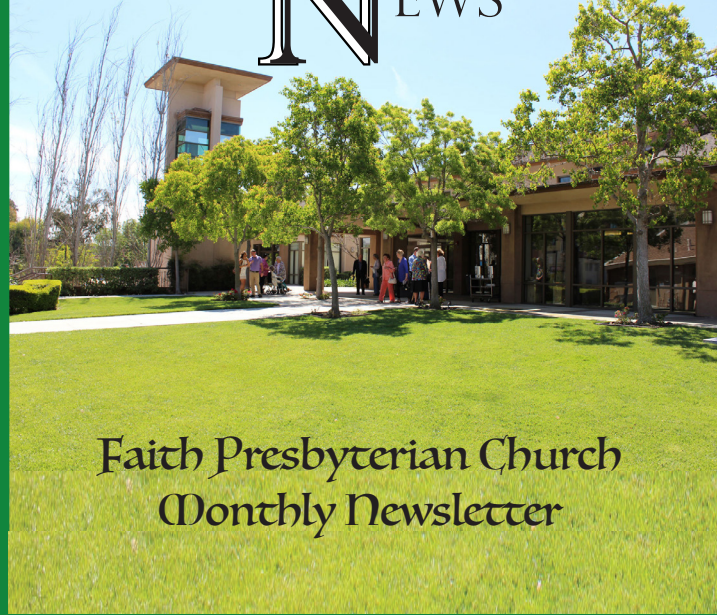


# FAITH FAMILY NEWS



## Faith Presbyterian Church Monthly Newsletter

**From Pastor Sam**

### *The Great Ends of the (small) Church*

Phillip Blackburn

If you are reading this, perhaps your church is small, or you think you are small, or you even someday dream of becoming small. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “small” is as much a state of mind as a matter of raw numbers. Some congregations with an average worship attendance of 200 think they are small because, once, 400 attended their worship. Other congregations think they are small because they compare themselves to the largest nondenominational church in town. Still others think they are small because they really are, by any definition, a small group of people.

The goal of church membership is to reach a union with God, which is achieved through “communion with him in grace and glory.”

Regardless of where you land on this spectrum, the mere fact that you are Presbyterian means that, at some level, you have wrestled with the idea that you are now – or perhaps always have been – part of a small congregation.

Theoretically our size should not really matter. We believe Jesus when he says he can be found “where two

or three are gathered” (Matthew 18:20). Practically speaking, however, being small does matter, very much.

#### **Why size matters**

Being small matters because we used to be bigger and now are smaller. It matters because we are sad when we see fewer people in worship than there used to be, and we miss those who are gone. It matters because our buildings need maintenance, and we cannot afford to repair them. It matters because we want to call a pastor, and none is available. It matters because success, in 21st-century America, correlates to size — and small correspondingly correlates to failure.

We can all agree, then, that size does matter, even if it should not. And because it does, and because “small” is a big part of our faith lives, we have developed some troubling emotional states.

First, smallness leads to fear. When you think of your church, are you afraid? If so, of what? Perhaps you are afraid that your congregation will not last. Maybe you are afraid that the glory days of your church are behind it. Maybe you fear something else entirely, but I suspect some fear lurks in there somewhere.

This fear leads to a second emotion: anxiety. This anxiety means you are counting, constantly counting. How many are in worship? How much is in the offering? What’s left in the endowment? How much longer can we operate with this deficit? Counting and counting and counting. That’s anxiety.

Perhaps the above describes your experience, and perhaps it doesn’t, I don’t know. But from my perch on the edge of the Ozark highlands at the University of the Ozarks – where I work with rural pastors and congregations in the Presbytery of Arkansas – this is what I see: fear and anxiety. I am not here to tell you that budgets and buildings and worship numbers do not matter. They do matter. What I do want to say, however, is that they are not everything. Far from it.

#### **Where Jesus is**

Go back to the quote from Matthew. Jesus says to his followers, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Two or three, now that is small. But it’s enough.

It’s enough to remind us of a couple of things. First, this passage reminds us that our vocation as disciples of Jesus is not contingent on numbers.

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## MEETINGS of OUR FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

### Book Study

Every Tuesday of the Month  
7pm on Zoom.

