



First Pres(s)

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 1540 M Street, Fresno, California 93721 559.485.6460
www.fpcfresno.org or on Facebook - First Presbyterian Church Fresno
 Rhonda Pope, Editor

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From Saturday of Service to Community Groups

by Jeremy Vaccaro, Senior Pastor

Recently, we held our very first First Pres. Forum. The Forum gave me the chance to talk to those gathered about our Core Values and the Community Building Initiative. The first phase of the Community



Building Initiative is launching this summer with a special worship schedule and the start of Community Groups. But as you read the contents of this First Pres(s), you might have a good argument to make that the Community Building Initiative really started on April 26.

On April 26, many of our church gathered in various locations around the city to serve our neighbors as part of the Saturday of Service (SOS). I had the privilege to join **Paul & Lori Meadors** as they served (with FPC friends) their neighbors, Floyd and Molly. It was a family affair, too; each of my kids was able to contribute to the work of blessing the Meadors' neighbors. It turned out to be as much a blessing to us as it was to them. What a joy to serve!



I was also encouraged to know that just down the street, in the same neighborhood, there was another crew from FPC serving as **Bob & Rosemary Avery** led a team to bless their neighbors. And, during

those same hours teams were distributed in neighborhoods around the city. How cool is that?! It is very cool.

Here's what I loved about it the most: each of those projects around the city were prompted by you. People in the congregation walked across the street to find ways to help their neighbors. They opened their eyes to potential needs in their own neighborhoods, and God used it to bless others. Others were humble enough to ask for help in their own yard or house, and the church responded. Way to go church!



When I think about the launch of Community Groups on June 22, I get excited about the potential for this type of service to happen more spontaneously all around our city for the sake of Christ. Imagine a group of folks from FPC coming together to address a need in your neighborhood. Imagine families building relationship while helping each other with significant projects at the house. Imagine a group that gathers for an early morning prayer walk. Imagine a group that cares for a widow or widower. And, imagine all those groups gathering, serving, and loving within the context of their own part of the city. Imagine First Pres. folks engaged together in loving our neighborhoods for Christ's sake. This is just one of the great things that could come with the launch of Community Groups. In fact, I can't imagine that it won't happen in a church like First Pres.

SATURDAY OF SERVICE BY TERRY JAURENA

Can you remember what you were doing the Saturday after Easter? I was opening boxes of books and sorting them at the Kepler school with **Bob Parkman, Amber Blodgett, Joy and Juliana Rosik, Sarah Addison, Shiela Skibbie** and a few others. It was a great day, made even greater as photos kept coming my way of similar gatherings in other neighborhoods. Many of us were in all kinds of neighborhoods doing all kinds of different projects all at the same time. I loved how it came together.



SOS was the third iteration of an idea that started three years ago. The first was "Doin' Good in the Hood" during the entire Easter Week of 2012. We started after a Palm Sunday Potluck and fanned out to two projects: one at Evangel Home and one at the Paz residence. We had morning and evening shifts and it was a wild and wonderful week. The next year we scaled back to a 1-day project, but increased the number of locations. "Spring into Service" of 2013 also

started with a Potluck on Palm Sunday after which teams were deployed to 8 different projects, most of them near the church. It was a great day.

But we had yet another idea we wanted to try. What if we asked folks in the congregation to find someone in their neighborhood that others of us could gather around and help in some way? So this year we asked, and sure enough, projects and project coordinators all over town began to emerge. We decided that some projects might need all day, so we moved to a Saturday instead of after church. And we needed a little more time to get organized, so we made it the week after Easter. Once again, folks of all ages signed up and showed up.

We think it worked really well. So we asked our project coordinators to help us tell some of the stories of the day so you could enjoy them, too. We've already heard, "do this again," from several participants. So fear not if you missed it ... we'll bring it around again with maybe a few new twists. We invite you to start thinking and praying now about how some of us might help be a blessing in your neighborhood.

SOS @ Kepler Neighborhood School by Shiela Skibbie

Saturday of Service was an amazing blessing to our school, Kepler Neighborhood School. When we first found out that we had been given a library, we thought we would have to turn down the donor because there was absolutely no way our staff could find the time or energy to get things moved, organized and arranged in the time we were given to get the books. Then, Amber Blodgett approached me about the SOS day. It was the most perfect timing. Knowing that others would be stepping in to help gave us the extra burst of energy we needed to get things prepped and organized for the actual Saturday of Service.



The folks who came to help were troopers as they sorted through endless boxes of books, placing them on shelves while avoiding roaches and mice who had traveled in inside the boxes! Our teachers and staff extremely grateful!



SOS @ The Church Campus by Susan Glover

We had 8 wonderful workers show up to help at the church. **Jim Grunwald** did an amazing job of cleaning the oven in the HUB. **Connie** and **Stephen Pendelton** cleaned the walls and refrigerator in the HUB. **Betty Garst** worked her magic on removing stains in the Art/Cooking room sinks. **Jim Dice** and **Roger Minassian** cleaned all the woodwork in the Fellowship Hall kitchen while **Marilyn Minassian** cleaned the service island cupboards. I worked on the big refrigerator and the pantry.

