



First Pres Challenger

WORSHIP *grow*
SERVE

Equipping the Family of God at First Presbyterian Church, Fresno

June 2005

Welcome 2005 Networkers!

By Diane Johnson and Lisa Goodell

Each summer First Pres has a tradition of hiring college-aged "Networkers" who help kick our summer programming into high gear! The goal of this program is to provide Networkers with leadership and discipleship training through relational ministry. This happens on many levels including: working with church staff and youth, being mentored in a one-on-one relationship with an advisor, and living with a host family. Networkers build relationships with youth through planning regular and special group activities. They deepen these relationships by spending time with small groups or individuals through attending camp with kids, visiting STARS, volunteering at the Thrift Shop or just hanging out.

Networkers attend church staff meetings and prayer times; their day off is Monday. Church staff and the Networker Equipping Team (NET), led by Dave and Debbie Norman, in turn provide training, housing, support and spiritual nurture to each Networker. As a result, Networkers are given a chance to experience what lifestyle ministry is all about.

The Lord has blessed First Pres by leading six terrific young women and four wonderful young men to our Networker program this summer. Please keep this biographical information handy through the next two months and include these people and the Net-

worker ministry in your prayers.

(Editor's note: Names of advisors were not yet available at newsletter deadline).

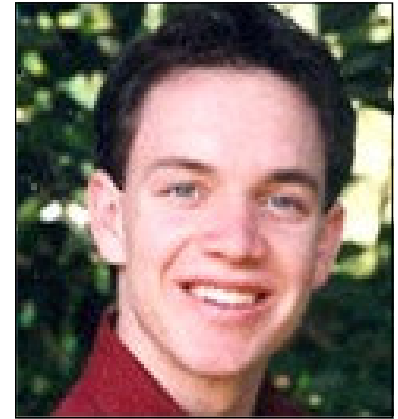
Vernon Burt



Vernon is a 2003 graduate of Heald College where he studied business software. A Renaissance re-enactor, he enjoys medieval history, leather crafting, Latin and Western martial arts. Vernon has benefited recently from a one-on-one discipleship opportunity with Chester Goodale. Vernon is drawn to the Networkers ministry saying, "I have felt a call to service and am looking to discover/reveal my gifts and find my place in God's ranks." He will be residing with the Allan and Barbara Knepper family. Vernon will be working with the primary/juniors group.

Matt Copler

Matt was initially attracted to First Pres by "a good balance of grace and truth and depth and width," and has served as a sound technician. A



sophomore in the prestigious Smittcamp Family Honors Program, Matt is pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering at Fresno State. Matt enjoys drafting and drawing, and has worked for Hume Lake Christian Camps. He will be living with the Chester and Julie Goodale family and will be working with junior high students.

Hayley Cook

A



Fresno native, Hayley comes to us from Stockton's University of the Pacific where she is studying civil engineering. She enjoys expressing her Christian faith through singing and theatrical productions. She can

tap dance, build stage sets and has a strong interest in missions. She committed her life to Christ as a seventh grader. Her home church is New Covenant Community Church in Fresno. Hayley will be staying with the Mick and Kim Saxton family and will be working with the primary/juniors group.

Andrea Cousins



Raised at First Pres, Andrea is entering her senior year as a President's Scholar at CSU, Long Beach where her major is dance and theatre arts. She enjoys ballet, sewing, crocheting and making hemp jewelry. She has worked as a stage manager and has skills in lighting design and other technical aspects of staging a theatrical production. She will be working with the high school group and living with the Steve and Sheila Skibbie family.

Ryan Dull

Ryan says that he has been attending First Pres "since my parents brought me home from the hospital." He is a 2003 graduate of Clovis High School, where he was



twice voted "Best Tenor," and has recently earned an Associates Degree in mathematics from Fresno City College. Ryan likes to sing, dance, act, read, swim, run and play video games. His job as a Campus Club aide for Clovis Unified likely provides him the opportunity to exercise all of these skills. Ryan will be staying with the Kent and Kathy Hamlin family and will be focused on the high school age group.



Maureen Hains

Coming to us from south-central Virginia is Maureen "Moe" Hains. Moe's home church is New City Fellowship of Fredericksburg, Virginia (PCA). She is currently working toward a bachelor's degree in fine arts in arts education and graphic design at Longwood University, a small public university not far from her home. Moe enjoys playing guitar and welding, and is learning how to

blacksmith! She has produced short films for her InterVarsity Club, and is a friend of Emily Hedstrom, a 2004 Networker. She will be living with the Curtis and Elizabeth Smith family and will be working with junior high-aged children.



