

# **FIRST PRES**

March 2018



Growing Generations  
in Christ

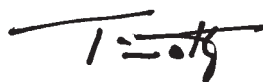
## Dear First Pres,

It's a blessing—a rare one in our culture—to walk into church on a Sunday morning and see five generations of faces. To look down the pew in worship and see a grandfather, his son and his grandson all worshipping together. To baptize a man and his two young daughters, while his parents look on. First Pres is rich with generations. It's one of our greatest strengths.



One of the privileges and responsibilities of our walk with Jesus is passing the faith from one generation to the next. In Galatians 4:19, the apostle Paul describes his desire to see new generations of believers growing in Christ. He says he wants it so badly that it *hurts*—the task is that serious! In this issue of *First Pres Magazine*, you'll catch a glimpse of several ways our congregation is working to pass on the faith. Will you be part of that effort? I invite you to actively watch for new ways to give yourself away for the next generation.

Yours in Christ,



Tim

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## FIRST PRES MAGAZINE

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## On Your Hearts



Hear, O Israel:

The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

# BUILDING A FAMILY MINISTRY

**M**ost every morning at First Pres I see families coming and going from our church campus. Some of these folks are becoming familiar to me as I also see them on Sunday mornings. Other folks I only see during the week—beautiful children, hopeful parents—all wanting the best for their families.

What a wonderful opportunity we have to make an impact on families, not only in our faith community, but also in our neighborhood. I'm excited about the idea that we are called to do both. We are committed in all that we do—whether with children, teenagers or parents—to warmly welcome and invite families to Jesus and to First Pres.

## A Plan of Action

The class I just finished teaching as part of this spring's **Growing Together Wednesdays** (GTW) has explored both the biblical principles behind our mission of helping families draw closer to Christ and some of the practical ways we live it out. We've been laying a foundation: what can we glean from Scripture about parenting? About the basic workings of a family? How did God put families together, and how do they run when they are centered on Him?

We've also been surveying child development from preschool through young adulthood. How do children grow? How do we grow in our relationship with them and begin to connect them to a relationship with God? How do we launch them into a faith in which they're standing firmly on the Rock with their own two feet?

When we look at the journey of parenting children from cradle to career and at the **Discipleship Pathway**, it's quickly evident that the two can fit together. Nurturing children and nurturing faith go hand-in-hand. And these are not jobs just for parents—they are jobs for all of us. A strong Family Ministry provides resources to help kids grow in their

faith and to help parents be the primary disciplers of their children.

## Leading Kids Along the Discipleship Pathway

As I have come into my new role here at First Pres, I have approached the work through the lens of the Discipleship Pathway. Everything from our nursery and preschool experiences all the way up through what we're doing with college students can be done intentionally using this model. Everything we do can help move folks from Community Member to Participant, from Participant to Worshiper and from Worshiper to Active Disciple as we take part in the rhythms of discipleship.

We've been asking, "How do our preschools connect Community Members to the family of faith at First Pres?" Providing the service of preparing kids for kindergarten is important, but we have a greater mission—to constantly serve those who come to us in a way that's welcoming and invitational. They're here for preschool, but they're being invited to step onto the Discipleship Pathway.

The same principles apply further along the pathway. We're taking a team of 10 high school students to the Dominican Republic again this year (see page 7), and I'll be part of that trip. If we intentionally view it as an Active Disciple opportunity, we'll be much more effective at helping teens take in that experience in a way that grows their faith.

The Discipleship Pathway provides a framework for everything we do. We're using it to evaluate all of our offerings for children, youth and parents. We remember that this *is* a model. It helps us evaluate why we do what we do. It's not a linear process where everyone needs to be in lockstep, but it can help us be united on where we invest our time and resources, and still be nimble.

By Tom Pipkin,  
Pastor for Family Ministries

### Equipping Parents

The second layer of a vibrant Family Ministry is coming alongside parents and equipping them to be the primary disciplers of their families. As I meet with Katie Fowler, Pastor of Discipleship, and others in the adult discipleship area, we're discussing how we shape adult discipleship to equip parents to disciple their families well. Everything from **Adult Sunday Communities** to **Life Groups** to **GTW** can contribute.

This model of interdependent, multi-generational discipleship isn't common in the American church, but I believe it's vital to our success at passing the faith along to the next generation. How is God calling you to be involved in building a thriving family ministry at First Pres?

