

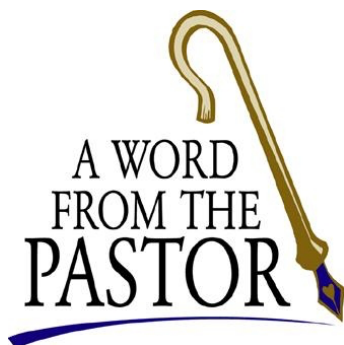


The Messenger

A PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PUNTA GORDA
FLORIDA — ECO: A COVENANT ORDER OF EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIANS

March 2020

Stay connected when you're away. Watch our worship service LIVE! Go to our website at: www.fpcpunta.org and click on the link "Watch services LIVE here" on our homepage.



Small Church?

At our luncheon in January I was asked about the churches, mainly the size, that Bo and I have served in before coming to First Presbyterian Church in Punta Gorda. We served on staff at three previous churches. We began at Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, which was about 3500, then Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian in St. Louis, which was about 2000, and then Wildwood Presbyterian Church, which was about 1000. "So why would you come to a church of about 100?"

The simple answer is we sensed a call from God, but there was also the power of the smaller church that attracted us. The power? Yes! Some statistics suggest that about a billion Christians attend church with membership over 350, and about a billion Christians attend church with less than 350 attendees. Basically, half of the Christians in the world are choosing to Worship and unite with smaller churches. God is using the small church in His plan of evangelism. In all those churches we served, we would spend time in staff meetings, and even retreats, dedicated to how to make our church feel smaller. How to make the mega-church feel smaller! They had every conceivable program imaginable to meet people where they live. I'm not bashing the large church, they provide things that are very needed. Yet, they were missing something vital - smallness.

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Words from Pastor Barksdale

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1. **Community** — When you come into this church there is a sense of friendliness, of warmth, of community, of caring that you are there. That is not something to take for granted. While Bo and I were waiting on God to provide the next call, we took advantage of the time and visited quite a few churches. (That is not something that a pastor normally gets to do.) Some churches were welcoming, but many were not, we just slipped in and worshiped and slipped out. As I watch the greeting time in our service, the fellowship after the service, there is a real sense of caring for one another in this congregation. That is to be celebrated.

2. **Relationships** — I'll have to admit that the 'seasonal' resident is a dynamic that I need to learn about. But even so, the relationships when these members started coming back, felt like a family reunion. Even when spread apart geographically, there are real relationships in this body that continue. It's a family. That is also to be celebrated.

So, I get asked, "What is the vision?" "What are the changes that are coming?" "Where do we go from here?" We are a good church, with a long history of ministry in this community. We have a body of believers that are unified and excited about the future. So, how do we capitalize on our past and become a better church? A great church? And a great church has nothing to do with numbers. It has nothing to do with trying to look like a smaller version of a big church. It has to do with understanding its unique role in the Kingdom. We want to ask questions like, "Why did God put First Presbyterian Church at the corner of Taylor and Airport Roads?", "If we ceased to exist, would our community notice?", "What are the gifts, talents, dreams of the members of our church?"

Our first year here we are getting to know one another, trying to figure out the answers to these questions, (or maybe just letting me catch up to the rest of y'all). But, I want us to pray, dream, and expect that God is going to do great things through First Presbyterian Church for His glory in the years to come.

Let's start dreaming.....

WORSHIP SCHEDULE



*Worship
Schedule*

Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service

Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA HAND BELL ENSEMBLE – March 22nd



Join us *Sunday afternoon, March 22nd at 3:00pm in our sanctuary*, for the fourth performance of our Annual Concert Series.

The Southwest Florida Hand Bell Ensemble are our guests.

