

FROM THE PASTOR

May 15, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Sunday I preached about another Hebrew name for God in the Old Testament, Jehovah M'Kiddish, "I am the God who sanctifies you." The message was titled, "God's Path to Change." We looked at how sanctification is how God is changing each one of us into become more and more like Jesus. We looked at three aspects of how God changes us and now I'd like to give you one more to think about.

In order to cooperate with God in this process of change, we need to "ask God to help with our roadblocks." Roadblocks are areas of life that slow down movement. They bring to a halt the change God wants to bring in our lives. For many, roadblocks are sometimes hidden and they are silent but they're very, very real. 2 Corinthians 7:1 tells us, "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence or awe for God." What are the things that contaminate our character? What stunts your spiritual growth? Here are some thoughts: pride, gluttony, lust, overspending, anger, too controlling, stealing, gossip, or criticism.

Some of the problems that are in our lives are so serious that we can't handle that problem on our own. We need to ask God for help. We need supernatural intervention by the hand of our sovereign God to take the roadblock and remove it. God is our only hope.

Proverbs 28:13 tells us, "People who cover over their sins will not prosper but if they confess and forsake them they will receive mercy." Do we want God's mercy for an area in our lives that we can't control? We need to humble ourselves and ask for it.

What's happening this week at FPC Napa:

- Session meets tonight at 7:00 p.m. Please pray for us as we meet to do the business and ministry of the church.
- Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. the Bible study will continue with 1 Samuel 8 as our text. Israel asks for a King is the topic of study. Come and join us in Room 6, the Adult Education Room.
- Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m., the Pastor Nominating Committee meets. The FPC Napa Church Information Form has been sent to Louisville, KY and resumes are already coming in for the PNC to look over. Please keep these nine members in your prayers.

- Sunday, May 20, I'll be preaching from Judges 6:22-24 on "God Is My Peace." I hope to see you there.

Scripture to ponder: Ephesians 4:22-24

Have a great week and know that God loves you!

Chris

May 9, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I hope you had a nice weekend last week. The weather has been especially beautiful. It's been a little cooler in Oakland which makes the evenings bearable.

Last Sunday I preached on letting God heal our hidden wounds - the hurts in us that others have caused that still haunt us. God is our Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. Jesus can heal the hidden hurts in our lives. I gave you three principles to think about. Here's a fourth principle: *Replace Old Tapes with God's Truth*. Our brains take in every experience we have in life, even the lies that were told to us. Unfortunately, we have a tendency to act on those lies which results in doing things that defeat us. Romans 12:2 teaches us, "Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God can make us into a new person by changing the way we think. Here's how: Ask God to heal those memories that hurt, those open wounds in my heart. Then, we need to fill our minds with God's Word. We need God's truth in our mind. The more we get into the God's Word, the more we build our lives on truth, the more we replace all the lies. We get into the Bible by reading, studying, hearing, memorizing and meditating it. The last thing we can do is to believe the truth from God's Word about us. Ephesians 1:4 tells us, "For he (God) chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love..." Once we come to faith in Christ we are blameless in his sight. That's how God sees us. Without a single fault. God sees us this way because of what Christ's love has done for us on the cross and through His resurrection. Everything we have done wrong is erased by God and he says, "We're going to start over." Do you believe that? God's says that about you and that's good news. Ephesians 1 has a lot to say to us about how God now sees us. Replace those old defeatist tapes with the truth of God's Word. It'll change your life.

Upcoming events:

- Thursday, May 10, is the **Rev. Bollinger's funeral service** at 1:30 p.m. at FPC Napa. There will be a reception following the service. Come and celebrate one

- of our pastors of old who is the second longest tenured pastor who served at FPC Napa.
- Saturday, May 12, is **Work as Worship**. Please come starting at 8:30 a.m. to help keep our old building going.
 - Sunday, May 13, is **Mother's Day**. We'll be celebrating Mother's Day during both worship services. I'll be preaching on Leviticus 20:8, "I am the Lord who sanctifies you." Hope to see you then.
 - Also on Sunday, May 13, the **Presbyterian Women's Honorary Life Membership Award** will be presented at the beginning of the 10:30 a.m. service.
 - **Small Group Bible Studies** for the summer of 2012 begin in mid-June and finish up by Labor Day, September 3, 2012. Each group will meet at least six times with four meetings focused on Bible Study (Gospel of Mark) and prayer, one meeting as a fun/fellowship event, and one in doing a corporate "act of kindness." There will be a Bible study offered on each day of the week. Sign up between services on Sundays or call the office to sign-up or ask questions. This is a great opportunity to get to know the Lord better and make a new friend or two.

Scripture to think about: 1 Peter 2:24

Serving the King,

Chris

May 2, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Sunday was a great time of food, fellowship and worship. A special thank you to all the deacons who provided us with food for the continental breakfast before the worship service. You did a great job and we appreciate you very much.

Sunday before I left home for church I was reading my Bible and came across Psalm 53:8-9, "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. *And I will hope in your name, for your name is good* (italics my own)." One of God's names is Yahweh Shammah, "I am there." This gave me great encouragement as I readied myself to preach on hope as one of our deepest needs in life. God's promise to always be present in our lives gives us hope no matter what situation we are facing. God is not passive but actively working in ways we don't always see. Be encouraged this week! God is always with you and He will not forsake you. The two verses concerning hope that I encouraged you to memorize are: Isaiah 41:10 and Psalm 32:8.

The following is information for the rest of this week in the life of our church family:

- Saturday, March 5, at 3:00 p.m. will be Trink Bullard's memorial service at our church. Everyone is invited and there will be refreshments following the service in the Fireside Room.
- Sunday, March 6, we return to two worship services with communion. I will be preaching on "God as Our Healer" from Exodus 15:22-27. Hope to see you there.
- Sunday, March 6, will be part two of our Inquirers/New Member's Class from noon until 2:00 p.m. Please contact the office by noon tomorrow if you are interested. Take this class now and then part one in the fall.
- I invite you to check out our Facebook page. The link is www.facebook.com/fpcnapa. Different items will appear throughout the week.

May God bless you this week as He loves and cares for you with His presence.

Chris

Week of April 23, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

It's good to be back. I had two wonderful weeks off—one week vacation and the other study leave. I was able to spend some invaluable time with my family which I always treasure. I want to thank **Kevin Lester and Rev. Randy Young** for filling the pulpit for me while I was away. Thanks also to Lora and Laurie for keeping everything moving in the office (never a dull moment). We have a great staff and we need to continue to thank God for them, affirming them whenever we can.

This coming Sunday is a **single worship service** at 10:00 a.m. This will be a blended worship including elements of both Sunday services. We do this on occasion to bring everyone together for fellowship and worship. There will be a continental breakfast served at 9:00 a.m. in the gym. Tom Flesher will begin playing a prelude at 9:40 a.m. in the sanctuary. We ask that the children join their parents for worship and then after the children's message, they will go to Sunday School until 11:00 a.m.

I will be starting a **new sermon series** this Sunday called “God’s Response to Our Deepest Needs.” This week I’ll be preaching on God’s presence and hope in our lives. The passage will be Ezekiel 48:30-35. We’ll be looking at Hebrew names of God for five weeks and how who God is meets our needs. I hope to see you there. Thank you to those of you who continue to keep me in your prayers.

Session will meet tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. Please keep us in your prayers as we oversee the work of our church.

I’ve been out of the loop but want to acknowledge the death of two of our saints, **Carl Hagelin and Joan Nagle**. This reminds me of Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” What a privilege to have known this brother and sister in Christ. Please keep their families in your prayers as they adjust to life without Carl and Joan.

I want to share with you some **insights** I’ve had from the NIV Daily Bible reading. First from Day 110, Deuteronomy 32:45-47 – “When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. **They are not just idle words for you—they are your life.** By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.’” While meditating on this passage I focused on the bold words above. Is the Word of God my life or are they idle words? Am I growing in my relationship with God as I read His word? Do I live my life according to the principles God has given us? Something to ponder.