### Coming Up

#### What's in the immediate future for Family Ministries?

- ✂ **Student Ministries** is actively moving forward under the leadership of Allen Hunter. We've got open positions posted for full-time high school and middle school ministry associates (see [www.first-pres.org/jobs](http://www.first-pres.org/jobs)). We're building a called, energetic team to do this exciting work together.
- ✂ Confirmation classes coming up in April and May are a terrific opportunity for our Student Ministries team and families to partner together for our kids' faith. Students can sign up for this five-week class, during which they'll study the foundations of the Christian faith together on Sunday mornings, then discuss them throughout the week with their families. The class culminates with Confirmation on Sunday, May 13, in worship. (See [www.first-pres.org/confirmation](http://www.first-pres.org/confirmation).)



# SUMMER FUN



## Upward Bound Overnight Camp

**June 3 to 8 at Camp Elim** - 5 p.m. Sunday to 4 p.m. Friday

Incoming 3rd through 6th graders

Cost: \$400 before March 29; \$425 before April 27;

\$475 after April 27

Questions: 884-6126

Enjoy swimming, archery, skits, campfires, crafts, the zipline and the obstacle course, plus great food and a great camp staff. Draw closer to Christ through Bible study and time with your counselors and friends in your cabin. This could be the best week of your summer!

## Student Life Mission Camp

**June 18 to 22 in Estes Park, Colorado**

Incoming 9th through outgoing 12th graders

Cost: \$450

Questions: 884-6221

Join hundreds of students from across the country at YMCA of the Rockies for fun, food, friendship, energetic worship and afternoons spent in service right here in our own state.



## The Great Escape

**June 24 to 29 in Gunnison, Colorado**

Incoming 6th through outgoing 9th graders

Cost: \$499

Questions: 884-6221

Middle school students from around the U.S. converge at Western State Colorado University for activities, skits, great worship music, awesome speakers and the beauty of the mountains. You don't want to miss this week of growing in Jesus together.

Summer is the perfect time to try something new, to take a step closer to Jesus and a step into community. Which of these awesome opportunities will your family choose?

Register for any of these events at [www.first-pres.org/summer](http://www.first-pres.org/summer).

## **Vacation Bible School & Mini Camp**

**July 9 to 13 in the Worship Center 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

Ages 4 through incoming 4th graders

Cost: \$10

Questions: 884-6126

Come explore the Miracles of Jesus through Bible study, singing and service projects. Bring your friends and neighbors and introduce them to Jesus' miraculous love too! Two- and three-year-olds can enjoy Mini Camp in the Ark Room during the same hours for \$50 for the week.



## **Serving Springs**

**July 9 to 13 at First Pres and around town 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Incoming 5th through outgoing 9th graders

Cost: \$100

Questions: 884-6221

Serving Springs is a week of impact, fellowship, fun and service. Fifth through ninth graders are a vital part of VBS, leading younger kids to know Jesus better. After VBS finishes each morning, we fill the rest of the day with food, fun and service to various mission partners around the City. Come find out how amazing it can be to pour yourself out on behalf of others.

## **HSM Dominican Republic Mission**

**June 1 to 10**

High school students

We're in our sixth year of partnering with Camp Pico Escondido, a Young Life Camp that has been reaching Dominican teenagers for Jesus since 2003. We will serve by doing work projects to help improve the camp, worship with local teens and stay two nights in homes in the community. This team is already full, but you can pray for our high school students as they go!





MORE

# SUMMER FUN



## Upbeat Camp

June 18 to 22

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

Incoming 3rd through 8th graders

Cost: \$100 before March 29;

\$110 after March 29

Questions: 884-6126

Upbeat Day Camp is perfect for kids who love to sing, dance and act. Campers learn and perform an entire musical in a week that's also full of fun, friends, exciting games and growth in Christian faith.

## String Camp

July 16 to 20

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday

Advanced musicians in middle school through college

Cost: \$90

Questions: 884-6113

String Camp offers young musicians a week of expert instruction at a fantastic price. It's a unique opportunity to grow as a musician and learn to play as part of an orchestra. Three orchestras of different skill levels will rehearse as a large group, in smaller groups and as individuals. Camp will conclude with the performance of a Friday evening concert.





These music and art adventures are held right here on our campus. Come give God glory through art and music as you learn from exceptional instructors. Register for any of these opportunities at [www.first-pres.org/summer](http://www.first-pres.org/summer).