### Wednesday Bible Study

FPC, Room #2 at 12noon - 1:00pm

### Tuesday Eves

Second Saturday of the Month  
Saturday, February 10th  
FPC, Library at 2:00pm

### Women's Circle

Thursday, February 8th  
FPC, Room #3 at 10:00am

### Women's Group Bible Study

Saturday, February 24th  
FPC, Library at 3:00pm

## THIS IS US

Faith Presbyterian Church gathers in the College Area from all across San Diego. We desire to embody beloved community. We are diverse. We are people of color, white, gay, straight, married, single, parents, old, young, and with various abilities. We share a common life characterized by concern for justice, delight in education, and excellence in music through all stages of life. We carry living traditions with us as we grow in faith, with the triune God as our best expression.

'TRULY I TELL YOU, JUST AS YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY, YOU DID IT TO ME.'

FROM MATTHEW 25:40 (NRSV)



2024 Focus

Membership

Interfaith Dialogue

Belonging

Openness



Aluminum cans  
Plastic bottles  
Glass bottles (CRV)  
Water jugs

The Deacons are continuing to collect recycling. Please contact Nancy Flynn at (619) 813-7063 or email at [esch46@hotmail.com](mailto:esch46@hotmail.com) to make arrangements for her to meet you in the church parking lot. In 2023 we recycled 267 pounds of various types of plastic bottles, 258 pounds of aluminum cans, and 238 pounds of glass bottles. The grand total received was \$786.00.

# Faith Family Life

## THE CHANCEL FLOWERS



THE FLOWER  
CHART IS UP  
IN THE NARTHEX

THE CURRENT  
PRICE IS \$75.00.  
JUST A REMINDER  
THAT THE COST OF THE  
FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS  
CAN BE SPLIT WITH  
ANOTHER MEMBER.

DEBBIE LENART, FLOWER MINISTRY

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

LeRoy Lafferty - 3<sup>rd</sup>

Helen Hoyle - 6<sup>th</sup>

Harold Martyn - 6<sup>th</sup>

Terry Powers - 7<sup>th</sup>

Ruth Morrison - 15<sup>th</sup>

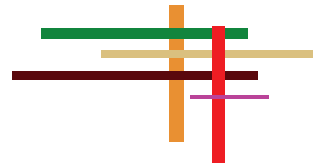
Jean Bruha - 15<sup>th</sup>

Jill Gustafson - 21<sup>st</sup>

Monica Radcliffe - 27<sup>th</sup>

Elizabeth Van Boskirk - 27<sup>th</sup>

If you would like to see your birthday listed in the newsletter with just the day, not the year, please email that information to Joe Rodriguez (jcr14@att.net).



## DATES TO REMEMBER

February 8th - Women's Circle at 10:00 am, Room 3

February 10th - Work Party, 9:00 am - Noon

February 10th - Tuesday Eves, at 2:00 pm, Library

February 11th - Deacons Meeting, at 11:00 am, Room 2

February 14th - Ash Wednesday Service, Noon, Sanctuary

February 15th - Submission Deadline for March Newsletter

February 17th - San Diego Presbytery Leadership Day  
9am -to 3pm, Sanctuary and FFC

February 18th - Church in Context, at 8:30 am, Room 1

February 18th - Annual Congregational Meeting, 10:30, Sanctuary

February 18th - Session Meeting, at 11:00 am, Room 2

February 19th - Presidents Day Holiday - Office Closed

February 24th - Women's Group, at 3:00 pm, Library

Church Office Hours

Monday - Thursday

9:00am - 12:00noon, 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Please note that office is closed on Fridays

COME, TRY OUR  
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY  
12:00pm in Room #2  
LED BY PASTOR SAM

# Financial Report

December 31, 2023

Envelope Offering for December 2023 was \$21,110.53  
 Envelope Offering monthly budget 2023 is \$18,939.00 per month



Parking Lot Income for 2023 was \$44,973.26  
 (this was income from Cannon Construction & Student parking)

Expenses Paid for 2023 as follows:

- Gas & Electric \$44,851.20
- Maintenance & Repairs \$13,378.75
- Water & Sewer \$7,442.07
- Mortgage \$110,736.99

Donations to the Piano Project for 2023 was \$8,320.00

Your Per Capita for 2024 is \$45.00 per member.

End of Year Info for contributions and pledges

If you have questions about the status of your pledge, please call Beverly Martyn at 619-582-2186 or email 64beam@gmail.com. Pledge envelopes for 2024 are available at church. Statements of Giving are also available at church.