Also, in Deuteronomy 34, Moses dies on Mount Nebo. I find that every time I read Exodus through Deuteronomy, I get to know Moses a little better. He has become a friend and mentor to me. His death always leaves me a little sad as I know our journey together has ended. But now we are with Joshua. God says over and over to him in the first chapters of Joshua “Be strong and courageous!” We need to be strong and courageous in living our lives for God, for the Lord our God will be with us wherever we go (Joshua 1:9).

I hope you have a wonderful week and I hope to see you this coming Sunday at 9:00 a.m. for a continental breakfast, followed by the worship service at 10:00 a.m.

In His Service,

Chris

Week of April 2, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

What wonderful Palm Sunday Services we enjoyed Sunday morning! The choir and children processing, the music, prayers, Scripture readings, sermon, Lord's Supper and offerings all contributed to making the services very meaningful. Thank you to all who were involved. We can't do this without you.

Also, thank you to everyone who contributed to 40 Days of Kindness. What a gift to see God work through our church family to be a blessing to people all over the world. And thank you to all who presented these opportunities to us. Let's continue doing Acts of Kindness to the world in which we live. It'll make a difference.

We're now in the middle of Holy Week. I want to invite and remind you of the worship service schedule for the rest of the week:

- Thursday, April 5, **Maundy Thursday Service** at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. This will be a combined Maundy Thursday/Good Friday service as we celebrate our salvation in the Lord's Supper and remember what Jesus did for us on the cross with the Cantata. The choir, soloists and readers are ready for this special service. Please come and join us.
- Friday, April 6, **Good Friday Service** at noon at the United Methodist Church courtyard. There will be a good number of Napa churches involved in the stations- of-the-cross and brief Good Friday Service in their sanctuary. Should be powerful. Hope to see you there.
- Sunday, April 8, **Easter Services** will start at 9:00 & 10:30 a.m. This is one of the most beautiful services of the year. The choirs, bells, soloist and children's messages will bring so much to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. There will be no Sunday School as this is such a wonderful family worship service. Come early, bless and be blessed.
- Please **pray** for all who are involved in these three important services around the Passion of Jesus. We need your prayers.

I will be on vacation and study leave for the next two weeks. **Kevin Lester** will be preaching on April 15 and **Rev. Randy Young** on April 22. Please pray for the guest preachers as they bring God's Word to you.

I met with the Wednesday morning Bible study today and asked them a question: What do we have to offer the world that no other organization can? There is much good being done in our world by non-profit organizations and the like, but what makes us different? The answer is Jesus Christ! What we, the Church, have to offer the world is Jesus Christ. No other non-Christian organization can claim that. That's what Easter is all about; offering the world the Good News of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. In Christ we have eternal life and with Christ's power, a new life to live in this world. That's worth celebrating!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Resurrection blessings,

Chris

Week of March 26, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I'll start my "Weekly Reflections" with a follow-up to yesterday's service. The Middle School youth were on winter retreat, Napa schools' started spring break (with some of our church families taking vacation) and Napa High's Chamber Group were on a trip to Spain. Our church members were everywhere! Thank you to everyone who filled in providing music for both worship services.

One follow-up from my message yesterday on "The Crucifixion: Why Jesus Had to Suffer." Saturday night, Margaret and I watched "The Passion of the Christ" and were distraught by the crucifixion scenes and its graphic depiction in the movie. It was an accurate representation of what Jesus endured. And it reminded me that sin is so serious to God that it costs life; that only through the shedding of blood is there restitution. God hates sin so much that its consequence is death; eternal death. But God loves us so much that He provided the perfect sacrifice to pay the debt for our sins, Jesus. We were bought with a price; the precious blood of Jesus. We are not our own, we belong to God, and eternal life is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord! As we enter Holy Week, may you experience the depth of God's love knowing the price that He paid so that we might be reconciled to God and enjoy Him forever. "Amazing love, how can it be, that God would shed His blood for me."

What to remember for this week:

- Wednesday night is our final **Spring Rest Stop**. Come and enjoy delicious food and fellowship at 6:00 p.m. and join us at 7:00 p.m. for a women's Beth Moore Bible Study or how God teaches Jonah about love or yoga for the soul. You'll be glad you did.
- Friday and Saturday night, starting at 7:30 p.m., walk or drive by the church and see the lighting of our **stained glass windows**. It should be beautiful.
- **Sunday, April 1, is Palm Sunday**. Please remember to bring your fish boxes full of coins and donations for One Great Hour of Sharing. This is a tremendous kindness that we can provide through the PCUSA to help the poor and those involved in disasters worldwide.
- Over the next two Sundays we'll be using the **Connection Cards** to enable us to connect with everyone who worships with us. Please fill out these cards on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. This will help us bless our guests.

Next Sunday, April 1, I'll be preaching "**What Is on God's Heart**" from Luke 19:28-40. The children will be part of the early service, along with celebrating the Lord's Supper. Hope to see you then.

Easter Week Services:

- Palm Sunday Services – 9:00 & 10:30 a.m. Sunday School and youth meet.
- Maundy Thursday Service – 7:00 p.m. Communion and Choir Cantata.
- Good Friday Service – 12 noon, "Stations of the Cross" Walk. Meet at First United Methodist Church in their courtyard.
- Easter Sunday Services – 9:00 & 10:30 a.m. Invite your family and friends. There will be no Sunday School for children or youth.

Scripture reading: Romans 5:6-11 – Jesus atones for our sins.

Have a great week.

God loves you!

-- Chris

Week of March 12, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

We are in the middle of Lent and if you're like me it is going fast. I chose to give up sweets during Lent to not only clean out my body of sugar, but more importantly, to draw closer to God. There is no biblical support for Lent but it is a wonderful time of preparation for Holy week and the great sacrifice of our Lord. If I don't seem to be a ray of sunshine, I hope you'll understand. It's the sugar. :)

This Sunday, I'll be preaching on "Triple Jeopardy" from Luke 23:1-25. Please keep me in your prayers as each week I bring the Word of God to you. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously. One of my favorite verses that I pray for myself and others

concerning preaching is 2 Timothy 2:15. Your prayers are appreciated, especially during Easter Week.

Tomorrow night is Wednesday and that means REST STOP. I know you will not want to miss out on the delicious food and great classes. Come at 6:00 p.m. for dinner and/or 7:00 p.m. for classes (Jonah, Beth Moore series or yoga). So far, it's been a lot of fun. Hope to see you there.

This Sunday, March 18, is the annual Pancake Breakfast to raise funds for Camp Scholarships for our youth this coming summer. It runs from 8:30 – 11:00 a.m. in the gym. Summer camps get so much more bang for our bucks spiritually. Young people's lives change more at camps than any other setting. So, please come out and support our young people and eat all the pancakes you can handle.

This Sunday we'll be hearing from the Samaritan Family Center of Napa during Moment for Kindness in our worship services. 40 Days of Kindness continues with donations to V.O.I.C.E.S during the offering. What a privilege to help the young people of Napa. Thank you ahead of time for your contributions to this worthy cause.

Last week I in my message I talked about how our fears can lead us to make wrong decisions. The Sanhedrin feared Jesus because he threatened their power and religious base. They feared him so much that their fear turned to hate and their hate turned to violence against Jesus. This is true today as we see so much hatred and violence in our society and world. The root of this is fear and 1 John 4:18-21 gives us the antidote for fear. I encourage you to read and meditate on this passage. May the Lord bless you as you read His Word.

Have a great week and remember, God Loves You!

In His Service,

Chris

Week of March 6, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Thank you to all of you who helped with **Work as Worship** last Saturday. Much was accomplished in the gym bathrooms and church offices as well as other completed projects. These special days are a great way to keep up our beautiful church facility and to build relationships with others in our church family. Thank you to the Trustees for

putting this on and overseeing the projects. Also thank you to the cooks who prepared lunch for the hungry workers.

What's next for **40 Days of Kindness**? This Sunday, March 11, we are supporting Napa Emergency Women's Services by bringing women and children's full size shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, bar soap, disposable razors. We'll be hearing about V.O.I.C.E.S. this Sunday for our support the 18th. What a privilege it is to use the resources God has given us to help others. Thank you to each of you who have given so that others may be blessed by God.