## Handbell Camp

July 9 to 13

9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday through Friday  
Beginning to advanced musicians in 3rd through 12th grades and beginning adults  
Cost: \$20  
Questions: 884-6113

This fun and unique music camp serves as an introduction to handbell ringing, as well as a concentrated time for advanced ringers to improve their skills. Ringers will receive expert instruction and prepare for a concert on Friday of camp week. **New this year:** we are adding an adult segment, in which adults with little to no experience can begin learning to play handbells.



## Fine Arts Workshop

July 16 to 20

9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday through Friday  
Beginning to advanced artists in middle school and high school  
Cost: \$85  
Questions: 884-6113

The Fine Arts Workshop gives middle school and high school students the chance to express themselves in a variety of media. From drawing to painting, 2-D to 3-D, artists will explore the partnership between art and faith. It is in our DNA to be creative, and our experienced camp staff will help campers tap into that desire. Students will have a chance to display what they've learned in an Art Exhibition on Friday.



# GIVE back the BLESSING

Laura Mueller,  
Mission Support Program Coordinator

Every year our Palm Sunday worship includes a special offering called **Give Back the Blessing**, designed to infuse one local and one global mission partner with the extra support they need to launch an initiative, finish a project or create big impact in the sphere of influence where God has placed them. Each year, the process of choosing recipients is a prayerful one, conducted in tandem with our mission partners—learning from them and following together where the Lord leads.

This year, both recipients are making great strides in support of families—one in Colorado Springs, one in Mongolia. We're thrilled to come alongside them.

## ABOUT OUR RECIPIENTS



### The Family Connections Center at the Helen Hunt Campus

God is doing incredible things in the Hillside neighborhood of Colorado Springs. The building that was once Helen Hunt Elementary is now a hub for families experiencing crisis or in need of support. The Family Connections Center, a part of Catholic Charities of Southern Colorado, is one of five organizations housed at the Helen Hunt Campus. All of the organizations work together to help families move out of crisis and toward long-term stability.



**John and  
Margot Lane,  
The Lane  
Foundation**

The history and the leadership of the Helen Hunt Campus both have strong First Pres ties. When Helen Hunt Elementary was set to close in 2016, Margot Lane—a long-time First Pres member—purchased the campus through the John E. and Margaret L. Lane Foundation and renovated it into this new community resource. Michelle Swanson, previously a member of the First Pres missions staff, is the Director of the Family Connections Center.

Our **Give Back the Blessing** offering will accomplish two specific things for the Family Connections Center. First, our contribution will help furnish a safe, welcoming common area for families to use as they take steps toward their goals. This “family room” is more than just a space for couches and chairs, but it is a place where FCC clients can take their first steps toward success.

Second, the offering will help fund an emergency apartment where families experiencing homelessness can spend from three days to three weeks as they receive life coaching and wait for longer-term housing. Meeting our funding goal of \$60,000 will underwrite the costs of the emergency apartment for three years.

**Family Connections Center Goal: \$60,000**





### Homebuilders Resource Translation through Mongolia Campus Crusade for Christ

Families in Mongolia face many factors that negatively impact their health and stability. Alcoholism, poverty, absent or distant fathers and difficult living situations all mean that many families are hurting and in need of support. The Mongolian Church has an opportunity not only to address these needs, but to set an example within their culture of what a healthy family centered on Christ can look like. The church can become the place where families can build healthy, long-lasting relationships.

**Homebuilders** couples groups are an effective tool that our partner, **Mongolia Campus Crusade for Christ**, is using to support the rebuilding and stabilization of the Mongolian family. These Homebuilders groups allow families to be in community and learn together what it looks like to live a Christ-centered, healthy marriage which, in turn, impacts the whole family. More than 30 groups have already launched, and they are making a difference, but they are working with just two out of seven available resources translated.

The **Give Back the Blessing** offering will fund the translation and contextualization of the remaining five resources, plus support existing groups and launch new groups for four years.

**Homebuilders Goal: \$16,000**

**Will you be part of this around-the-world effort to strengthen families for generations to come? Designate gifts toward Give Back the Blessing in worship or online. Learn more at [www.first-pres.org/blessing2018](http://www.first-pres.org/blessing2018).**

## Outreach at First Pres

In any given year, First Pres' outreach giving totals between 15 percent and 17 percent of total income. In 2017, First Pres outreach-related activity totaled \$1,364,478, or 17 percent of all dollars given to the church for the 2017 financial year. Outreach activity includes specific ministries, designated missionary and organization support through our Sunday Communities, disaster relief such as funds raised in 2017 for Hurricane Harvey relief work in Houston and for Santa Rosa, California, fire relief. Outreach activity also includes the **Give Back the Blessing** offering, proceeds raised through the **Something Significant for Christmas** catalog and designated missions support funds from the First Pres Foundation.