A free will offering will be accepted
(suggested donation is \$10.00)

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Presbyterian Women's Bible Study will meet on *Tuesdays, March 3rd and 17th*. We will focus on Lessons 4 and 5 of "Redeemed" by Dr. Sam Nadler that is based on the book of Ruth. We meet from 10:00am - 11:30am the first and third Tuesdays of each month at the home of Kathy Belville, 6400 Taylor Rd #211 Eagle, Punta Gorda. For additional information and directions to Kathy's home, please call Kathy at 508-733-0546 or the church office at 941-639-1959. ***To carpool, meet at the church at 9:45am.***

All women are invited to join us for study, fellowship, and refreshments!

PRAYER SHAWL GATHERINGS

Monday, March 9th



The Prayer Shawl group meets the second Monday of each month at **10am in Fellowship Hall**. Please join us when you can. If you don't knit or crochet, perhaps you'd like to make a donation to support this ministry.

TREASURES TABLE



We are seeking donations of your "treasures" (no clothing, please) to add to the Treasures Table in Fellowship Hall. Also, please visit the table and if you find a "treasure" that you like, put a donation in the container. Proceeds are for outreach projects.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY - "Great Words"



The Wednesday Morning Bible Study, led by Pastor Barksdale Pullen, meets every Wednesday at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall. *We are embarking on a study of Jonah and his adventures.*
All are welcome, so join us when you can!

Session Highlights - February 2020

- 1) Membership: 93
- 2) Prayer time for our church and church members
- 3) Capital Fund to-date - \$11,922
- 4) Financial Report - Year-to-date deficit of \$1,665
- 5) Approved March 8th for ordination of Bonnie Brown as a deacon
- 6) Approved looking for a Handyman to handle larger repairs at church on an as needed basis
- 7) Donations of \$350 were collected for the Wheelchair Ministry; \$100 from Souper Bowl Sunday was given to St. Vincent de Paul; and 25 cans of soup were taken to the Veterans Village

PEACE RIVER SUNSET



EARLY FLASHES OF LIGHTNING REFLECTED
THROUGH MOUNTAINS OF DARK CLOUDS
AS CRIMSON LIGHT PEAKS THROUGH
TO OUTLINE A GLOW OF SUNSHINE

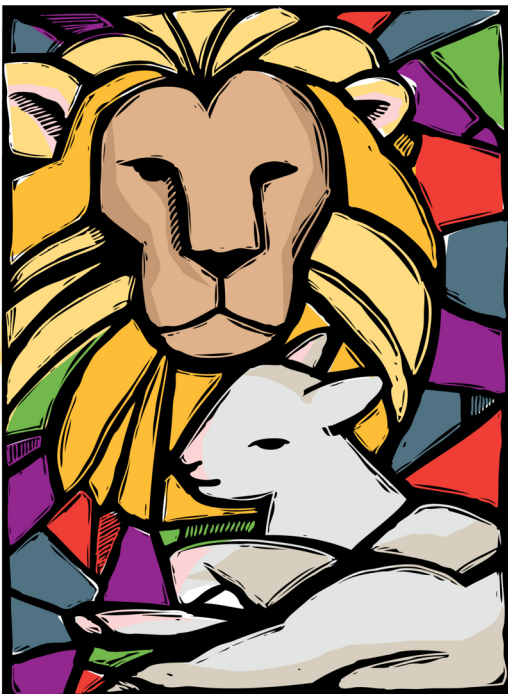
DARKNESS FALLS ON PASTEL SKIES AS
A SILHOUETTED LANDSCAPE FORMS BELOW
WHILE GOD IS THERE

AND THE RIVER FLOWS

LIGHT REFLECTS ON DARKENED WATER
SCARLET PATHS FORM TO THE DOCK
THE GENTLE SOUNDS OF WINGS
AS BIRDS FLY TO THEIR EVENING ROOST
WHILE GOD IS THERE

AND THE RIVER FLOWS

Holy Spirit / Nancy Beasom



"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and...
honor and glory and praise!"

Revelation 5:12, NIV



Join Bion Cantorum to hear music that you have heard over time and be introduced to newly discovered pieces. We will take you on a "Heavenly Aeroplane Ride", sing you love songs and bring you back to earth to verdant pastures. Maestro Engler will present a discussion of the concert at 2:30pm.

