



Deep Places, Mandy Bankson

What are the signs that a church is healthy, vital, and vibrant? There was a time I would have said look at the numbers — to see if membership is increasing, participation in worship and other activities is growing, and whether giving meets and exceeds the budget. Numbers can tell a story, but it doesn't hold our attention or interest for long. It is mostly matter of fact.

A better way to read the health and vitality of our congregation is to measure the strength of our connections — our relationship with God and with one another. It is this quality of being interconnected that tells me how we are doing as a church — whether this is a place we call home; whether the relationships we share with others here are important to us; whether this is where we feel safe enough to be open and vulnerable and learn to grow in our faith and personal development. This is the kind of story I love and am eager to hear — a story of character development, of relational bonds that grow stronger through commitment and care, and of faith that is being challenged and stretched through life's struggles and coping with perpetual change.

This reflection of 2019 is such a story. You'll read how people stepped out of their comfort zone to serve God and found the capacity of their hearts enlarged. You'll understand why music is integral to our worship experience, but vital to our many church musicians. You'll see how programs and services our church provides met critical needs, but in each instance it is the personal connection that made the difference. You'll discover how parents request for more shared faith experiences with their children led us to find ways to integrate children and youth more into our overall church life. You'll read of the many choices adults of all ages were given to grow in their faith through classes, workshops, cohorts, and small groups. And you'll see how finances followed personal involvement and commitment; such that a few designated bequests enabled leadership to upgrade and improve our facilities for God's use.

May your reading of this story fill you with a sense of gratitude for the role our church has played in your relationship with God and inspire you to be even more connected.

We Serve

How we choose to live in a missional way – fully immersed, culturally aware, and lovingly effective witnesses of the gospel.

... Our introduction to Medellin and the seminary was through a lens full of heart and vision reflecting a decades-long history of investment and faith. ... I was in awe of Elizabeth's fierce commitment to transparency, accountability, and faithfulness to doing right even if unpopular ... and amidst so many responsibilities as President, her unwavering focus on the spiritual formation of each student.

—Audrey Schell

I am so blessed to represent our church to the people of Ecuador's Santa Elena Peninsula for these past 19 years. Aside from reconnecting with old friends, the highlight this year was celebrating the inauguration of a new water system in the small community of El Corocito.

—Bob Swift



I learned mission work comes in many forms — working with children in the classroom, helping in the library and sewing curtains — all the tasks we took on made it possible for full-time missionaries to focus on advancing God's work at the Rafiki Village. ... I met children that are holding a piece of my heart firmly in Rwanda.

— Ann Gospe

2019 Short-term Mission Trips

Bob Swift served as a volunteer with Annunciation House of El Paso, Texas Catholic Diocese. Bob said 250 to 300 asylum seekers came, per day, to the house as guests upon their release from an ICE detention facility. They arrive with heart-breaking fear and bewilderment, but after a few days of care and assistance they continue their roller coaster-like journey (until a court appearance) moving on to their next destination with heartwarming smiles and waves of goodbye.

In November Audrey & Peter Schell visited mission partners, Elizabeth and Don Sendek who serve at the Biblical Seminary of Columbia in Medellin.

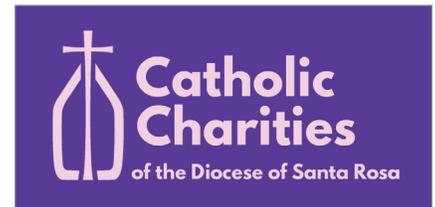
The Schells then joined Bob Swift in Ecuador to visit several villages and review mission projects we've supported to improve health, quality of life, and economic development for people of the Santa Elena Peninsula.

In October, Pat Cuneo, Katie Woodward, Elaine Carlson, Ann Gospe, and Laura and Kari Young served children and families of the Rafiki village in Rwanda.

Catholic Charities On Tour at FPC

In June the Community Service team provided lunch and we were presented with a virtual tour of the various service programs of Catholic Charities as a way to acquaint us with volunteer opportunities. Several senior staff members rotated between six tables informing us of what Catholic Charities does and how we might join in.

Of all our community service partners, Catholic Charities offers the most extensive and comprehensive ways for us to serve alongside vulnerable members of our community.



A Hub of Hospitality

We introduced a new and fresh way to make connections. Located at the sanctuary entrance, *The Connect Center* is where visitors are welcomed and invited to participate and become involved in our church. It is also where members/friends find information and/or sign up for events and activities. A plug-in station for charging electronic devices and a new chilled drinking fountain with a dispenser for filling water bottles adds to our hospitality efforts, but it is the hosts at *The Connect Center* and our entire church family who make lasting connections become a reality.



We Care

How we encourage each one to give and receive care and deepen our relational bonds.

Why I'm Grateful for GriefShare

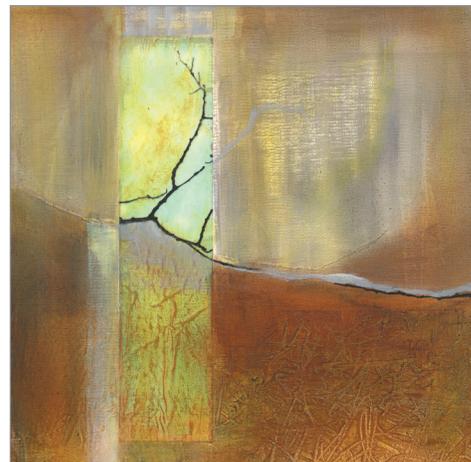
By Diane Swart

I must admit, I planned to attend only one session of GriefShare so I could say, "I did it." Colleen Soldate, Director of Caring Ministries, had invited me to attend, but I was certain GriefShare wasn't for me. So, my plan was to attend the first session, then make an excuse for not coming back.

