

FIRST PRESS NEWSLETTER



We are a welcoming community formed in Christ, committed to sharing his love with others – with feet that carry us out into the world, with hands that serve, and with hearts in fellowship and faith.

Dear Friends:

As a young adult, I thought there were certain things that had to be accomplished prior to becoming a parent. The list went something like this: own a home; have six months of income in the bank; take Lamaze classes; decorate and furnish the nursery; pick a name; start a college fund; update the wills; join a church; read the leading baby and child-rearing books; know all the answers and be able to anticipate all the problems; develop a unified philosophy of how to raise a child -- something both parents can agree on; purchase a car seat and stroller; and in those pre-cell phone days, rent a pager so I could be reached at the time of delivery.

As you might guess, upon the arrival of the first child, a number of items on that “to do” list had not yet been accomplished.

I now realize that if we had waited until we were ready, most of us would never have become parents. You can never be quite prepared enough. You can never know enough. You can never have it all figured out. You can never be mature enough. In fact, I said many times as I was raising my children, “By the time I get this parenting thing figured out, my work as a parent will be finished.” The thing about becoming a parent is: It’s less a matter of waiting until we’re ready. It’s more a matter of learning and growing as we do it.

So it is with the Christian faith. If we waited until we were mature in the faith to become Christians, we might never become Christians. It’s not so much a matter of being ready. Rather it’s more a matter of being willing - that is, willing to learn and grow as we live the faith. It’s a matter of trying and sometimes failing, then trying again.

Do you remember the time when Peter and the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water? Peter, in a moment of boldness, says: *Master, if it’s really you, call me to come to you on the water.*

Come ahead -- says Jesus.

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walks on the water toward Jesus. But then he looks down at the waves churning beneath his feet. He loses his nerve and begins to sink. *Master, save me!*

Jesus doesn’t hesitate. He reaches down and grabs Peter’s hand.

We can criticize Peter for his loss of nerve. But the truth is: at least he got out of the boat. And therein lies the lesson for us. When Jesus says to us *come ahead*, we need to be willing to risk getting out of the boat.

We’re never going to be completely ready. But that’s the reality of following Jesus. It’s in the doing that we are made ready. It’s in the obedient response to his call that we grow as Christians. It is in the *stepping out in faith* that we mature and our faith grows stronger.

(Continued on page 2)

And the lesson of Peter is that once we respond to Jesus' call by stepping out in faith, when we falter, when we begin to sink, Jesus is there to help us. Jesus is there to pull us up and pull us out of whatever mess we're in. Jesus is there to help us find our feet again. Jesus is there to help us start over.

In 1999, a church in Lancaster, California, was at a low point. Worship attendance had dropped to 50 people per Sunday; and the congregation was desperate for revitalization. As the church discussed its future, a 92-year-old member stood up and challenged members of the church to become "mission-minded." And they did just that. The congregation took a leap of faith and embarked on a mission trip to Southeast Asia in the year 2000. The work they did there -- planting a new church -- was not easy. And it cost a lot of money. But they repeated the trip the following year, then went to Egypt and then southwestern China.

To date, approximately 70 percent of the congregation has been overseas on church-planting mission trips; and this work has revitalized the church at home. It's no longer difficult to get volunteers for Sunday school and VBS because the people have been trained and equipped through their mission experiences. The members of that church sensed Jesus calling them to *come ahead* into the mission field. And trusting the power of God, they did just that.

Members of a Colorado congregation spotted an old store on the main street of their small town and immediately recognized that it had incredible community outreach potential. They sensed God was calling them to reach their neighbors -- especially those disconnected from God and the church -- and so they acquired the building as an ideal location for a café and bookstore.

They turned the store into a commercial restaurant called *The Lighthouse Café* -- an eatery that is now open to the public six days a week -- with specialty coffees, pastries, sandwiches, and soups. The café provides a bridge to the community by bringing people into the building for breakfast, lunch and community events. It helps build relationships, break down barriers, and makes it easier for neighbors to come to the church for other events.

The café also stimulates community-building within the congregation. People worship during one service and eat during the other; or they stop in for breakfast before worship or for lunch a bit later. People have a hunger -- for food and for relationships -- and *The Lighthouse Café* plays a role in satisfying both. This church sensed it was being called to get out of the boat to do something new and different and challenging. This church had never been in the restaurant business before. There was no guarantee of success; and there were mistakes made along the way. But this church responded to the call -- turning an old store into a place of grace. And it's working.

I'm not certain where God is calling First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood to go, or what God is calling this congregation to do. But I am certain that God consistently challenges the people of God to do new things, to stretch our faith, and to grow. God in Christ consistently calls out to his followers: *Come ahead* -- challenging us to do amazing things for the sake of his kingdom. And when that happens -- whether we think we're ready or not -- we must get out of the boat and walk with him on the water.

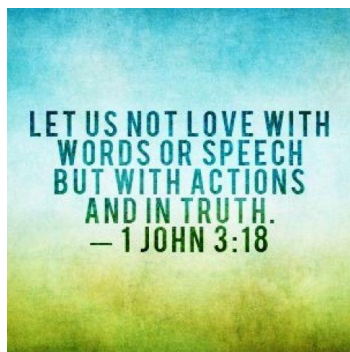
You may be thinking: *We're not ready to walk on water.* But remember: Jesus who calls will pull us out of the water if we start to sink. And it's in the doing that we are made ready.