## SERMONS FEBRUARY



### Belonging

In the months of January through April, we will read the Gospel of Luke together in Sunday morning worship services, and we will raise questions around what contributes to our experiences of belonging.

|               |            |   |               |
|---------------|------------|---|---------------|
| February 4th  | Pastor Sam | <i>Joining the Journey</i>  | Luke 5:1-11   |
| February 11th | Pastor Sam | <i>Awaking to Glory</i> (Transfiguration Sunday)  | Luke 9:28-36  |
| February 14th | Pastor Sam | <i>Standing With Us</i> (Ash Wednesday)   | Luke 6:17-26  |
| February 17th | Pastor Sam | <i>Learning to Weep: Loss, Lament, and Grief</i><br>San Diego Presbytery Leadership Day | Luke 19:41-44 |
| February 18th | Pastor Sam | <i>Cultivating a Posture of Love</i>  | Luke 6:27-36  |
| February 25th | Pastor Sam | <i>Widening Circles of Care</i>   | Luke 7:1-10   |

Register Today!

Leadership Day  
San Diego Presbytery  
A day of worship,  
workshops, lunch, and  
community

February 17, 2024

Saturday, 9am-3pm

Faith Presbyterian Church  
San Diego, CA 92115

Registration closes February 9  
seating is limited  
to register contact:  
officemgr@presbyterysd.org

Leadership Day  
February 17th  
Saturday  
9am-3pm

Faith  
Presbyterian  
Church



**Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes**  
once a shoe-shining boy  
in Brazil, now a  
theologian, liturgist,  
playwright, and artist

*“Searching for Home:  
Prayer, Theology,  
and Rituals for Times  
of Catastrophe  
and Longing”*



**Church in Context**  
listening, learning,  
growing together

February 18, 8:30am  
**Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes**  
São Paulo and Massachusetts

Lent 2024

*A Season of Prayer*

Ash Wednesday

Prayer Service at Noon  
with Imposition of Ashes  
February 14

Palm Sunday Service, 9:30am, March 24  
Maundy Thursday Supper, 7pm, March 28  
Good Friday Service, 7pm, March 29  
Easter Sunday Service, 9:30am, March 31

Prayer Service  
at Noon every Wednesday  
February 21 to March 20



## COLLEGE PARK PRESCHOOL

WHERE IMAGINATION SOARS

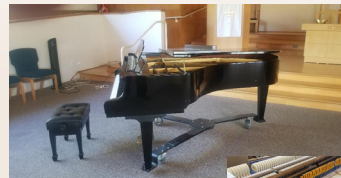
Meghan Stubbs, Interim Preschool Director



The children at College Park Preschool have always enjoyed exploring the Nature Space. Earlier this year some classrooms planted flower and plant seeds. Regrettably, the children were not able to utilize the Nature Space for a couple months. But with Mike Gehl's amazing help (both with securing a company to install a new fence and patching some small size holes in other spaces), classrooms have begun to explore the space again and have noticed the beautiful sunflowers and plants blossoming. The children are so proud and amazed at how tall sunflowers grow and have been able to measure their height. Learning happens everywhere and we are so grateful to have the Nature Space as once again another learning environment.

## OUR PIANO IS HEADING FOR REPAIRS

**People of Faith, our piano will be away being overhauled (rebuilt) during February and a portion of March. We look forward to hearing our piano when the rebuild is over. The Worship and Arts Committee and Music Ministry thank you for your generous donations for this project.**





## Beloved!... yes! YOU all of you!

Did you not hear what Sam said a few weeks ago ... and what you/we said in response to the assurance of God's love: "We are God's beloved. Always and Forever. Thanks be to God! Amen!"

As the new year has begun let us be glad to be one of God's beloved. As beloved children of God we are beloved ... as are all persons ... when I look again, I wonder at the possibilities; we are made in the image of God and thus we too hold all as beloved. Can you imagine what that means? The possibilities seem great. There is a great circle of love that defies the impossible.


I invite you in the month of February to reflect on being God's Beloved ... how does this gift appear in your life, in your thinking, in your actions ... listen for God's call to you & me, all of us ... would love to hear your experiences, your wonderings, your questions.

Blessings Beloved ones of God.



## Work Party

Please join us for our Winter Church Work Party on Saturday, February 10th, from 9am to Noon, for a morning of TLC and helping out for the Church and its Campus. There will be projects for everyone to pick from no matter your skill level, interest, or age. Thank You!