**International Partnerships** are in Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, India and Mongolia.

### Local Partnerships include

Catholic Charities of Southern Colorado  
Dale House  
Ecumenical Social Ministries  
Family Life Services  
Family Mentor Alliance  
Fostering Hope  
Greccio Housing  
Habitat for Humanity  
Hope & Home  
Family Promise  
Life Network  
Lutheran Family Services  
Mission Medical Center  
Panorama Middle School  
Partners in Housing  
Pikes Peak Academy  
Springs Rescue Mission  
Thrive  
Urban Peak  
Young Lives

# With Gentleness

**“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”**

– 1 Peter 3:15

**Y**ou sit down over a cup of coffee with someone who doesn’t believe in Jesus. The conversation turns to matters of faith. Here’s a chance to share the hope you have! But how do you do so with gentleness and respect?

The **Alpha** and **God Questions** teams here at First Pres have had dozens of conversations with skeptics and seekers alike. Our experiences have taught us about the opportunities and pitfalls surrounding faith conversations. Here are a few things we have learned.

## **Pray!**

This may seem obvious, but don’t take it for granted. We don’t bring people into the Kingdom—only God does that! So any effort to share the Gospel must be rooted in prayer. When you find yourself in a faith conversation, pray silently. Invite God into the conversation. Be attentive and follow the Holy Spirit’s direction.

## **Let the Relationship Lead**

Remember that the person sipping coffee across from you is made in the image of God. He or she has dignity, value and a perspective unlike any other in the world. If God wants a personal relationship with this person, so should you!

Let the relationship take the lead. If you’re talking with a stranger, learn about his life. If the person is a friend or family member, simply seek to love her with no strings attached.

Don’t minimize the importance of investing in these relationships. In their book *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*, Don Everts

and Doug Schaupp share their findings from more than 2,000 interviews with skeptics who came to faith in Christ. They discovered that non-Christians today often cross five thresholds on the journey to Jesus. The first threshold is simply learning to trust a Christian. This means that earning a person’s trust by being a friend to them is a *significant* first step towards Jesus!

## **Listen Honestly**

*Listen to the people entrusted to your care. Listen to them until you can hear the longings and losses of their lives.* Dr. Scott Cormode, one of my professors at Fuller Seminary, repeated this phrase until it was seared into my brain. It is fantastic advice for faith conversations.

Listen to the person in front of you. What does he care about? What does she yearn for? How has life wounded him? Where do you see the image of God in her? Listen closely, and you can detect evidence of the Spirit’s work in every life.

## **Build a Bridge**

When it comes to sharing the Gospel, the American Church no longer has “home field advantage.” There’s no guarantee that people understand what we mean when we use words like *sin*, *grace*, *faith*, *law*, *church* or even *God*.

We have to adopt the mindset of missionaries and learn how to communicate the good news on the mission field, because that’s where we live now!

If you’ve done the hard work of letting the relationship lead and listening honestly,



# and Respect

Chuck Fowler,  
ECO Candidate  
for Ordination

you've got a head start. Now find common ground and build a bridge.

Maybe he doesn't buy the idea of *sin*. But you hear something in his voice that revolts against injustice. Start there! "God hates injustice too—because God loves the world he created. But even our own hearts are poisoned by injustice. Do you live up to your own convictions about justice?"

## Foster Curiosity

Think about how Jesus approached conversations. Rarely did He give direct answers to the questions people asked. Instead, He responded by answering questions with more questions or by telling provocative, sometimes cryptic, stories. Have you ever stopped to wonder why? I think one of the reasons is that Jesus was fostering curiosity in his listeners.

Sometimes giving answers too quickly or too plainly can cut off conversations. Try responding to a tough issue with a question that drives the conversation deeper. Or see if there's something you can do or say that challenges the other person's presuppositions.

Giving closed-end, pat answers may feel safer than provoking curiosity and letting your friend wrestle with the questions that arise. But here we have to trust the Holy Spirit to do the work we can't.

## Point to Jesus

As Pastor Tim has said, every conversation about faith is really a conversation about Jesus. When we're talking over coffee, there are thousands of faith topics that can come up.



But ultimately, if we don't get to Jesus, we don't get anywhere.

We have to point to Jesus! This can be as simple as one sentence, or it can be a conversation that you pick up again and again for months. The bottom line is that your abilities will never bring anyone to Christ. Only Jesus can reveal Himself. Some of us get to plant, and others will water, but God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Take a moment right now to pray for people in your life who don't know Jesus. Ask for opportunities to share the Gospel with gentleness and respect.