Tickets are \$15.00 for adults, \$10.00 for students and there are discounts for parties of 10 or more.

They are available from Joan or Ray Byron, by calling 941-206-2071, or at the door.

FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES



*St. Patrick's Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner
by Chef Bonnie Brown*

*Wednesday, March 11th, 5:30pm
Fellowship Hall*

Program: Simply Faith, The Joy King Singers

\$5.00 Suggested Donation

Sign up in the Church Foyer



*Friday, March 6th
12:00pm*

*Ana's European Cafe
315 Taylor Street
Punta Gorda*

Sign up in the church foyer

SOCIABLE SINGLES

LUNCH - 1st and 3rd Friday of each month

*Friday, March 20th
12:00pm*

*Olive Garden
1341 Tamiami Trail
Port Charlotte*

Sign up in the church foyer



FPC'S ANNUAL CONCERT SERIES



*Stephanie Smith
Organ
September 29, 2019*



*Eirinn Abu
Saxophone
October 27, 2019*



*Isaac Mingus Trio
February 16, 2020*



*SWFL Hand Bell
Ensemble
March 22, 2020*



*Chamber Accord
April 26, 2020*

MISSION MINISTRY



Where did local mission baskets go?

Check out our new “Connect With Our Community” section in Fellowship Hall!



Your donations on **Sunday, March 1st**, will help provide warmth for victims of disasters and communities worldwide through Church World Service. Make a gift of love that will keep on giving throughout the year. **Make checks payable to FPC.**

HELPING MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Our mission outreach to Misión Peniel in Immokalee with **Pastor Miguel Estrada** continues through the collection of Rice and Pinto Beans, clothing and other items. They may be placed in the plastic bin and wicker chest that are in Fellowship Hall.



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA)

To learn about volunteer opportunities at Crossroads, visit their website at www.Crossroadspg.org or talk to First Presbyterian Church member Ron Beasom.

Another way to help Crossroads - when you place an order from Amazon, please consider going to <https://smile.amazon.com> and select Crossroads Hope Academy as your charity. Crossroads earns a percentage of your purchase with no cost to you. Thank you!



ANTIOCH PARTNERS MISSIONARIES



Eric and Debbie Stone have served as missionaries in Guatemala for 21 years. Their mission is to facilitate Kingdom presence amid social crisis and they envision a community of churches with whom they share close bonds of trust and fellowship.

Learn more about Eric and Debbie Stone's ministry at www.theantiochpartners.org.

Lisa Alfonsi was called to participate in God's mission in Lima, Peru. She uses her experience as an occupational therapist to serve the disability community and their families in a variety of ways under the leadership of a local church. Lisa is also working with Free Wheelchair Mission, assembling and distributing wheelchairs to people in need.

Learn more about Lisa at www.theantiochpartners.org.



MINISTRY OUTREACH



Welcome Bags are available in our church foyer.
*If you have a new neighbor or should greet someone at Church
that is new to the area,
please give them one of our Welcome Bags.*

We help the Veterans Village in Punta Gorda by providing needed items and food. Dollar donations are used to purchase gift cards. As a way to thank our Veterans, we have "Thank You" notecards that you can take and write on.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED - The Veterans hold Flea Markets on Saturdays. Volunteers are needed to help between 9:00-12:30 or 12:30-4:00. If you would like to reach out to our community, this is an easy way and a big help to raise money for the needs of veterans who are trying to better their lives. Please call Gail Thornton at 941-916-1726 or at the church office for more information and to volunteer.



Receiving gift cards!

PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Capt. Alex Treadwell, Army, grandson-in-law of Diane Culver-Truby, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.
- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, grandnephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.
- * Timothy Laux - ETVSN, Navy, grandson of Diane Tabert, stationed at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Georgia.
- * Capt. Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.
- * PFC Harrison Raymond Klipstine, Army, great nephew of Dianne Sizemore, stationed in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- * 2nd Lt. Paul Corbitt Geuy, Army, great nephew of Dianne Sizemore, attending the Ohio State University Dental School Program in Columbus, Ohio.
- * 2nd Lt. Zadick Self, Marines, grandson-in-law of Ron & Nancy Beasom, stationed at Camp Pendleton, California.
- * Navy Seaman Tyler Beasom, Navy, grandson of Ron & Nancy Beasom, training at Coronado Island, California.
- * PFC Brian K. Hulshoff, Army, grandson of David & Lynn Lang, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.
- * Lt. Col. Robert C. Prijatelj, US Marine Corps, son of Bob and Dona Prijatelj and nephew of Laurel Aumend, stationed in Washington D.C.
- * MSgt. Nick Weiss, Air Force, grandson of Gail Thornton, is home based.

*Do you have a family member serving in the military?
If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list. Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table
in the church foyer and place it in the HELMUT or let the church office know.*

MEMBER CARE



Births in the Church Family

*Congratulations to Larry and Sue Mesler
on the birth of their great granddaughter
Esther Louise Blomberg
Esther was born on January 29th to
Annelise and Niklas Blomberg of Andover, Massachusetts*

*Congratulations to Larrie and Marjorie Tisdale
on the birth of their fifth great grandchild
Tucker Bradley Powell
Tucker was born on February 13th to
Kelly Anne and Brad of Crestwood, Kentucky*

*Congratulations to Gail Thornton
on the birth of her 7th great-great grandchild
Marcus Andrew Corson Jr.
Marcus was born on February 19th to
Andrea Boston and Marcus Corson of Somonauk, Illinois*



*Our sympathy to the family of Elaine Unrau,
who went home to the Lord on January 28th.
Elaine and her husband Speed were active members
of FPC for many years.*

FPC Family,
Keep us informed on:
Prayer Requests and Hospital / Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email changes
Birthdays and Anniversaries



First Pres is now on Facebook!

*You may now see posts about the life of our church....
Go to [facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda](https://facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-PuntaGorda)*

MARCH 2020

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....
*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
 and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1 Sarah Stones	11 Charles & Evelyn Zietsma	21 Bonnie Brown
2 John Stremming	12 Lois Zietz	22 Marion Brown
3 Anne Swift	13 Jay Aldridge	23 Ray & Joan Byron
4 Diane Tabert	14 Rex & Helen Anderson	24 Kay Callahan
5 Gail Thornton	15 Laurel Aumend	25 Bonnie Carey
6 Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale	16 Ron & Nancy Beasom	26 Joe & Georgia Cherny
7 Verna Wargo	17 Roy & Kathy Belville	27 Jean Cleffi
8 Don & Mary Anne Washabaugh	18 Shirley Berg	28 David & Cathy Coleman
9 Dave Woods	19 Rick & Kay Berner	29 Cara Coletti & Family
10 James & Teri York	20 Joe & Betty Brooks	30 Charlie & Doris Costa
		31 Irene Csontos



3—George Fallenbeck	15—Sonja Dosse
8—Sue Mesler	15—Barb Harris
9—Nelson Parker	19—Kay Berner
10—Don Washabaugh	19—Marjorie Tisdale
12—Al Lorenz	31—Patti Nuznoff
	31—Fred Rosa



15—Roy & Kathy Belville	51 yrs.
21—Ron & Billie Sixt	56 yrs.
26—Jerry & Margie Smith	54 yrs.

THIS 'N THAT

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

We welcome material for our church newsletter. All contributions are subject to editing with regard to the subject matter and space requirements.



*Articles for the April 2020 issue are due
Monday, March 16th*

WEEKLY PRAYER SERVICE



Please join your church family in the Conference Room **Sunday evenings at 6pm**. Come and share in this experience of God's people praying together.

LOAVES AND FISHES MINISTRY



Are you interested in making a meal when there is a short term need in the congregation due to an illness or loss?

Are you willing to deliver a meal that someone else has fixed? If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please speak to Kay Callahan, our Deacon of this ministry, or all the church office.