I continue the **Lenten Preaching Series**, "The Last 24 Hours of Jesus' Life" this Sunday looking at Mark 14:53, 55, 61-68, 70-72, "What Is Your Verdict about Jesus?" I'm really enjoying this series as we work through the 24 hours of Jesus' life that changed the world. I look forward to seeing you this Sunday.

Have you ever thought about the characters in the last 24 hours of Jesus' life? We have a tendency to want to condemn the **Jewish religious leaders** for how they treated **Jesus** as well as **Peter** for denying Him three times? But is there some of us in each of them? What can we learn from both groups about ourselves that God may want to reveal to us and perhaps change? Let's gather together this Sunday and see what God will do in our lives as we interact with God's word. God won't disappoint us.

Here are the events coming up over the next couple of weeks:

- Wednesday night, **Spring Rest Stop**, is happening this week. 6:00 p.m. for dinner and 7:00 for classes. Dinner is \$5.00 per person. Last week we had ribs and other delicious foods. What will our chefs come up with this week? Can't wait to see!
- Friday night, March 9, is **Friday Night at the Movies**. Come at 6:00 p.m. for pizza and salad in the Fireside Room. Cost is \$5.00 per person. The movie, "**The Help**" will be shown at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. If you aren't able to attend the dinner, please come for the movie. All are welcome.
- Sunday, March 11, is the **Inquirer's/New Member's Class** from noon – 2:00 p.m. Lunch and childcare are included. If you are interested in finding out what it means to be a Presbyterian Christian, I hope you'll join us. Please register by calling the church office (224-8693).
- Sunday, March 11, is the **Family Fun Event at Scientopia** from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$7 per child, adults are free. I like the look of that. Friends are always welcome. Just come and have some cool science fun.
- Sunday, March 18, is the **Pancake Breakfast Summer Camp Scholarship Fundraiser** from 8:30-11:00 a.m. in the gym. Come and support our children and youth as they raise funds to attend Christian summer camps. Camps are life-changing experiences our young people will go through that will help their Christian walk during the teenage years and beyond.

Remember, God loves you! Have a great week. See you soon.

Grace & Peace,

Chris

Week of February 27, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

We're in the throes of "40 Days of Kindness". Last Sunday we received contributions to Rebuild Southern Africa Association to purchase blankets for HIV/AIDS orphans and adults living in poverty in South Africa. This coming Sunday, March 4, we'll be receiving food for The Table (large cans of vegetables, fruit, and tomato products; gallon size zip lock bags; bottle salad dressing; 15 oz. cans of kidney and garbanzo beans; instant mashed potatoes). Thank you for your generosity and kindness in supporting these ministries.

Here is a list of activities coming up this week:

- * **Wednesday night Spring Rest Stop*** -- The meal is at 6:00 p.m. and the classes begin at 7:00 p.m. This is the first week of classes and all are welcome to attend. I'll be teaching a class on Interpreting Scripture in the 21st Century. We'll be studying the Book of Jonah. Hope to see you at Rest Stop.
- * Friday, March 2, is the final day to donate stuffed animals and small toys for Dr. Adrian Fenderson to take on his upcoming mission trip to South Africa. The stuffed animals must be 6" or less in size. Please bring them by the church office.
- * Saturday morning, March 3, is "**Work as Worship.**" This is an opportunity to contribute to the upkeep of our church facility. It starts at 8:30 a.m. If you can't help at 8:30 a.m., please come when you can. The volunteers will be there throughout the morning.
- * **Presbyterian Day School job opening** -- We are seeking a new director of our Presbyterian Day School. Any active member of our church family interested in this position should contact the church office for an application, job description, and qualification criteria.

This coming Sunday I'll be preaching on "Alone with God," the second week of my Lenten series, "The Last 24 Hours in the Life of Jesus." The Scripture is Luke 22:39-48. We'll be celebrating the Lord's Supper as well. Hope to see you there.

I've been studying the **life of Jesus** during his last week in both my sermon series and Wednesday morning Bible study. I've been moved by Jesus' faithfulness to complete his mission despite the obstacles placed before him.

- * He knew his disciples would abandon him.
- * He knew one of the twelve would betray him.
- * He knew that Peter would deny him three times.
- * He knew that Satan would tempt him in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- * He knew he would suffer and die a terrible death on the Roman cross.

I remember a Robert Schuler quote from many years ago, "There are times in life when we need to go through the crucifixion to get to the resurrection." Hebrews 12:2-3 has been a very meaningful Scripture for me concerning this. "Keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Life can be hard, but let us keep our eyes on Jesus that we may see his resurrection power at work in our lives so that we will not grow weary and lose heart. There is always hope with Jesus.

Have a great week and I hope to see you soon. God loves you!

In His Service,

Chris

Week of February 20, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Lent begins Ash Wednesday of this week, February 22nd. We begin this season of preparation for Christ's suffering, death and resurrection with a Rest Stop **potluck soup dinner** in the gym at 6:00 p.m. and an **Ash Wednesday service** in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. Rest Stop Wednesday will go on for the next six weeks. **Classes** will begin on February 29th. Please sign-up for classes and meals by calling the church office or registering on Sunday morning between services.

I'm starting a **new five week Lenten series of messages** this coming Sunday titled, "The Last 24-hours of Jesus' Life." February 26th we'll be looking at Luke 22:14-23, "From Slavery to Freedom."

- There will be a collection during the offering to purchase wool blankets for poor children in South Africa through **RSAA** during the service. The average blanket costs around \$20. Envelopes will be in the bulletin. Thanks for considering this.
- We'll be hearing from Kathi Moore and **The Table** ministry this Sunday.
- Both of these are part of 40 Days of Kindness through our FPC Napa missions committee.
- Please be praying for 40 Days of Kindness that we would make an impact on Napa and the world for the Kingdom of God.

Two other events are coming up this weekend that might interest you:

1. **Presbyterian Women's Baskets and Blessings** will be this Saturday from 10 am – 1 pm in the Fireside Room. For more information, please call the office.
2. **Family Fun Event** of bowling is this coming Sunday afternoon. For more information, please contact Jane Roscoe at the church office or Kevin Lester. All are welcome.

I mentioned last week that I would conclude the summary of the **Book of Job** from the One Year Bible reading. Here it is:

- God Answers Job (Job 38:1-41:34). God himself finally answered Job. God is in control of the world, and only he understands why the good are allowed to suffer. This only becomes clear to us when we see God for who He is. We must courageously accept what God allows to happen in our lives and remain firmly committed to Him.
- Job Is Restored (Job 43:1-17). Job finally learned that when nothing else was left, he had God, and that was enough. Through suffering, we learn that God is enough for our lives and our future. We must love God regardless of whether he allows blessing or suffering to come to us. Testing is difficult, but the result is often a deep relationship with God. Those who endure the testing of their faith will experience God's great rewards in the end.

Verse to ponder: Galatians 6:9-10. A good 40 Days of Kindness verse.

Have a great week and remember God is good, all the time. See you Sunday if not sooner.

In His Service,

Chris

February 14, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Happy Valentine's Day 2012! Strange how it feels a lot like 2011's Valentine's Day. I regress. A friend of mine opened my eyes once to Valentine's Day when I asked him how he was going to celebrate this day with his wife. He said, "Every day is Valentine's Day with my wife." Good reminder.

I want you to know how pleased I was with the Church's Annual Meeting on Sunday. There was plenty of delicious food (thank you to those who contributed) and the meeting went smoothly, finishing at 1:00 pm on the dot. How blessed we are to have the leadership we have to lead us forward in 2012. Thank you to all who lead.

I want to mention one of the ministry opportunities coming up with 40 Days of Kindness. I'm going to promote this as it was in the bulletin on Sunday.

- Do you enjoy reading to children? Remember how magical it is? Spend a half hour one day a week reading to a child at Shearer Elementary School and open their world to a lifetime of wonder through reading. Sign up between services in the courtyard on February 12 & 19. Readers are needed Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 12:00 – 12:30 pm & 12:30 – 1:00 pm. For more information contact Elizabeth Bosch, elizabethbosch@comcast.net.
- I thought of how many of us could take part of our lunch hour during Lent to help a child with their reading? We give back to your community when we do a kindness like this to help our children.
- Please seriously pray about doing this for the six weeks of Lent. Contact Elizabeth for more information.