*Want to have more intentional conversations with non-Christians? The Alpha Course and God Questions are two great places for seekers to explore. The Alpha team is currently looking for new leaders who can help give direction to future courses. Contact Pastor Katie Fowler to express your interest.*

# LIFE GROUPS



## A CHAIR AT THE TABLE

If there's one thing churches are known for, it's potlucks. Maybe we find it easier to focus on the Word with a full stomach, or maybe we receive love through the food that means so much to us. Whatever the reason, food is a universal signal to come together in friendship and fellowship. That's the strategy my **Life Group** has been

Todd Naevestad  
Assistant Editor

using to make connections easier between people who didn't previously know each other. Everyone contributes to the meal. Then, around the table with emptied plates, we open our Bibles and begin to open up to one another.

There's some fear in joining a new small group. No matter how outgoing we are, meeting new people can be uncomfortable. We don't know how open we can be with one another or how vulnerable we can make ourselves, even around the study of the Bible. Are our experiences with God similar to those of others? Will sharing a personal story open me up to criticism?

But we can't understate the necessity of small groups. It's human nature to want to connect with others. God made us relational beings. A common thread for both the leaders with whom I spoke and the participants in this spring's newly formed Life Groups is that they are seeking real, honest connections with people in the body of Christ.

### Life Group Leader Stories

Carolynn Halton and her husband Chris lead one of the new adult groups. Carolynn tells part of their story: "We gave the idea some thought and decided to volunteer as leaders to build deeper relationships with other First Pres members and to deepen our understanding of our faith." Carolynn goes on to say that these relationships, even in their newest form, are essential to understanding God better. We may read and study the Word on our own, but our perspectives will only take us so far. When we include others, with their life experience and their interpretations, we can learn so much more.

That's why Life Groups are important, says Carolynn. "Learning from others—hearing about their struggles and successes and how they have relied on God—bonds people together in a way



which can't be achieved through corporate worship alone."

Life Groups are about more than just creating friendships and hearing others' stories. They're a step of faith, even for the leaders. Leigh Saulsbury leads a group of women and has felt God work on her as a leader, as much as on the group. Leigh explains that she had never led a group like this before and had some reservations about it. But God was at work. "I know it sounds cliché," says Leigh, "but I felt God put people on my heart to invite to the group." A few weeks in, Leigh believes the small group of women have begun to better understand each other. "We have not only a love of Christ, but some similar life experiences as well. I learn from these women as I listen to their hearts. The Life Group is really good."

### The Call to Connection

That same desire to be connected is what ended up putting me at a dinner table with 12 people I didn't know, sharing a meal with them and discussing the Bible. I was brand new to Colorado Springs—maybe two weeks in—and I made the jump to try a Life Group. I wanted to plug into something that would make this strange new place feel more like home.

Part of the initial appeal was the diversity of the group. The fact that I could browse a catalog of groups for different demographics helped me find a group that fit me. That first night was awkward, as initial meetings can be, but understanding that everyone was there for the same reason helped us get through our initial hesitation. Some people knew each other; most didn't; and we were all there to find a community that held faith in high regard and allowed us to be ourselves. Sitting around the table, empty plates and open Bibles in front of us, it grew easier to say what was on our minds, to talk about our Scripture passage, to answer questions, to be wrong at times. It didn't feel like a stiff class, but enjoyable company.

Jesus invites us to the Lord's Supper, to communion, to His table. He knows how people connect at the table. Life Groups, whether they share a meal or not, embody His call to connection. It is through our relationships with each other that we see God more clearly and deepen our relationship with Him. We are all made in His image and act as a reflection of His love to those around us.

*Life Groups are groups where we know each other, pray meaningfully for each other, study the Word and apply it to our lives and live out our faith together. Interested in joining the next wave of Life Groups? Sign up for the Life Groups mailing list at [www.first-pres.org/lifegroups](http://www.first-pres.org/lifegroups).*



# Did Jesus really come back from the dead?

**Sunday, March 25**

Palm Sunday Concert  
4 p.m.

**Monday, March 26**

Guided Reflection Service  
12 p.m.

**Thursday, March 29**

Maundy Thursday Communion  
7 p.m.

**Friday, March 30**

Good Friday Ecumenical Service  
12-3 p.m.

**Sunday, April 1 | EASTER WORSHIP**

6, 7, 8:30, 9, 10, 11 & 11:30 A.M.