Jennifer Hill

Jennifer is a recent graduate of Hoover High who loves to camp with her family. Though she now attends First Pres, she has been an active member of Evangelical Free Church of Fresno where she has led Awana and Vacation Bible School activities. She accepted Christ when she was four years old at a backyard Bible club held by her mother. She has been on mission trips to San Diego and Cuba (where she helped her parents bring the Awana ministry to that country). She will be living this summer with the Ron and Sheree Dull family, and will be working with the primary/juniors age group.

Emily Hubel

Emily has just been conferred a degree in art from University of the Pacific, and after this summer, will serve on InterVarsity staff at CSU, Fresno. This is her second stint as a Networker. After her experience here in 2003, she "realized that I wanted to be in

The Networkers ministry enables young adults to have a challenging summer job experience as they seek to serve others and know God more fully.



full-time ministry for life.” Since then, she has attended the Urbana conference and done mission work in the countries of Ukraine and Georgia. Emily’s favorite instrument is her voice, though she also plays the trumpet, piano, guitar and clarinet. She also enjoys sign language, painting, sewing and cake decorating. Emily will be living with the Jim and Barb Grunwald family and will be working with high school students this summer.



Eric Shamp

Eric will be a junior in the fall at Azusa Pacific University, and would like to become a youth minister. He grew up near Kernan on his family’s farm. While in high school, Eric founded a Christian club on campus, “The Pulse,” and has since served on mission trips in Mexico. He is glad to be back in the Valley for

the summer and is excited about being a Networker. He will be staying with the Stuart and Marilyn Conrad family and will be working with high school students.



Emily Williams

Emily is a junior at Fresno Pacific University where she is majoring in contemporary Christian ministries and psychology. Emily’s family is originally from Fresno and First Pres but now hails from Atwater. Like Jennifer, she accepted Christ at a backyard Bible school gathering taught by her mother! Her family has a very active Christian walk. She has completed a five-month Discipleship Training School through Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in Denver. This included three months of study and two months of mission work in Mexico. She enjoys reading and writing, and is fluent in Spanish. She will be staying with the John and Lisa Goodell family and will be working with the primary/junior age group.



Session Report

By Scott McCallum, Clerk

The following are highlights from the May meeting:

The April financial report is highlighted as follows: giving was below budget (1.26 percent), spending was also below budget (11 percent), cash available for operations is approximately two months of budgeted spending.

Mark the fourth day of the month on your calendar to pray for our Presbytery. Pray for the churches, 21 seminary students (seven of which are ours), and our pastors and their families.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- Long Range Planning prayer time is June 8, at 7:00 p.m., in the Adult Lounge.

- New Members Orientation will be held on June 4 and 11, 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., and June 12, 9:40 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.

- New Members Luncheon will be June 12, 12:15 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

- High school group will have fireworks booth again this year. Details to follow.

- In God We Trust Music Festival will be held on July 30 at the Coombs Ranch. Tickets will be \$25. See Skin Mead for details.

- Women’s Brunch will be held on Sept. 24, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Come, follow me,
and I will make you
fishers of men.**

Matthew 4:19

Being Like the Father

By Greg Ehlert, Youth/College Director

Ever since I saw a brief sermon on video by Henri Nouwen, I've become a big fan. Recently I finished reading *The Return of the Prodigal Son* which he wrote, in part, from his extensive research on the painting by Rembrandt and the story in Luke 15. You can see a picture of the painting at this link: <http://www.christusrex.org/www2/art/images/rembrandt06.jpg>

In his book, Nouwen analyzes the choices and issues concerning the younger son, the older son and the father. Nouwen suggests that each of us can identify both with the rebellion of the younger son and the attitude of the older son. Nouwen argues that the younger son's challenge was to move from "dissipation" to "containment." What he meant by this is that the younger son's identity and selfhood were dissipated in his frivolous activities and wasteful living. In fact, it wasn't until the younger son came to the end of his rope and finally embraced his identity as the son of the father that he had the courage (albeit fearful) to return home to the father. The younger son

finally found containment in the presence of his father's love. There can be no doubt that the younger son was astonished that the father lavished him with fine clothes and a celebration with his friends.