This Sunday I'll be preaching on Luke 10:30-37, the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan in relation to 40 Days of Kindness. Please pray for me this week that the Lord will give me the right words to proclaim this Sunday.

Next Wednesday, February 22, is Ash Wednesday and our first Spring Rest Stop at 6:00 p.m. We'll open with a potluck soup supper in the gym followed by worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 pm. Hope you will join us.

I mentioned last week that I would give the last two breakdowns of the Book of Job. I will take that up next week and leave you with a verse to ponder: Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Have a great week and I'll see you this Sunday, if not sooner.

Blessings in Christ,

Chris

Week of February 6, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I want to start off my weekly reflections by giving a possible outline and summary of the **Book of Job** through chapter 37 which many of us are reading from the One Year Bible. This comes from my Life Application Study Bible, which I have found to be a very helpful resource for understanding Job.

A. Job is tested (1:1-2:13): Job, a wealthy and upright man, lost his possessions, his children, and his health. Job did not understand why he was suffering. Why does God allow his children to suffer? Although there is an explanation, we may not know it while we are here on earth. In the meantime, we must always be ready for testing in our lives.

B. Three friends answer Job (3:1-31:40): Job's friends wrongly assumed that suffering always came as a result of sin. With this in mind, they tried to persuade Job to repent of his sin. But the three friends were wrong. Suffering is not always a direct result of personal sin. When we experience severe suffering, it may not be our fault, so we don't have to add to our pain by feeling guilty that some hidden sin is causing our trouble.

C. A young man answers Job (32:1-37:24): A young man named Elihu, who had been listening to the entire conversation, criticized the three friends for being unable to answer Job. He said that although Job was a good man, he had allowed himself to become proud, and God was punishing him in order to humble him. This answer was partially true because suffering does purify our faith. But God is beyond our comprehension, and we cannot know why he

allows each instance of suffering to come into our lives. Our part is simply to remain faithful.

Next week, I'll finish with what happens to Job when God speaks to him and his friends.

This coming Sunday, February 12, 2012, is a very important Sunday in the life of our church. The **Annual Meeting** will take place in the gym following the second service. The meal is a potluck of salads; please bring a favorite salad to share with the rest of our church family. If you go to the first service, please come back at 11:45 a.m. to hear about all that is happening in the life of our church. There is even a place in the agenda for questions to be asked by the church family. The theme is Celebrating 2011 as we look forward to 2012. Annual Reports are available in the church office if you didn't pick one up yesterday following the church services. We have them available before the meeting so you can read through the report to be ready for our time together next Sunday. I hope to see you there.

The **2012 Spring Rest Stop** planning team is taking reservations for those who are planning on attending. Rest Stop starts February 22nd with a light dinner in the gym and an Ash Wednesday service in the sanctuary. More information can be found on the church website.

I'll be **preaching** from Proverbs 3:9-10 next Sunday. I've titled the message, "How to Be a Generous Person." **I'm wondering if there is anyone who is generous who would be willing to give a brief testimony (I'll help you) during both services next Sunday.** Please respond to this email if you are willing. I always look forward to seeing you on Sunday mornings, if not before then.

Have a great week! God loves you!

Chris

Week of January 30, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

This is the Tuesday edition this week of my "Weekly Reflections." There are a couple of events that took place recently that I want you to know about.

- Last Wednesday evening the **Round Table Discussion** was invaluable as there were wide spectrums of ages in attendance. This provided wide-ranging input concerning significant events in the life of our church family. Thank you to those who attended.

- Saturday was a full day as the deacons held a retreat in the morning and there was the Soute Memorial in the afternoon. The **deacon's retreat** went very well as the dialogue around this important ministry of our church was a "teaching moment" for many of us. We are very fortunate to have each person who serves on the Deacons Board. The care that they provide for so many in our church family is mostly unnoticed but so appreciated. Thank you to every deacon serving our church family.
- The **Evie Soute Memorial** was special as there was special music provided from her homeland in Indonesia. The potluck reception afterwards had her native foods as many who came were from Indonesia and knew Evie well. The faith in Jesus Christ that these brothers and sisters in Christ demonstrated was very encouraging. Thank you to the deacons who oversaw the reception.

Over the next three weeks I'll be **preaching** on three different topics about three areas in our church family that are essential to the on-going life of FPC Napa. This coming Sunday, Feb. 5, is communion Sunday and I'll be preaching on "Worship." The passage I'll be preaching from is Romans 12:1 and I hope to see you then. Please keep me in prayer as I continue to seek the Word of God that God would have me proclaim to you.

This Wednesday, February 1, will be my **final Round Table Discussion**. It will be held in the Fireside Room at 10:00 am. I asked the Wednesday morning Bible Study group to join us for this one week alternative. The reason for this hour of the day is to accommodate those who may not want to go out at night. I hope you will join us tomorrow morning. Please pray for our time together that God would be glorified.

Sunday, February 12, FPC Napa's Annual Meeting and Lunch will take place immediately following the second service in the gym. The office staff is planning on having the **Annual Report** available for you this coming Sunday so you can read it, be informed and ready for our time together the following week. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Annual Report.

Next Sunday, February 5, is **Super Bowl Sunday**. I'm grateful that it's being played in the afternoon so we can come together in the morning to worship God and pray for our favorite team.

Have a great week and remember God will never leave you nor forsake you.

Serving Christ,

Chris

Week of January 23, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I'm glad to report that **Sarah Lester** has given birth to her and Kevin's son, Soren Lester, who was born yesterday afternoon. Kevin emailed this information while in need of much sleep so this is all the information I have at this time. Please continue to keep the Lester's in prayer as they enter into this wonderful adventure called parenthood. Kevin will be away for a couple of weeks, but in preparing for this time, he put together a plan for Youth Group and second service music to continue. Congratulations to the Lesters.

Session had a retreat last Saturday and we reviewed much of FPC Napa's church family life including selecting committee team leadership roles. We had healthy dialogue throughout our time together and I feel we're ready to move forward in 2012. Please continue to pray for the leadership of our church as we meet tomorrow night for our regular monthly meeting. We have a number of items of importance to look at and need your prayers. We are fortunate to have such committed, gifted and faithful people serving as leaders in our church.

Our **deacon's ministry** will be having a ½ day retreat this coming Saturday morning. Please pray for us as we spend time together looking at the responsibilities of the deacons and how we can better serve and care for our church family in 2012. I have been very impressed with our deacon's ministry and look forward to our time together.

Next Sunday will conclude my series on "What God Wants for Us in 2012." We'll be doing a verse analysis on Romans 6:23, which I've titled, "The Bridge to God's Love." This is the third component from my sermon yesterday on "Loving All People." I hope to see you this Sunday.

One **application** from my sermon yesterday is for our church family to hear people tell their story of when God's love came down in their lives. If anyone is willing to share their story with some assistance from me during one of our upcoming worship services please reply through this email address. I look forward to hearing from you.

I want to share with you a **few thoughts** that came out of our session retreat during our time of devotions. We looked at Isaiah 43:18-21.

- God is doing a new thing in our midst (vs. 19). We are in transition between permanent pastors and God is at work doing something new among us. Do we perceive it?
- God provides water in the desert and streams in the wasteland to give drink to his people (vs. 20). The situations around us may be parched of God, but Jesus is our "Living Water" and as we drink of Him our thirst is quenched and we find nourishment for our souls.

- God has formed us for Himself (vs. 21). We are created by Him for Him. Why? So we can proclaim our praise. We are created to worship God.

May each of us know God's love and faithfulness in our lives this week

Chris

Week of January 16, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I hope you are having a nice Martin Luther King weekend. Some of you may have attended the **MLK service** last night at the Methodist Church next door to us. I was told that some of our youth were singing with the Napa High Chamber Choir. I'm confident it was a great service.

One of the highlights from yesterday's worship services was the welcoming of **three new members** (Nancy Richardson, Allan and Mary Ann Moss) to our church family. It's always very positive to have people commit to our local body of believers. I hope you get the chance to get to know them. They're wonderful people.