R.O.M.E.O.S. & J.U.L.I.E.T.S. BREAKFAST



R.O.M.E.O.S. (Retired Old Men Eating Out Someplace) and J.U.L.I.E.T.S. (Joyful Understanding Ladies Inconspicuously Eating Together Someplace) will meet for breakfast at the **Sky View Café, Punta Gorda Airport**. Meet us at **8am on Thursdays, March 12th and 26th**. Come and enjoy the food and fellowship.

THE SECOND CUP (OF COFFEE)



The Second Cup Bible Study discussion group, led by Dave Sifferd, resumes on **Thursdays, March 12th and 26th at 9:15am** in the Conference Room.

GAME FELLOWSHIP



Game Fellowship is held **Thursdays from 10am to Noon** in **Fellowship Hall**. Join us to play or just to observe.

ADDRESS & EMAIL UPDATE



Please advise the church office when you change your mailing and/or email address. Thank you.

COMPUTER AVAILABLE FOR YOUR USE



We've set up a computer in the Conference Room for those of you who need the use of one. It has high-speed internet access and is available during office hours. We suggest that you call ahead to reserve time.

CHURCH LIBRARY



Need a good book to read? We have a wide variety of books including a large assortment of Christian Fiction. Please stop by, take a look, and check one out!

SPONSOR SUNDAY FLOWERS



The cost to sponsor flowers is **\$37.50**. To make a donation, please sign up on the sheets in the church foyer. You may list the flowers in honor and/or in memory of something or someone. When you sponsor flowers for a Sunday and would like to take them with you after the service, please stop in the kitchen after the last service and see the deacon in charge that day.

FURRY FRIENDS



Please remember our furry friends! In Fellowship Hall there is a green tub where you can put dog and cat food, animal toys, and gently used blankets and towels. Donations are sent to the Animal Shelter.

MEET OUR OFFICERS

ELDERS



DEACONS

Nancy Beasom — Fellowship	505-9383
Rich Harris — Property	629-8336
Jean LaMantia — Ministry	525-4266
John Evans — Discipleship	616-551-6438
Bruce Peters — Administration	352-552-2324
Ron Sixt — Property	607-742-4385
Gail Thornton — Clerk & Missions	916-1726
Diane Culver-Truby — Worship	637-7407
Don Washabaugh — Worship	255-8616

Laurel Aumend — Flowers	625-5238
Margie Smith — Prayer Shawls	833-0185
Bev Brady — Communion	843-838-9021
Phyllis Ehrhardt — Visitation	863-884-7489
Helmut Ehrhardt — Helping Hands	863-884-7489
Kay Callahan — Loaves and Fishes	916-9252
Marj Haun — Communications	661-2881
Lynn Lang — Library	979-7238
Jean Cleffi — Kitchen	639-6395

MEET THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN STAFF



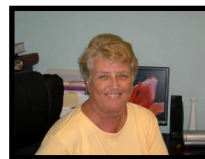
Pastor
Barksdale Pullen
bmpullen3@fpcpunta.org



Office Manager
Debbie Rostad
debbie@fpcpunta.org



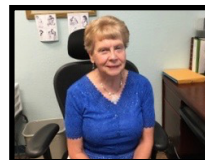
Choir Director
Joan Byron
jfbbyron@comcast.net



Secretary / Treasurer
Gail Thornton
gthorn1941@aol.com



Organist
Stephanie Smith
mornsun381@gmail.com



Volunteer Office Assistant
Billie Sixt



Volunteer Office Assistant
Bonnie Brown



25250 Airport Road
Punta Gorda, Florida 33950

Telephone: (941)-639-1959

Email: first@fpcpunta.org

Website: www.fpcpunta.org

OUR MISSION AND PURPOSE

LOVING...GROWING...GOING...in JESUS!

Loving...God and others through worship and fellowship.

Growing...in our understanding Jesus' and God's purposes for us through Bible study, and developing our ministries to serve God and others.

Going...into God's world with His message of love and salvation through Jesus Christ, and with His ministries of compassion and mercy.



ECO

A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians