisbee Golf, to Settlers of Catan, or even just having dinner, its been an awesome summer with these awesome guys.

One God Sighting that I've had this summer is discussing why we can trust Scripture in our small groups at Bible Study. There were so many insights into the faith of the students, and it was awesome to see their struggles and their successes.

disagreement, I was proud of the way our team encouraged one another. They challenged each other to be positive and considerate both when it was fun and when it got hard.

One of the things that I took away from this week was just as the students were tied together, we are bound to each other as the Body of Christ and as such we are called to persevere unity. We must support each other with humility, gentleness, and patience, rather than causing hurt and tolerating division. After all, we are stronger together. On a personal note, I need to be intentional about showing the love of Christ to members of the Body who tend to irritate me.

Something to share: How can you promote unity within the body?



Photos courtesy of Emily Alkire & Julia Crantz

My biggest take away from this summer would be that even in all the busyness of life, as I was working two jobs and my plate was more or less full most of the time, even then, there is time for quietness and to build up my own relationship with God. Without Him, this summer would have been very difficult indeed.

If I had something to share, it would be that God takes life on crazy twists and turns, but He always has a direction for it, and He is good.

Rachel Hamlin:
Favorite Moment: Playing soapy relay games on a giant tarp slip n' slide with the high school students.



God Sighting: In every small group time that we had at Bible study I saw God working in these girls. God was teaching us all through each others' stories, struggles, and questions. I loved seeing God use that setting each week to teach us more and move in our hearts.

I learned a lot about my own abilities as a leader and what my gifts are. God taught me to be confident in His abilities to work through me and use me for His glory even when I don't feel confident in my own abilities.

Something to Share: God can use any circumstance to reveal more to us about who He is. He also has blessed us greatly by giving us a body of believers that we can participate in. So encourage and be encouraged, support and be supported, love and be loved.

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER INTRO BY LANA ROBERTS

Not long ago, in our bulletin and the weekly, you may have seen information inviting you to ask for Healing Prayer. Rev. Roger Minassian and his wife, Marilyn, have had a number of prayer experiences when by God's grace and power people have been



healed. What a testimony to God's goodness and care for those who call on His name! While God doesn't promise that everyone will be healed, we believe He can and does heal as He wills. Below is a testimony from one of our members who experienced healing after praying with Roger and Marilyn. Billie Jo's testimony is offered in praise to God, and with the hope that if you suffer from a similar disease, you might consider asking for healing prayer. The Minassian's would welcome the chance to minister to and pray with you — they can be reached at 434-1435.

TESTIMONY BY BILLIE JO AMATO

In 1994 I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, an autoimmune disorder. The reasons for the onset of this disorder as well as the cure are unknown. The major symptoms include muscle pain, exhaustion and sleep disruptions. Stress, weather changes, a jolt, or even loud noises can cause a "flare-up," which is extreme muscle pain such as you would experience with a severe case of flu. Last fall, Roger Minassian asked me if I would like to be healed of fibromyalgia. Well, of course I would, but doubted it was possible.

Roger had been studying autoimmune diseases in relation to counseling he had done at Hope Now. While counseling gang youth, he heard about various abuses that had happened to different individuals before the age of 18. As a result of this information, Roger developed a list of 42 questions that describe abuses a person may have experienced. Using this list, he would interview a young man who may or may not elaborate with his answer. Then Roger would explain that the abuser was wrong, and should have been protecting the child. He also explained that the gang member's sin was the anger held onto all these years. This "stress" when added to current life stresses would make gang members angry enough to fight, shoot and kill. He then asked if he wanted to confess his anger to Jesus and place it on His Cross, letting Him carry it. If so, he would then lead the gang member in a prayer of recognition, confession and release to Christ.

Although hesitant to revisit hard memories, I met with Roger and Marilyn and healing did happen! Roger explained that often, with women, the anger of one's childhood or past goes inward, attacking the body itself. After the interview and prayer, Roger gave me a copy of his booklet, "Seeing Myself Through the Eyes of Christ" because my self-image was a lie that Satan had told me all these years. My assignment was to read the prayer at the back every day, to begin to see myself as Jesus sees me.

Since that time, I have not had a flare-up. Am I totally well from all health issues? No, but overall, healing has happened. There is a peace I did not have before. Things that happen to us (innocuous as they may seem from our adult perspective) leave deep footprints on our future.

TWELVETEN@FPC-FOR THE GREATER FRESNO COMMUNITY

BY KIM LEE & SKIP LYNN, OUTREACH MINISTRY



Last February, after much prayer, FPC began a downtown lunchtime ministry called TwelveTen. The Bible study is available to all who work downtown and as the name suggests the study is from 12:10 -12:50 every Friday.

This time has been a wonderful opportunity for seeing God build community as we join together, share a meal and study God's word. God is at work as He calls

people together --- some may be members or visitors to FPC. The Bible passage centers upon the message for the following Sunday and as we focus on God's word, we discuss how it applies in our lives and the workplace.

The gathering and fellowship is fulfilling and our hope is that this ministry will be a blessing to all who feel called to join us. Our hope is to build community both at FPC and in the downtown workplace. If you would like information about the TwelveTen Bible study or want to be placed on the email notification list, please call the office at FPC 485-6460 or email TwelveTen@fpcfresno.org.