Yesterday's application for the sermon on "Loving One Another" was to pick one of the "one anothers" from the power point to work on this week with the help of the Holy Spirit. I'm praying that the Lord will work this out in our lives as we continue the journey of loving one another as the family of God.

Next Sunday I'll be preaching from John 3:16-17 which I've titled, "Loving All People." There is a video that will be shown that is real powerful and will be part of the message. I hope to see you there.

I need to ask for **prayer** for a couple of upcoming events in the life of our church:

1. Please pray for session as we are on retreat Saturday. Pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as we interact with one another concerning 2012.
2. Our church family has lost a couple of saints who have gone to be with the Lord (Evie Soute and Leona Cole). Please pray for the families and friends of the deceased for God's comfort and peace. Evie's memorial will be on January 28th at 2:00 p.m. in our sanctuary.
3. Please pray for Sarah Lester as she and Kevin are expecting their first child anytime.

Those of you who are reading the **One Year Bible** with me read today about Jacob wrestling with God (Genesis 32:22-32). What's always impressed me about this passage is while they are wrestling, the man asked Jacob what his name is and then changes it to Israel. Jacob means "deceiver" which he was and now his name is Israel, "he struggles with God" which he continues to do. This is not the first time he struggled with God. God is always in the process of changing us. His love and holiness demands it. Jacob needed a new name as he returned to the Promised Land. God used the 20 years in Haran to mold Jacob into one of the three Patriarchs of Israel and now as he returns he has an appropriate name to take him forward. God is in the process of changing each of us into the man or woman of God that He wants us to be so we can move forward with the plan and purpose He has for our lives. May it be for His glory.

Passage to ponder this week: Philippians 2:2-3

Blessings in Christ,

Chris

Week of January 9, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

I want to give you a follow-up to my message to you yesterday concerning loving God more in 2012. I came across this in my studies and thought it might minister to you as we think about drawing closer to God this year.

Gary Thomas, a friend of Rick Warren, raised the question, "Since God has intentionally made us all different, why should everyone be expected to love (worship) God the same way?"(1) Gary has discovered that for 2,000 years Christians have used many different paths to enjoy intimacy with God. In his book Sacred Pathways, Gary identifies nine ways that people draw near to God:

- *Naturalists love God best when they are outdoors.*
- *Sensates love God best when all their senses are engaged.*
- *Traditionalists love God best when they are able to stick close to ritual, symbols, and familiarity.*
- *Ascetics love God best in solitude and simplicity.*
- *Activists love God best when they are battling injustice and evil.*
- *Caregivers love God best through caring for those who hurt.*
- *Enthusiasts love God best by experiencing celebration.*
- *Contemplatives love God best through adoration and meditation.*

· Intellectuals love God best when their mind is fully engaged.

Did you find your favorite approach to loving God? Have you figured it out yet? It is not about style. So what is it about? It is about how much of you does God have when you worship?

I've been pleasantly surprised by the number of One Year Bible's that were purchased for use this year. We ordered 64 and had two left as of the second service yesterday. God has used this Bible reading tool to not only draw me closer to Him but to help me see how God works through different people and scenarios of life. My prayer is that you would fall more deeply in love with Jesus this year through interacting with God's word.

Next Sunday I'll be preaching on "Loving One Another" from John 13:34-35. If you want to read in preparation for the message, please read John 13:1-17. Part of our time together next Sunday will be welcoming three new members into our church family. How exciting this will be on the heels of ordaining and installing church officers yesterday. God is at work in our midst.

Thank you to those of you who signed up for this Wednesday's Round Table discussion from 7-8 pm. For those of you who would like to sign up for this Wednesday or for the 25, Feb. 1, or Feb. 8, please call the church office at 224-8693. Your participation is appreciated.

Please pray for your staff and session as we seek to listen to God and lead our church family forward in 2012. Also, continue to pray for the PNC (Pastor Nominating Committee) that the Holy Spirit would move mightily in them and through them as they work together in seeking God's best pastor for FPC Napa.

Scripture to think about: Romans 13:8-10

Have a great week and I hope to see you Sunday!

Blessings,

Chris

Week of January 3, 2012

Dear Church Family & Friends,

Happy New Year!

It's great to be back after being away with my family for a week. We celebrated wonderful Christmas Eve services and a much quieter Christmas Day service with the FPC Napa church family and friends. Thank you to everyone who contributed to a very festive celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. A special thank you to Rev. Linda Powers for filling in for me on New Years Day. I have heard nothing but kudos for Linda's sermon and leading of worship.

This coming Sunday, January 8th, I'll be starting a new sermon series called "What God Wants for Us in 2012". I'll be looking at the text from Mark 12:28-30 which I've titled "Loving God." We'll also be ordaining and installing church officers for 2012 during the service. I hope to see you Sunday.

This coming Saturday the Dorothy Estenson Memorial will take place in our sanctuary at 2:00 p.m. All are invited. There will be refreshments after the service.

This Sunday, January 8, from 2:00 – 4:00 pm will be the first Family Fun Event for 2012 at Rockzilla. Please contact Jane Rosco mat children@fpcnapa.org, for more information.

Next Wednesday, January 11th, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. I will be moderating the first of four Roundtable Discussions around historical significant events at FPC Napa. The other dates are Jan. 25, Feb. 1, and Feb. 8. The purpose is to look at what has contributed to who we are today as the FPC Napa church family. I hope you will join me as this will be helpful for the PNC and leadership in our church. Please sign-up by either calling the church office at 224-8693 or email Laurie Vigoda at secretary@fpcnapa.org. Thank you for considering this.

I started reading my One Year Bible on January 1st. It's been great reading God's love letter to humanity through different parts of the Bible. What's nice about this Bible is that anytime in the year you can begin your reading. There are still a few Bibles available in the office for \$5 if you are interested. Reading today in Genesis 6 about the shape the world was in when Noah was alive are the following descriptions: wickedness, evil thoughts all the time, Lord was grieved and pained, corruption and a world full of violence. What a sad state of affairs the world was in that God would choose to wipe it out and start all over again with Noah, his family and the animals on the ark. The world then didn't have a chance, but today we have Jesus as our Savior and deliverer. We can find refuge in Him from sin and death and can bring hope to a world that needs God's love through Jesus Christ. The world's only hope is Jesus.

Please pray for our church staff as we being a new year full of promise and opportunities. May God richly bless, equip and embolden them as they co-labor with our church family in the work God has called us to do. We have a great staff and we need your prayers.

God bless you!

Chris

Week of December 19, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

We are down to the home stretch this Christmas season. Six days until Christmas and we have much to celebrate and look forward to:

- All **75 gift cards** were purchased by our church family for the VOICES Christmas party last Thursday evening. Thank you to everyone who contributed to make this Christmas a little more special for a young person in our community.
- The **Christmas brunch** was fantastic. Thank you to all who made this delicious and successful. God has blessed us with wonderful talented people.
- 32 **One Year Bibles** were sold during the lunch yesterday with many more people wanting to purchase one. I have ordered more and they should be here in time to have them available Christmas morning after the service in the library. They will also be available on New Years Day after the service in the library. If you want to stop by the office during the week, we'll have them available there as well starting Dec. 28th. The cost is \$5.00 per Bible.

Just as a reminder, here is the worship schedule for the next couple of weeks:

- **Christmas Eve** services are at 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The 5:00 service is the Family Service with the Children's Christmas play as the highlight. The 7:30 service is the traditional Candlelight service. I've heard these two services are well-attended so come early to get the seats you desire.
- **Christmas Day** is on Sunday this year and there will be a 10:00 a.m. single service.
- **New Years Day** is also on a Sunday this year and there will be a 10:00 a.m. single service with communion. What a great way to start off the New Year.
- The **Sunday Children's Program** will be taking a two week break on December 25th & January 1st. **Childcare** will be offered during the worship services.

Christmas Eve I will be preaching from Luke 2:10-11, 14, "God's Christmas Gift to You." Sunday morning, Christmas Day, I'll be doing a meditation on Luke 2:17-20, "Treasuring Christmas in Our Hearts." I hope to see you at this weekend's services. If not, I pray that God will give you safety and good health wherever you may be.