Nouwen's second portion of the book analyzes the issues and choices of the older brother. From the story, we see that the older brother is very angry at the father for throwing a party for the younger son. In fact, the older brother denies his kinship to his brother by saying, "That son of yours..." Nouwen asserts that the challenge for the older brother is to move from an attitude of resentment to one of gratitude. Nouwen suggests that it is actually the older brother who is more lost than the younger brother ever was although he had remained faithfully at home serving the father. The older son had "slaved out of a sense of duty" for the father, but he was really driven by a sense of compliance and selfishness rather than freedom and gratitude.

In fact, the older brother thought he had to be dutiful to gain the fa-

ther's love. But notice how the father, in Luke 15, says "You are with me always and all I have is yours." The older son thought that he had to *earn* his father's love by his actions. Little did he know that the father loved him regardless of his dutiful work. Rather than being driven by an ungrateful, resentful and unhappy spirit, the older son could have served the father with a grateful, thankful and happy response to his father's love.

I identify with the older son. I used to see God as a displeased coach in heaven keeping track of my mistakes on a clipboard. But I have learned that our Father is not like an angry coach at all. He is a loving Father who desires to bless His children with His presence and resources. As a "Recovering Pharisee", (see *12 Steps for the Recovering Pharisee - like me* by John Fischer) my daily challenge is to reject an attitude of resentment and embrace the Father's love with gratitude. May you and I learn to leave the tools in the field for awhile and join the celebration in our Father's presence.

Finishing the Course

By Wes Gunther

The passion of Peter's life, first as director of Evangelical Literature Overseas and then as director of Moody Press, was the distribution of Christian literature on mission fields in countries around the world. For 30 years he traveled to just about every country in the world, meeting with missionaries and assisting local Christians to open and operate Christian book centers.

When Moody Press retired Peter at age 65, he and his wife planned to fulfill the dream of a lifetime - move to the swampy coast of the eastern Florida peninsula. They would build a little cottage, grow their own fruits and vegetables, live off the land. "And how could life be any better?"

they said.

Peter was sharing this dream with me one day. So I asked him, "Do you know anyone in that part of Florida? Do you have family there? Is there a church nearby?" His answers were, "No, no, and no." I said, "Think about it, Peter. You have devoted your whole life to ministry. Working with people has been at the center and core of your life. What will you and Phyllis do in isolation from the things that have been most meaningful to you?"

I heard from Peter a few months later. The move to Florida was off. They had bought some acreage near Colorado Springs. Peter would

spend his retirement years working for Christian Booksellers Association, headquartered there. He would continue traveling to all parts of the world distributing Christian literature.

When Peter was about 70 years old he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. For the next three years he suffered unbearable pain from the disease. But he never allowed his disease to deter him from continuing his calling. Even during the last weeks of his life, his wife drove him the 50 miles from their home to his office because there was still so much work to be done.

He died in his home at the age of 73 - one week after his last visit to his

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From the Treasure Chest: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” (Colossians 3:16)

By Marcie York , Children’s Director, K-6



What does Sunday morning look like down in the Treasure Chest? Join me for a “virtual tour” of Children’s Ministry and let’s see. It is early still, the church grounds are quiet. Peer over the rail with me and observe the prayer team quietly going from room to room, praying for God’s purpose to prevail in each child and volunteer. Look into the windows and see early arriving teachers making final preparations, both in lessons and in heart. Hear the sounds of children’s praise music? CD players are turned on and rooms are ready to receive children.

Let’s head downstairs now. Be careful on those stairs; they are tricky!

Watch out for toddlers and preschoolers who *insist*, “I can do it myself!” Smile understandingly at harried parents as they make their way very slowly down to classrooms. Grab a diaper bag, perhaps, and help these beleaguered families get everyone checked in to classes, and get to church on time. Listen to the sounds of greeting and laughter coming from each room. Caring, prayerful adult volunteers welcome children Mark 9:37-style. Parents greet one another, eyes never leaving their exuberant children. Names are registered, name tags are on and we are ready for the day.

The door in front of you at the bottom of the stairs leads to the preschool rooms. As two to five year olds come in, they gather together to sing and praise God. Then they move into separate rooms according to age. Note that some two-year-olds are crying, as transitions are very difficult for them. So are separations from parents. However, under the tender care of teachers, transitions are made and little hearts are quiet and ready to learn.

Next door is the nursery. Note the smiles and loving attention given to each tiny baby. Parents are conveying last minute instructions and receiving a pager for the morning. Music is playing cheerfully and babies are quickly drawn to bright, age-appropriate toys. Babies who are fussy or sleepy are gently rocked.

Now turn left to the elementary Art/Cooking Room where the energy and exhilaration level kicks up a beat. Hear the guitar and sounds of music? Kindergarten-fifth graders are gathering at one end of the room, clapping hands and singing. Shepherds are greeting children and taking roll, as ministry teams gear up around the campus to teach and reinforce the Biblical concept for the month. Let’s follow the children up the stairs again as they burst into one of the four rotation rooms. Catch the original video production in the Media Room, get the central Bible thrust in the Bible Knowledge Room, and watch the children internalize the truth through drama and art or cooking. While we are upstairs, let’s peek into the sixth grade room where students are experiencing the book of Exodus “hands on” by crafting the elements of the Tabernacle. Wow, these kids are doing an amazing job!

Well, we are back at the Treasure Chest rail again, and people are pouring out of doorways. The children are swarming all over the play equipment and up and down stairs, reconnecting with parents. The toddlers and preschoolers are insisting they can climb *up* the steps themselves. Parents hold hands tight and juggle diaper bags, jackets and Sunday school papers. The parking lot reverberates with “goodbyes” and car doors shutting. All is quiet again, but God’s Spirit continues the work begun that morning, as the Word of Christ dwells richly in each tired, satisfied little heart.

Continued from Page 4
office.

I know this is a true story because Peter was my brother. And why am I sharing it? Because I see my brother as an example of one of many thousands of saints of God who have followed in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. Just before Paul died he wrote, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7, KJV) I trust God will give me the grace to follow in Peter’s footsteps.

Deadline Information

The deadline for the July issue of *The Challenger* is Friday, June 24 at 5 p.m. It will be mailed out July 7. Please submit articles to Carol Valencia (454-9467), cjm44@cvip.net, or leave in newsletter box in office.

The deadline for "A Place for You" is each Monday at 5 p.m. Please submit announcements to Cheryl Eaker (485-6460), via email at ceaker@fpcfresno.org.

First Pres Challenger

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First Presbyterian Church

1540 M Street

Fresno, CA 93721-1277



The Ministry Team

Rev. James Evans, Senior Pastor
jevans@fpcfresno.org
Rev. Thomas Parsons, Pastor to the
Congregation tparsons@fpcfresno.org
Rev. David Abdo, Executive Pastor
dabdo@fpcfresno.org

Craig Blodgett, Assistant Youth Director
cblodgett@fpcfresno.org
Dr. Julie Carter, Coordinator, Worship & Music
jwlc@sbcglobal.net
Greg Ehlert, Youth/College Director
gehlert@fpcfresno.org
Susan Glover, Administrator
sglover@fpcfresno.org
Terry Jaurena, Mission/College Director
tjaurena@fpcfresno.org
Lana Roberts, Worship Arts Director
lroberts@fpcfresno.org
Corrie Sands, Children's Director, Birth-Pre-K
csands@fpcfresno.org
Marcie York, Children's Director, K-6
myork@fpcfresno.org
Other Church Staff: staff@fpcfresno.org (Type
staff member's name in subject line).
Newsletter Staff:
Co-Editors: Daphne Saul and Carol Valencia
Editorial Board: Karin Cook, David Kimball,
Paula Lloyd and Bobby Temple

For Your Information

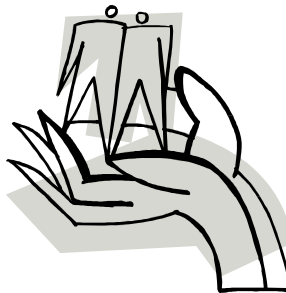
Dear Friends at First Pres,

I want to say thank you to everyone at First Pres for the lovely cards you sent when Duane passed away. I am doing better now in Georgia. I'm even driving. Wow! I am teaching Sunday school and running the preschool department. You can reach me at janetsheldon@hotmail.com. I'd love to hear from all of you. You can also write me at 4807 Floyd Court, Columbus, GA 31907-4079.

I'm missing you all and send you my love!

With love and prayers,

Janet Sheldon



Women's Conference 2005

Reserve the weekend of Oct. 14-16, at Calvin Crest, for Women's Conference 2005. Speakers will be women from First Pres.



Dear Church Family,

Your prayers and notes of encouragement have sustained me through a difficult recovery. I have learned a lot about being helpless and of the great value of other people's prayer support. I am most grateful for my church family.

Thank you, thank you!

Debbie Fletcher

First Presbyterian Church
1540 M Street
Fresno, CA 93721-1277
559-485-6460
Fax: 559-485-1538

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