## Congratulations Riley



**RILEY VOLKERT JUST EARNED  
HIS EAGLE SCOUT RANK**

To become an Eagle Scout, a Scout must first qualify for the previous six ranks of Scouting, which are Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, and Life. There are multiple requirements in physical fitness, citizenship, nature, hiking and navigation, first aid, and camping to earn each of these ranks. In order to advance to Star, you must be a First Class for at least four months and have served in a leadership position in the troop. You must also earn a minimum of six merit badges. To advance to the next rank of Life Scout you must spend at least six months at the Star rank and must earn a minimum of five more merit badges.

To advance to Eagle Scout you must have six letters of recommendation from your parents, a religious leader, a teacher, and three other references. You must have a total of 21 merit badges. You must have served in another leadership position in the troop, and you must plan, develop, and lead other Scouts in performing a community service project.

The required merit badges for advancement to Eagle are camping, citizenship in the community, citizenship in the nation, citizenship in the world, communication, cooking, cycling, emergency preparedness, environmental science, family life, first aid, hiking, lifesaving, personal fitness, personal management, sustainability, swimming, and citizenship in society.

Approximately four percent of all Scouts advance to Eagle. Notable Eagle Scouts include Michael Bloomberg, Bill Gates, J.W. Marriott, Gerald Ford, JFK, Richard Nixon, and Steven Spielberg. Of 24 astronauts who have traveled to the moon, 21 were Eagle Scouts, including Neil Armstrong.

continued from page 1

We don't need 20 or 200. We need just two, and we are in business. I think all our congregations can tick that box.

Second, and perhaps most important, the passage reminds us that Jesus is in our midst. Jesus is amid your congregation, just as he has always been. While you might be scared or anxious about the future of your church, Jesus probably is not. That means a lot.

I am not here to tell you that budgets and buildings and worship numbers do not matter. They do matter. What I do want to say, however, is that they are not everything. Far from it.

### **What do we do, if we are diminished?**

Reminding ourselves of Jesus' words, then, let's return to our congregations. What do we do in this moment? How do we move forward if we are not who we used to be, if we are diminished?

You and I are Presbyterians, and that means we think things. We have one of the richest theological heritages in Christianity, a heritage that has held us in good stead for 500 years.

When I began my work as director of the Thriving in Rural Ministry program of the University of the Ozarks, I did not know exactly what I would do. But I knew where I wanted to start: the great ends of the church.

Nestled inside the "Foundations of Presbyterian Polity" section of the Book of Order, the great ends were composed way back in 1910. In six simple statements they outline the church's job description. Is their language a bit anachronistic? Yes. Do those short sentences lack necessary exposition? Of course. But those six sentences also remind us of who we are, who we are called to be and what we are supposed to be doing in this world. If you do not know them or have forgotten them, allow me to refresh you.

The six great ends of the church are as follows:

The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind.

The shelter, nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.

The maintenance of divine worship.

The preservation of the truth.

The promotion of social righteousness.

The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

One could write a whole book on each of these, and indeed people have. The denomination produced a series of books on the great ends between 2005 and 2010; sadly, they are now out of print. Regardless, take a minute and reread the great ends carefully. Ponder them for a moment.

### **Embodiment**

I want to talk about something else for a moment. I want to talk about "embodying" our faith. This idea is not new — but it is, I believe, of vital consequence for us as a denomination. If we Presbyterians excel at thinking stuff up, we have really fallen off at the embodiment part of faith.

Embodiment simply means bringing our beliefs into alignment with our actions. We used to be better at this. I work at a university which was planted, nurtured and sustained by the Presbyterian Church. Starting a university in rural Arkansas in the 19th century was an embodied act of faith if I have ever seen one. When the great ends were written down, the Presbyterian Church at that time was concerned about a whole raft of social issues, among them fair wages for workers and child labor. (Cynthia L. Rigby wonderfully details the context of the great ends in her 2010 book titled *Promotion of Social Righteousness*.)

Somewhere along the way, however, our ability to embody what we believe waned. I don't know where it happened, but clearly it has fallen off. And I believe fear and anxiety are the culprits.

So I believe it is time to reconnect with who we are and what we believe. It is time for us to take those six sentences, the great ends, and really embody them, all of them.

### ***Asking questions within our congregations***

It's not as if we, as congregations, are doing nothing. Most of us have regular worship, mission programs and Bible studies, among other things. My suggestion is that we lean into those things. My thought is that we sit down as congregations, all across the denomination, and think about how we might live into the description of the job our churches have held for almost 115 years. My thought is that we sit down as congregations, all across the denomination, and think about how we might live into the description of the job our churches have held for almost 115 years.