I want to share with you a wonderful story I heard from one of our church family. She was going through rehab in her living facility and had a roommate in her room. One day her roommate was having a tough day and so our sister-in-the-Lord asked if she could read the day's Advent devotional that she received from our church. The roommate said sure and the devotional was read and lifted her spirits. Our sister-in-the-Lord is going to follow-up with this lady in the future to see if she has a church home. I praise God for the courage she had to be a blessing to her roommate; Christ was proclaimed and this roommate was blessed. That's what life is all about for us. That's what Christmas is all about.

Merry Christmas to you and your families and remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of December 12, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

What a wonderful weekend for our church family—Voyagers Christmas party, Nameless in Napa Christmas Party and two wonderful worship services well attended. God is good.

Yesterday, I preached on "The Gift of Blessing." I was so encouraged when someone mentioned to me that their young family member was very compassionate and she was going to give a blessing to that young person. I love it when application takes place from God's word. This coming Sunday, I'll be preaching on "The Gift of Second Chances" from Luke 1:57-66. I hope to see you then.

I want to thank those of you who have returned the VOICES Star gift cards. Those of you who are still planning on turning in gift cards, they are needed before Thursday as the Christmas party is that evening. Thanks again for blessing the youth in Napa.

The Christmas brunch will be served this coming Sunday from 9:30 am – 11:00 am in the gym. Jay and Madonna will be cooking and you don't want to miss this. One Year Bibles will be on sale and sold at the brunch for \$5 each.

The annual Christmas Joy offering will be received in both services this coming Sunday, Dec. 18th. This offering goes to help supplement retired pastors and missionaries as well as help assist funding ethnic colleges. There will be a special offering envelop in the bulletin this Sunday. Thanks for considering this.

Sunday afternoon at 2:00 pm in the sanctuary, the Napa High School Chamber Choir will perform their annual concert. It is free and refreshments are served afterwards. I've heard that some of our own youth will be involved in the concert and that it's outstanding. Hope you can make it.

Thank you to those of you who have turned in your pledge cards for 2012. If you are still planning on turning one in, please drop it by the office or place it in the offering plate.

Last week I taped a radio interview for KVOM that I was told would be broadcast this coming Friday at 9:00 am. Turn on your radio and hear what I have to say.

Scripture for this week: Numbers 6:22-26.

Remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of December 5, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

20 days until Christmas Day. Just thinking about all that needs to happen between now and then can be mind-boggling. Yet, with God's help and good time management we can get truly celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Son of God.

Yesterday, I preached on "The Gift of Miracles" from Luke 1 when the Angel Gabriel visits Mary to proclaim God's favor on her and her selection to be the mother of God's Son, Jesus. Our God is truly the God of the impossibilities. I suggested a number of applications to experience God's miracles in our lives:

- Read through the Bible in a year and experience God through His word.
- Pray a genuine and heartfelt prayer daily, "Lord, use me this day."
- Be obedient to God in areas of reconciliation, helping someone in need and letting people know that God loves them and forgives them through Jesus.

This coming Sunday, December 11th, we'll look at the next "Great Gift for Christmas." Luke 1:39-45 is the story of Mary and Elizabeth I've titled "The Gift of Blessing." I hope to see you Sunday as we look towards the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Christmas is the theme for the church activities coming up this week:

- Tomorrow, Tuesday, the **Presbyterian Women Cookie Wrap** takes place in the Fireside Room at 9:30 a.m. All women are welcome.

- Friday, December 9th, is the last day to support this year's **Alternative Gift Market**. Gift cards for ministries like Heifer International and Habitat for Humanity may be purchased through the church office through Friday.

- **Voyagers Christmas party** for singles and couples of baby boomer age are invited to the home of Don and Patti Ridenhour at 6:30 p.m. on December 10th. They ask that you RSVP by Dec. 6th at 80schick@prodigy.net to indicate whether you will bring an entrée, side dish or dessert. A \$10 wrapped gift gets you into the gift exchange.

- **Nameless in Napa** is our fellowship for 50 year olds + and they are having a Christmas party on Sunday, December 11th, at 6:00 p.m. at Pat Wolfe's home. Bring hors d'oeuvre to share, beverage of your choice, and a \$10 gift card (per person) for the kids at The Wolfe Center. RSVP by Dec. 7 to Pat at wolfe@napanet.net.

- **The V.O.I.C.E.S. ministry** to emancipated foster youth in Napa is having a Christmas party at our church on Thursday, December 15th. Salads and rolls are needed as well as three volunteers to help serve. Contact the church office if you can help.

- **Take a Star** is an opportunity to bless Voices youth by taking one of the stars off the tree located in the church office during the week or the narthex on Sunday and purchasing a \$20 Target or Wal-Mart Gift Card. Return the Gift Cards and stars to the office by Dec. 12th.

Any of these is a wonderful way to share Christmas joy. I hope you will prayerfully consider one or many of these opportunities to join in.

Verse to ponder: "...with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26b

Blessings,

Chris

Week of November 28, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

I hope everyone had a pleasant and festive Thanksgiving Day. We watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, a little football and enjoyed having Margaret's side of the family over for a fabulous meal and family time. We're still eating the leftovers, but I think that's the best part of Thanksgiving—the food.

Yesterday was the first Sunday of Advent. It was wonderful having two of our families lighting the Advent candle, one in each service. The choir gave us a teaser for the Advent Choir Concert given later in the afternoon, and you could start feeling the beginning of the Christmas season coming upon us.

The Advent Choir Concert was excellent. Not only did we get to hear four choirs sing separately from the others, but when they came together for the cantata, what a tremendous full sound we experienced. Thank you to John Partridge, Tom Flesher and the choir for all their hard work. There were a lot of new faces in our sanctuary which is always great to see. A good start for the Advent season.

I started my new sermon series, "Great Gifts for Christmas" yesterday. We looked at the "Gift of Silence." Next Sunday I've titled the message, "The Gift of Miracles" from Luke 1:26-38. Please continue to pray for me as I bring the Word of God to our church family each week. I greatly appreciate it.

I want to say a word about how I approach preaching. I believe it is important for preaching to be for transformation; we are to become more like Christ. Looking at Jesus' sermons in the Gospels, I see him over and over again challenging people to action. Christians do things. I liked what I learned in seminary where we were taught that you always ask the question, "So what?" when you put a sermon together. It's not all about information. It's also about application. I have so appreciated when someone has told me that they have put something into practice from what they have heard preached or taught. May God continue to bless each message I put together for the edification and building up of the Body of Christ at First Presbyterian Napa.

Please continue to keep in prayer those who are sick, lonely and hurting during this Advent season. God is at work in our church family as individuals and as a whole. How great is His love for us.

Verse to ponder: "He must become greater; I must become less." John 3:30

Have a great week and we'll see you on Sunday.

Chris

Week of November 21, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

I hope everyone had a nice week. Fall is definitely here as the weather has cooled off considerably and the leaves are changing colors. I like this time of year because I can break out my sweaters to keep warm.

A number of events took place this past weekend that are of great encouragement.

- Saturday morning, eight of us went through CPR/AED (defibrillator) training. The church now has an AED machine at the front of the sanctuary near where the choir sits, near the door to the office. This gives the church one more aid in case of heart attack, stroke or unconsciousness.
- Sunday morning both services had the opportunity to share what we're thankful to God for in 2011. Thank you to those of you who shared. I came away thinking how much God does for us on a daily basis. He is good.
- I heard that the Friendship Class collected over 100 boxes for the Christmas Child Shoebox ministry. Hope to confirm this later in the week.
- Sunday afternoon, we had four people go through the Inquirer's/ New Member's Class. What a great time we had of food, teaching, questions and fellowship together. God is at work in our church and this is another example of His grace in people's lives. One common thread was shared about our church family from each of those attending; we are not only friendly towards one another, but also to our guests. It makes a difference. Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has returned their pledge cards. Our Finance team is putting together our 2012 budget and is appreciative of everyone's help.

Next Sunday, November 27th, is the beginning of Advent. What can we look forward to this coming Sunday?