We initially wanted to paint several doors that are in very bad shape. The weather was not dry enough for us to take a chance on the paint not drying. Maybe we can get to that at another work day. One obvious objective was that the workers could see the real need for church work projects. It is my sincere hope that we will find even more folks that want to help with the care of our campus.

A disadvantage our group had was that we were spread out through out the campus and not everyone received the benefit of the type fellowship one gets from working shoulder to shoulder. We didn't even have lunch together because we finished before lunchtime! That's good because we worked so efficiently but we did miss out on another chance for community building. Perhaps next time we will plan to eat first then work!

SOS @ The Sterlings by Scott Norvell

On Saturday, April 26, **Cindy and Kurt Sterling** had a crew work on a lot next to their house which they had recently acquired. A visiting missionary from France along with his son joined **Charity and Ian Whitney**, the **Sands, Dolans, Norvell** families and the **Sterlings** in clearing brush, trees and preparing the lot to be leveled and prepared for grass in the near future. The adage *many hands make light work* was true as this task took only a couple of hours to complete.



Before



After



Hard working boys



Hard working girls

SOS @ Carleton/Lande Home by Trent & Jen Ewert

Our family (**Trent, Jen & Brayden Ewert**) teamed up with a group led by **Amy Watson** for our SOS project. You may have heard of the story of **Melissa Carleton** and her husband, **Brian Lande**. In March, in her 26th week of pregnancy, **Melissa** was diagnosed with a brain tumor. They wanted to wait until their son was born to remove the tumor. But a traumatic seizure due to the tumor necessitated an emergency surgery leaving **Melissa** in a coma. While **Melissa** still in a coma, their son was carried full term and w **West Nathaniel Lande**, was delivered successfully.



Our project was to work on cleaning up their house in the Fresno High area. Their home looked as if they had an emergency and just left everything. Getting their home back in order wasn't a high priority at the moment. **Amy Watson** is a dear friend of the family and jumped on the opportunity to help with the Saturday of Service. The house was cleaned top to bottom, dishes were washed, beds were made and clothes were laundered. The back yard was cleaned from back to front and the garage was thoroughly cleaned & reorganized. All in all, it was a deep spring cleaning.



Melissa's dad, who was there with us was deeply moved. He commented, "Wow! It is amazing that so many people would come from a church to help someone they don't even know." And that was exactly what this was. We had the opportunity to minister to this family in an indirect way and be a blessing in their lives behind the scenes. It made us realize that there are bigger things than worrying about what we were going to watch on TV that particular Saturday. God had us purposely in this home to minister to this family, even if the only direct impact was on **Melissa's** dad.



Amy Watson was a great team leader, and along with the **Swain and Peltola Families, Brian and Lana Roberts; Kaylan Roberts, Craig Hill; and us Ewerts**, we were able to tackle this project full on.



We praise God that this was where He wanted us to be this

Plagues and Wanderings and Commandments - OH MY!

My name is **Wendi Norvell** and I am one of the teachers in the 5th/6th grade Sunday school class. I have been teaching this class since the fall of 2005 when **Debbie Fletcher** and **Heidi Lynn** passed on their amazing study of Exodus to me so that I could continue teaching it. Because we have 2 grades, we study Exodus one year and the book of John the next year. This year we are studying Exodus.

Heidi and Debbie wrote this study and it is very hands-on. We do a lot of fun projects that help the students learn about Moses, the Israelites and, most importantly, God. Early on, we spent time looking at all the plagues and why God chose those specific plagues. The students made pictures of each plague using ripped paper art. This year, a team of students made a 3-D picture of plague #10. I've never had students do that before and I was impressed with their creativity.

They have learned that God is their banner; and they are under His protection. Like the Israelites who followed the cloud in the day and the pillar of fire at night God is with us, through everyday of our lives. They can see that God cares about them, and is fully present in their lives.

The God of the Old Testament is the same God that loves them now. The 10 commandments are still commandments for God's people today. The students learned about each commandment and why it is still applicable to them. Can you name them all, in order? They can!!

We have ended the year by studying the Tabernacle, building a mock version in class, right down to the furniture. We had a slight interruption while we had class downstairs because one of our students had a broken ankle, but we are finishing strong. And, of course, we also had our traditional "ditch day" at McDonald's.

I love teaching this class. I love the students, I love the curriculum, and I love the other people I teach with: **Sandy Mozier, Susie Hancock, and Kaylene Norvell**. I love to come to church on Sundays because I know I have the pleasure of being with these kids and teaching them about God.

I love the discussion we have about God, and how He cares for them. They have such big thoughts about Him, and such deep questions about Him, and I LOVE talking with them. I always feel the presence of the Holy Spirit as the kids ask me challenging questions, and make such insightful comments. God is good, and I'm grateful to be part of His plan!



5TH/6TH GRADE SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS MAKING THE FURNITURE OF THE "TABERNALE." GOLD SPRAY PAINT COMES LATER.

New Members Introduced by Lana Roberts



Leo & Betty Conner, Carole Petersen, Andrew McFadden. Sheree Dull, Aaron Aarii, Bill Pipes, Charlene Henry, Jesse & Nicole James

It's with great joy that we present these who have completed the Membership Class and have been received as members by Session. Some of these folks are new to the church, and some have been around a while. Let's give them a warm welcome!