How would the great ends sound if you put them into the vernacular of your community? If you are already carrying out some of them, how are you doing them? If you aren't, why not?

I encourage all of us to spend time letting the great ends ask questions of us. How are we proclaiming the gos-

continued on page 9



pel — and if we are proclaiming it, what does it sound like? In what specific ways are we nurturing one another? We are maintaining worship, but is it divine? How do we define “truth” in our congregation? What is the most profound social issue in our community? If the Kingdom of Heaven were defined by our life together as a congregation, what would it look like?

I hope these questions begin to show you the potential of the great ends in your church and help you start a conversation.

And here is the key: do not ask these questions in the hope that your answers might attract new people. Ask these questions, and others like them, because we are followers of Jesus. Ask them because we are the church. Ask them because the Holy Spirit called us in this time and in this place to be disciples. Ask them because you were baptized. Ask them because right now, you and your congregation are alive.

You have already crossed the size threshold established by Jesus.

If we consider ourselves in this way, is it not exciting? Do you not feel inspired and convicted? Every time I read that list of great ends, I feel compelled to act, reminded of who I am as a follower of Jesus. The church has been a great gift in my life, and I assume it has been to you.

The congregation of which you are part is also a great gift. It is a gift to you and your community and the PC(USA). So go ahead, count your worship attendance and your dollars if it makes you feel better. But don't for a second confuse those numbers with your purpose. And don't let them be the reason you do or do not do something.

We worship Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. That is truly something. Wherever two or more of us gather, impressive things can happen: things that change hearts, change communities and have historically



PHILLIP BLACKBURN

Phillip Blackburn is the director of the Thriving in Rural Ministry Program at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Arkansas. In addition, he and his wife Tasha co-pastor First Presbyterian Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Phil would love to hear your thoughts, ideas and stories about rural life and ministry. He can be reached at [pblackburn@ozarks.edu](mailto:pblackburn@ozarks.edu).

I STAND  
CONFIDENT,  
KNOWING THAT  
**JOY AND GRIEF**  
WORK TOGETHER  
SO THAT MY  
**FAITH**  
IN THE LORD IS  
UNDENIABLE &  
**UNSHAKEABLE.**

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## **NAVIGATING THE WATERS OF GRIEF TO SHORES OF JOY SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH AT 11:00 AFTER WORSHIP.**

**We will be exploring many tools to be used at times of grief and loss. While this is primarily a Christian class, we are also drawing upon other resources from different faiths and cultures.**

**Please join us for a conversation about this topic.**

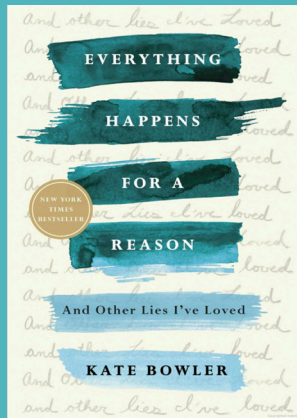
**Leader is Kate Cameron**

**Please RSVP so we have a head count for class materials to [K88Cameron@gmail.com](mailto:K88Cameron@gmail.com).**

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# Continuing in February



## Our group will be studying the book *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved*


By Kate Bowler

This book study continues on Tuesday evenings at 7 pm on Zoom.

“Kate Bowler is a professor at Duke Divinity School with a modest Christian upbringing, but she specializes in the study of the prosperity gospel, a creed that sees fortune as a blessing from God and misfortune as a mark of God’s disapproval. At thirty-five, everything in her life seems to point toward “blessing.” She is thriving in her job, married to her high school sweetheart, and loves life with her newborn son. Then she is diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer.

The prospect of her own mortality forces Kate to realize that she has been tacitly subscribing to the prosperity gospel, living with the conviction that she can control the shape of her life with “a surge of determination.” Even as this type of Christianity celebrates the American can-do spirit, it implies that if you “can’t do” and succumb to illness or misfortune, you are a failure. Kate is very sick, and no amount of positive thinking will shrink her tumors. What does it mean to die, she wonders, in a society that insists everything happens for a reason? Kate is stripped of this certainty only to discover that without it, life is hard but beautiful in a way it never has been before.