Yours in Christ,

Bruce

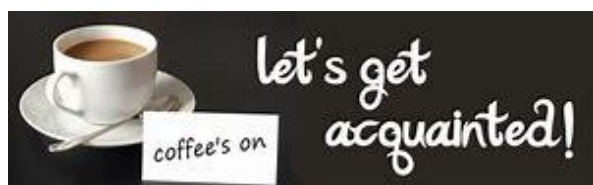


Happenings



On Sunday, April 7th, the McDevitt family served 25 men at St. Paul's homeless shelter in Paterson as part of our monthly mission. Thank you to all the volunteers who made this month's trip a success: the McDevitt family for serving the meal and making a Mexican chicken and lime rice dish, Joanne Bonwick for her popular sweet & sour meatballs, Marjorie Vanacore for preparing a healthy salad, and Dawn Murdock for providing fresh fruit and bread. The men appreciated a home cooked meal and all came back for seconds! Our next trip to the shelter will be Sunday May 5th. If you are interested in becoming a part of this mission, feel free to contact Laura Di Iorio at lauradiiorio6@gmail.com or 201-634-9322.

A Congregational Meeting to elect officers will be held Sunday, May 5th following the Worship Service.



For those interested in joining First Pres as well as those who would like to learn more about the church before making a decision to join, there will be a *Get Acquainted Breakfast Gathering Series*, scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Sunday May 5 and May 19, in the Church Dining Room. The gatherings will serve as an orientation, enabling prospective members to get acquainted

with the pastor and some of our members, our Presbyterian heritage and First Pres history, our mission as we understand it, and our ministries. Child care or children's activities will be provided upon request. If you plan to attend or have any questions regarding the series, please call the church office or speak with Pastor Bruce.



Second Saturday Service is back on May 11th
Worship in the Chapel at 5:00 PM with a light supper to follow
Come and bring a friend!



Saturday, May 11 th at 7:00 PM	The Leonis Trio
Sunday, May 19 th at 10:00 AM	Mozart's Solemn Vespers
Monday, May 20 th at 7:00 PM	Ridgewood High School Maroon Men
Saturday, June 1 st at 7:00 PM	The Brian Prining Trio

(There is an admission charge for June 1st show)

Sunday School News

On Palm Sunday, we enjoyed a pancake breakfast for First Pres students in the dining room then we gathered in the Minnema Room to tell the Easter story!

We made a cross from Palm fronds.

Thank you Paul Eliya for your patient instruction in making these beautiful palm crosses!!!



We read Luca Torielli's beautiful Lenten poem during a children's message which reflected on the importance of his baptism. Good Job Luca!

Rotations for April....in addition to making pretzels and learning the importance of prayer, the students had an opportunity in choosing a prayer partner. The next class they learned about serving others with humbleness and took part in a foot washing...



John 13:1–17 recounts Jesus' performance of this act. In verses 13:14–17, He instructs His disciples: If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have *washed* your *feet*, you also ought to *wash* one another's *feet*. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

A YELLOW Sunday school/Christian Ed suggestion box is located on the table outside of the Collentine parlor! You are all invited to place your suggestions for Sunday school and church events or anything you would like to see in the upcoming school year 2019-2020. You do not have to put your name on it if you would like to send it anonymously! That is fine. Please send us your ideas or suggestions!

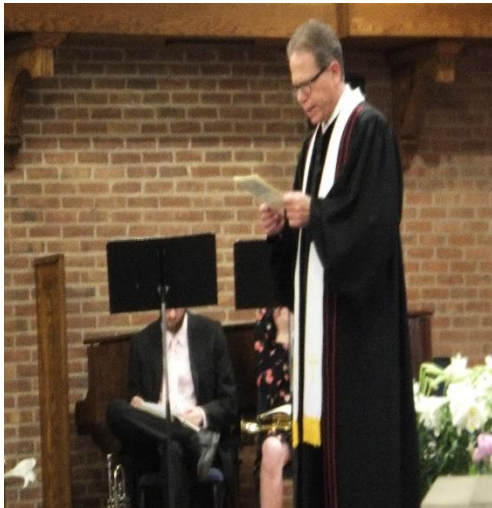
THANK YOU SO MUCH to all who donated candy to the Easter egg hunt! We appreciate your generosity!



Christian Ed mailed College boxes to students that are presently attending school! It was such a great way to reach out and keep in touch with our college students! We received so many thanks you's and words of appreciation from our youth.



Palm
Sunday
&
Easter
Joy!



Did someone say GO?

Endowment Corner

"A NEW LEAF"



Mark Dance was a faithful and active member of First Pres for many years. Among his active duties over the years was Usher, Elder, Chair of the Personnel Committee, and member of the Growth Committee but his first love was teaching Sunday School which he taught for more than 30 years.

A Leaf in Mark's honor was added to our "Tree of Life" recently and we rejoice in this permanent reminder of his teaching, counsel and encouragement of our students.



Session Notes

In April session voted to form two Mission Task Forces one dedicated to One Great Hour of Sharing and the other for Habitat for Humanity. They approved the Ministry Information Form submitted by the Pastoral Nominating Committee.

The following Officers of the Corporation were elected:

Richard Davies- President Andrew Castaldi- Vice President

Carolyn Reitz-Treasurer Joan Davies-Secretary





Church Staff

Interim Minister	Pastor Bruce Ballantine
Director of Children & Families	MaryEllen Castaldo
Director of Music	Dr. Ed Schmiedecke
Organist	Linda Sweetman Waters
Director Cherub Choir and Bells	Carol Schmiedecke
Administrative Manager	Dana Feeney
Treasurer	Carolyn Reitz
Youth Leader	Jessica Strader
Tom Carozza	Sexton
Custodian	George Wood
Director Nursery School	Julia Bolt
Newsletter Editor	Joan Davies

Church Phone (201) 652-2504

Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623 please contact him directly for Pastoral Care
www.firstpresridgewood.org