- Children's Ministry will kick off Advent on Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. The Christian Education classrooms will prepare gifts, make crafts, and enjoy a time of fellowship as we anticipate with joy the coming of the Savior! Encourage the children to bring a friend.
- This Sunday, I'll be starting a new Advent sermon series called, "Great Gifts for Christmas." We'll be going through the Christmas story in Luke's Gospel, starting with Luke 1:5-25, the story of Zachariah ("The Gift of Silence").

•Sunday at 4:00 p.m. four church choirs, including ours, will be performing a cantata in our sanctuary. Plan on being there as there will be over 100 people involved. A \$10 donation is requested that will go towards the Table ministry.

This Thanksgiving I thank God for each of you and the positive impact you have had on my life these first four months. Let me encourage you to take a few moments this Thursday to go around the dinner table asking each person what they're thankful for over this past year.

Happy Thanksgiving! God loves you!

Chris

Week of November 14, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

Wow! Thanksgiving is only 10 days away. This Sunday, November 20, our focus during both services will be on giving thanks to God. My application will be you. I'm asking that you take some time this week and think about all that you are grateful to God for in 2011. There will be a time in the worship service for people to share God's blessings in their lives. I look forward to hearing about these blessings.

We have just concluded a very full season in the life of our church family. Thank you to everyone who made Rest Stop successful. Seeing how this was my first one, I was very impressed. Great food, classes, and fellowship. The Alternative Gift Market was quite the buzz yesterday and it was wonderful seeing people stepping up to further the Kingdom of God through the ministries showcased. Thank you to all who put this together. And yesterday afternoon, the Organ/Handbell Concert took place in the sanctuary. Thank you to all who made this possible. Whew!

Please keep your session in prayer as we meet Tuesday night. Also, your prayers are appreciated for the Pastor Nominating Committee as they meet for the purpose of eventually bringing the new pastor to First Presbyterian Church Napa.

As a reminder, First Presbyterian Church Napa serves at The Table on the third and fourth Wednesdays of each month. If you are interested in serving, please contact Caroline Spence.

Next Sunday, there will be a Congregational Meeting between services (10:05 a.m.) for the purpose of electing a new slate of officers and trustees for 2012. Please be present for this meeting as an encouragement to those who have agreed to serve.

After the second service there will be an Inquirers/New Member's Class from 12 noon – 4 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Lunch will be provided. If you or someone you know in

the church is not a member and would like to know what it means to be one, please join us. The time will go fast and will be enjoyable. If interested, please contact the office.

I know some of you will be traveling over Thanksgiving week and will be leaving this weekend. May God bless you with traveling safety, good times with family and friends, and a safe return home. We'll miss you and look forward to seeing you when you get back.

Verse to ponder: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of November 7, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

Wow! What a great weekend we had as a church family. Saturday was the Presbyterian Women's Gift and Collectible Sale, and Sunday was the single worship service with refreshments and fellowship before the service. Thank you to all who contributed in making both a success.

It was great to see everyone breaking breakfast bread and sharing life together in the gym yesterday. When I entered the sanctuary before the service started I could feel the energy that started in the gym carry over in the service. Once worship started, we were off and running. Those of you who stayed after the service for Laurie Vigoda's tour of the inside of the sanctuary were not disappointed. We have a rich history in which to be proud.

The sermon yesterday was on "Sharing Our Past Together." The Christian faith is abundant in history as we saw with the Israelites and the Church in Corinth. I'm often amazed how much we can learn about living a godly life from those who have gone before us. There is an attachment with this email from the Shown family on the application concerning temptation. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Next Sunday, November 13th, we'll be looking at "Sharing Our Gifts Together" from 1 Corinthians 12:3-20. If you get the chance, please read this passage ahead of time. Besides the worship service being back to normal times of 9:00 am and 10:30 am there is much going on that needs repeating:

- Alternative Gift Market will start at 9:30 am in the gym.

- Christmas Child Shoeboxes are still being collected through Sunday, November 20th. If shoeboxes are hard to come by don't worry, we put together 100 empty ones recently to be filled. Please bring what is needed for inside the boxes and the Friendship Class will put it all together.
- Pledge Card Sunday is Nov. 13th. Please prayerfully consider what your financial pledge for 2012 will be and either mail it to the office or bring it next Sunday to the worship service. We'll have a special time to receive them during the services. This will help session with preparing the budget for 2012.
- 4:00 pm is the Bell Choir/Organ concert in the sanctuary. I know people have been working hard to prepare for this. Hope you'll come and enjoy some great music and talent.

Sunday, November 20th, I'll be offering an Inquirer's/New Member's Class from noon until 4:00 pm (lunch is included). No charge, just come and learn about what it means to be a member of First Presbyterian Church Napa. It'll be fun and informative. Call the church office to register or fill out the insert in the bulletin next Sunday.

Fall Rest Stop concludes this Wednesday evening. I have enjoyed this immensely and hope you will come out for dinner or a class or both. Thank you to all who have made this a positive and worthwhile experience.

Coming up fast are the Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Years holidays. Please pray for our staff, leaders and me as we plan for celebrating these joyous events. It's a great time of year and there's much to do in preparing for it.

Here's a verse from Scripture to think about as we go about our lives this week. 1 John 5:21, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." Our God is a jealous God and He wants our complete devotion.

Remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of October 31, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

It was great seeing those of you who attending yesterday's worship service. A lot took place including an update from the Pastor Nominating Committee and our Trustees. What I want to remind you of from yesterday's message is the promise of God from James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you." That's where we'll find direction for the future, God and His wisdom; the same wisdom that gave us the message of the cross.

The Fall Rest Stop on Wednesday evenings is past the half-way point. We've had three delicious meals and wonderful classes to attend. It's never too late to join us. The classes are:

- "Living Histories at FPC Napa" with Harriet Nelson.
- "Growing in Christ" with Chris Gelini
- Knitting with the Esther Circle
- The children are preparing for the Children's Christmas Eve Program

Hope to see you Wednesday evening!

Saturday, November 5, is the Presbyterian Women's Gift and Collectible Sale in the gym from 10:00 a.m – 3:00 p.m. There will be homemade foods, collectibles and hand-crafted items for sale. Stop by, check it out and support our Presbyterian Women.

Next Sunday, November 6, I'll be preaching on "Sharing our Past Together" from 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. This will be a wonderful morning of fellowship and worshipping together. The following is the schedule for next Sunday morning:

- Session will serve a continental breakfast at 9:00 a.m. in the gym for everyone.
- Sunday School for the kids will start at 9:15 a.m.
- Tom Flesher will play an organ prelude at 9:45 a.m.
- The worship service is at 10:00 a.m. and will be a blend of traditional and informal elements. We will also celebrate communion together.
- Laurie Vigoda will give a tour of the inside of the Sanctuary at approximately 11:15 a.m. for about 20 minutes.

Also, next Sunday starts Daylight Savings Time. We set our clocks back an hour.

I'm very excited about next Sunday's service. My wife and daughter will be attending as well as my parents and sister. We're bringing our Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes

next Sunday as well. I can't fathom what it must be like for children all over the world to receive these shoe boxes of love and care from our church family and others. It may seem like a small gesture, but it's received with grateful hearts.

Looking forward to seeing you Sunday and don't forget to set your clocks back.

Remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of October 24, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

I hope this email finds you well. If not, please let us know at the office so that we can at least pray for you.

Yesterday, Sunday, was a very full day at FPC Napa. Our two worship services had a lot squeezed in for an hour service. We heard from our pre-school, children's and youth ministries and how God is blessing them through your support and prayers. We heard from a session member about session's decision to move forward with the seismic retrofit and the forming of a task force for the purpose of planning the capital campaign. If there are any of you who would like to be part of the task force, please feel free to contact anyone on session, including me.

I preached on "Discovering our Purpose Together" from 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. The main theme was that our purpose together is to be united in Christ and Christ alone (no preacher groupies). We are to be united on the essentials of our faith – Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We are to be gracious with the non-essentials of our faith. Next Sunday, we'll be looking at "Finding Direction Together" from 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Reading it ahead of time is a wonderful way to prepare for next Sunday's service. Hope to see you there.