Frank and funny, dark and wise, Kate Bowler pulls the reader deeply into her life in an account she populates affectionately with a colorful, often hilarious retinue of friends, mega-church preachers, relatives, and doctors. *Everything Happens for a Reason* tells her story, offering up her irreverent, hard-won observations on dying and the ways it has taught her to live.”



**Grape EXPECTATIONS**

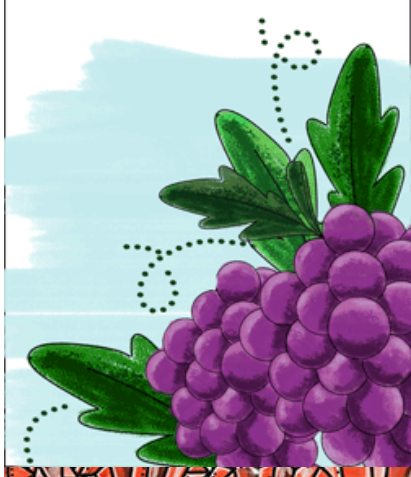
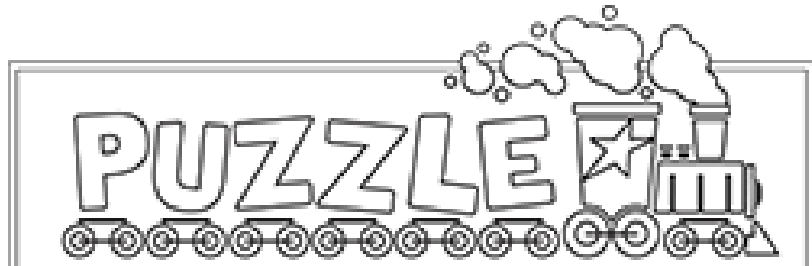
Try this chilly new take on a healthy snack.

**What you need:**

- 30 grapes, washed and dried
- ½ cup vanilla yogurt
- 4 graham crackers, crushed
- Toothpicks
- Parchment paper

**What you do:**

1. On a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, arrange grapes in a single layer. Freeze for two hours.
2. Insert a toothpick into each grape.
3. Dip each grape into the yogurt, coating half of it.
4. Roll each dipped grape in the crushed crackers. Place back on the parchment.
5. Freeze for two more hours. Enjoy!

## PUZZLE TRAIN

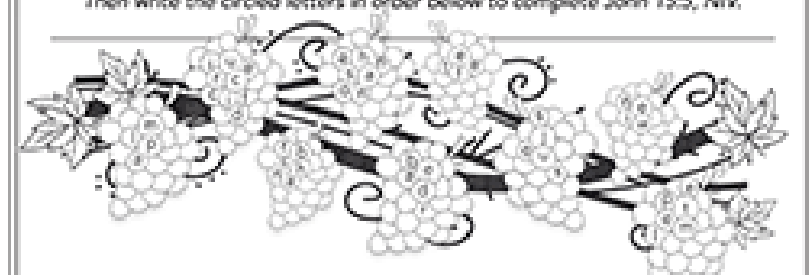
### A LASTING LESSON

Before dying on the cross, Jesus teaches the disciples an important lesson.

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Directions: Use the clues to unscramble the letters in each grape cluster. Then write the circled letters in order below to complete John 15:5, NIV.

---



|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| A branch that was waved                  | ---○---   |
| How Jesus was put to death               | ---○----- |
| A stick attached to the vine             | ---○---   |
| People shouted this to Jesus             | ○-----    |
| Jesus washed these                       | ○-----    |
| This was broken and eaten                | ○-----    |
| The Messiah                              | ---○---   |
| A drink from grapes                      | ---○---   |
| Jesus drove the money changers from here | ○-----    |

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear \_\_\_\_\_; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5, NIV

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**FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

5075 Campanile Drive

San Diego CA 92115

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

5075 Campanile Drive

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(619) 582-8480

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Spiritual Director: Mary Elva Smith

Director of Music Ministry: Joe Rodriguez

Media Director: Stephen Dichiera

Interim Preschool Director: Meghan Stubbs

Custodian: Agustin Urueta

Sexton: Robin Craig

Office Administrator: James Kelly

Newsletter Editor: Joe Rodriguez

GIVE THANKS TO  
THE LORD, FOR  
HE IS GOOD.  
HIS LOVE ENDURES  
FOREVER.  
PSALM 136:1

Send all submissions to  
Joe Rodriguez, editor  
[jcr14@att.net](mailto:jcr14@att.net)

DEADLINE FOR  
NEXT  
MONTH



FEB  
22