John Partridge and the choir sponsored the fundraising "Ragtime Festival" and it went very well. Between the auditioning for participating in the Ragtime Concert, the cake walk, the Charlie Chaplin silent movie (with John playing the piano throughout) and the concert, the afternoon just flew by. Thank you and a job well done to the choir, bell choirs and all involved for your hard work.

I want to share with you an encouraging conversation I had with Laura Peters who was in the hospital for a knee replacement last week. She had shared with me how many people

she had talked about Christ with as well as our church. When I saw her before surgery that's what we prayed for together, that God would provide opportunities to talk about Him with others. God is faithful.

A reminder of the upcoming events in the life of the church:

- Fall Rest Stop continues Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm for meal and 6:45 pm for classes. The food has been great and so have been the classes. Come out and join us.
- Saturday, November 5th, is the Presbyterian Women's Gift and Collectible Sale from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at the church.
- Sunday, November 6th, is the combined worship service at 10:00 am in the sanctuary. 9:00 am is the continental breakfast. 9:45 am is Tom Flesher's organ prelude in the sanctuary. 11:15 am is the tour of the sanctuary by Laurie Vigoda. Please plan on being here. It'll be a wonderful time of coming together as the family of God.
- Sunday, November 13th, is Alternative Gift Market Sunday. This has been an incredible event for a number of years. Mark it on your calendars.
- Sundays, November 13th & 20th, we invite you to bring your Christmas Child Shoeboxes to the worship services. The Friendship Class is hoping for our church family to provide 100 shoe boxes this year.

I'll close with a Scripture to ponder: "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31

Have a great week and remember, God loves you!

Chris

Week of October 17, 2011

Dear Church Family and Friends,

I hope everyone had a wonderful week. We had a couple of firsts last week: Fall Rest Stop began and I started a new sermon series yesterday.

First, I'll share with you about the Fall Rest Stop. This was my first one and I had a great time. It was so wonderful to see everyone mid-week, sitting around tables breaking bread together. The food was delicious as advertized. Harriet's class on FPC Napa history was very well received as was my class on Maturing in Christ. The knitting class for Jesus can never go wrong. So, if you have been on the fence about coming this week, let me encourage you to attend. You'll be blessed if you do. A special thank you to all who are working hard to put the Fall Rest Stop together each week. Bravo!

Second, I started my new sermon series, Sharing in Ministry Together. We looked at 1 Corinthians to see what Paul had to say to the Church in Corinth about "Being Grateful Together." One of the things that stood out to me yesterday was being reminded of the

blessings we have as the Body of Christ; how God's grace is at work in our lives individually and corporately. Philippians 1:6 encourages us with these words, "...*being confident in this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completing until the day of Christ Jesus.*" This Sunday, October 23rd, we'll be looking at 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, "Discovering our Purpose Together." Please pray for me as I study and seek God's word for us this Sunday. Hope to see you there.

Speaking of Sundays...one of the encouragements I receive is when people apply what they hear on Sunday mornings. A number of you have commented on how you are trying to spend seven minutes a day with the Lord. I know God delights when we spend time with Him and it's good for us, too. It is in this time with God, that I receive much love, guidance and direction from Him. May God continue to bless you as you build this invaluable habit in your life.

This Sunday the Ragtime event and concert will be put on by our music department. Activities will begin at 2:00 pm, with the concert beginning at 4:00 pm. This is a fundraiser for the music department and I hope you will join me in supporting this important and vital ministry of our church. For more information, please call the church office (224-8693).

Also, this Sunday during our worship services we'll be hearing as part of our moment for stewardship from our pre-school, children's ministry and youth ministry about how God is at work in the lives of our young people. This is such an important ministry that we support in the life of our church. Please pray with me for God's hand to continue to bless our young people and the choices they make.

I just want to mention a few upcoming events to mark on your calendar:

- November 6th – 9:00 am Continental Breakfast, 9:15 am Sunday School for children, 9:45 am organ prelude by Tom Flescher, 10:00 am combined service with communion, inside-the-sanctuary tour following the service.
- November 13th – Alternative Gift Ministry, Christmas Child Shoeboxes, Pledge Card Sunday.
- November 20th – New Membership Class from noon-4:00 pm.

I thank God for you and pray for His grace, salvation and blessings upon your lives.

In His service,

Chris

Week of October 10, 2011

Hello Church Family and Friends,

Thank you for the positive response I received from many of you with my congregational email last Monday. Today I continue with what I hope will be a very helpful means of communication from me, your interim pastor.

Yesterday, I finished my sermon series on “How to Be the Church” by looking at Jesus’ seventh command, witnessing. This is always one of my more challenging sermons to proclaim because of my own journey with obeying Christ in this area. Yet, I have seen God’s power unleashed when I obey Christ in being a witness for Him to our broken and lost world.

After the second service yesterday, members of your session came together to pray for our church. Before we prayed, I shared with them that if each of us in the church invited one person to join them for a worship service, we would double our attendance. Did you know that a recent poll showed that 94% of people said they would go to church if someone invited them? Pretty amazing, huh? Food for thought.

Next Sunday, I will begin a new five-week series I’m calling “Sharing in Ministry Together.” We’ll be looking at Paul’s first letter to the Church in Corinth for our inspiration - looking at the importance of remembering who we are and what we are to do together during a time of transition. The message on October 16 will be from 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, “Being Grateful Together.” Please pray for me and I hope to see you next Sunday.

Yesterday we also heard about the Alternative Gift Market ministry that will be happening November 13. How great that we have the opportunity to participate in helping people all over the world through this outreach. If you have any questions, please call the church office for more information. Next Sunday we’ll hear about the Christmas Shoebox ministry opportunity from the Friendship Class.

The Stewardship campaign is in full swing. Bruce Riddell spoke in the service yesterday of the importance of planning our giving to God’s work through First Presbyterian Church Napa for 2012. Please be praying about this key area of our church life.

This Wednesday night, October 12, is the first night of Fall Rest Stop. I know that the people leading the classes have been preparing. The cooks are ready. We just need you to make it a fantastic evening of food, fellowship and learning. This will be my first Rest Stop and I’m looking forward to seeing you there.

This Saturday, October 15, the Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of the Redwoods will be meeting at our church for their fall gathering at 9:30 a.m. Lunch is \$10. All women are welcome. Please call the office to RSVP by the end of today, Oct. 10.

I'd like to close my email with a scripture for encouragement: *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

1 John 4:9

Have a great week and God bless you!
Chris Gelini, interim pastor

Week of October 3, 2011

Dear church family and friends,

This is the first of what I hope will be a weekly email from me on what is going on in the life of our church. Communication is so important for our well-being and this is one way I can contribute. I plan on focusing on what has happened and what will be happening in the near future.

Last Sunday, Oct. 2nd, we celebrated World Communion Sunday with our brothers and sisters all over the world. Oct. 2nd was also Peacemaking Sunday as we gave special gifts to the peacemaking efforts of the PCUSA worldwide. Thank you to all who gave.

I preached on the sixth command of Christ, "give." What we saw is that God calls His people to be generous with what He has provided for us. This Sunday winds up my series on "How to Be the Church" with the seventh command of Christ. Can you guess what it will be? I hope you will join us.

Starting Oct. 9th, the stewardship committee will provide an opportunity during the worship services to hear about ministries and areas of service going on within our church family. This is all part of the stewardship campaign as we look to plan financially for 2012 and beyond. Each Sunday through Nov. 13th a different area of our church will share about some ways we are investing into the Kingdom of God at First Napa. This Sunday, Oct. 9th, we'll hear about the Alternative Gift Market which will take place in November.

Fall Rest Stop begins Oct. 12th and will continue for five weeks through November 9th. You will have received a description of classes being offered in our recent October Seasons' newsletter. Dinner will start at 6:00 pm. with the classes following. If you would like to register or get further information, please call the office at 224-8693. The cooks and teachers of the classes would like to know if you're coming to help plan for the evening. Your assistance is appreciated. Let's all come together mid-week and break bread together. I hear the food is great and the classes will be excellent as well.

A final note: Please keep session in your prayers as they make important decisions concerning our church.

First Presbyterian Church Napa is a wonderful church family and I consider it a privilege to serve you and our Lord at this time in our lives.

Blessings in Christ and have a great week!