Little did I know that after the first session I was hooked. I discovered I could say things in the gathering that I was unable to say to anyone else. I felt so loved and safe. Everyone who participated shared their experience and for the first time I felt I wasn't alone.

Scott and Nina Campbell, as facilitators, are so loving and caring. When we meet, the first thing we do after greeting one another is to pray. Then, we each light a candle in memory of our loved one who has passed away and we say their name aloud. It was as if my deceased husband, Joe, was right there. We have a discussion and watch a video that gets down to what we all feel which includes ideas of how others have gone through grief. There is a workbook we may choose to use or not, because there is no pressure or expectation. We honor the fact that grief is personal and all of us grieve differently. Most importantly, we know that whatever is said remains confidential.

I am so thankful GriefShare is offered at FPC and that I agreed to attend.



Quiet Space, Mandy Bankson

Shelter in a Time of Storm

The Kincade Fire fueled by high winds and exceptionally dry weather on October 23, 2019 resulted in an unprecedented evacuation of more than one third of Sonoma County's population. As cars began pulling into the church parking lot, it became clear there was a need for the church to serve as a shelter facility for church families and community neighbors. People arrived in various states of preparedness. Some were at peace; some felt distress, and others were physically and emotionally traumatized by having to relive their memory of the North Bay fires of 2017.

Staff and volunteers provided hospitality and coordinated care to welcome evacuees and their various animals; including dogs, cats, a turtle and a snake. Classrooms were converted into bedrooms and the Freeman Room served as a refectory for food, beverages and fellowship.

We helped soften the alarm and feelings of anxiety as we shared meals, sang songs, prayed together, and encouraged each other as we put together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle or huddled around the radio to catch fire updates. As the days passed and firefighters gained control over the fire, our guests began to relocate or return to their own homes. A week later, on Wednesday October 30, we said goodbye to our last few guests and returned the church to its regular functions with a renewed sense of trust in God to be present with us and alongside us during times of need and challenge.



Due to the Kincade Fire threat and mandated, widespread evacuations worship services were cancelled on Sunday, October 27, 2019.

Children drew posters in Kids Church honoring First Responders; their parents joined them to display the posters in front of the church.

We Grow

How we make disciples and grow community.



Turning “Possibilities” into Reality in Children & Family Ministries

In May, parishioners and staff gathered for a conversation called “Through the Looking Glass: Picturing Possibilities in Children’s Ministry.” We talked through values and goals for Children’s Ministries at FPC to help guide us in planning for the future.

In our conversation, we named a shared value of involving kids more in “big church.” So, we invited kids to join their families for communion, and pastors now help with kids’ church. Kids came to a scripture reader’s workshop and read scripture during “All Together Worship.” Children performed a dramatic reading with the bell choir on Youth Led Sunday. For Christmas Eve, every child who came at 5 pm got to participate in the service.

Additionally, we heard that families with young children appreciate activities to do together, and people of all ages like to spend quality time together at church. In August, we barbecued and went fishing at Spring Lake. In October, we painted pumpkins together. In November, we introduced a worship event called “Breaking Bread,” people of all ages prayed, sang, and had communion together around the dinner table. On Christmas Eve, we gathered for hot cider, treats, and a Christmas ornament craft project. We’re continuing our “5th Sunday” gatherings, “Connecting through Nature” and other traditions, too.



We’re keeping the values and goals we “pictured” in mind as we plan – and looking ahead, we’ve got our eyes and ears open for where God is leading us!

New Leader of Children’s Ministries



In February, we welcomed Shawna Rundstrom as Director of Children’s Ministries.

Shawna’s organizational and administrative skills, love of God and people, and experience of working with children and

youth has provided stability and continuity for our various programs involving children and their families;

including Kid’s Church, 5th Sundays, VBS, and Club Paradise.

In the absence of a Club Paradise Coordinator, Shawna serves as the leader for the mid-week gathering of 4th–6th graders who come to have crazy fun, play games, eat snacks and learn about following Jesus. A humorous video transitions into a Bible story which is followed by a group discussion of how to apply the lesson to their lives.

The kids offer insightful questions and comments.



What’s Going On Up There? Checking in with “Kids’ Church”

You’ve surely heard the thunder of kids’ footsteps upstairs on Sunday mornings! If you haven’t been up there lately, you might wonder what we’re up to! This year we reviewed the curriculum to ensure that we’re encouraging our children to grow as disciples in a fun, developmentally appropriate, and biblically literate way.

Our Kindergarten–4th graders gather for “small group” time with dedicated volunteers to pray, read God’s word, and do hands-on activities. Then, they get together in “Large Group” to participate in the telling of the Bible story by reading scripture, answering questions, acting out different parts of the story, and playing games (this is where all the noisy jumping happens!) The 5th–6th graders start out with an activity, check in and share prayer requests, dig into the Bible, discuss how it applies to their lives, and play Bible games and eat snacks!



Youth Fulfill Their “Destiny”



In November, seven high school youth deepened their faith, their relationship with God, and their role in the church body through a “Destiny Quest” adventure. In a nutshell, we explored how our very creation centers around knowing God, worshiping God, and glorifying God personally and corporately. It is our destiny to embark on a lifelong journey towards seeking the only true treasure, Jesus Christ!

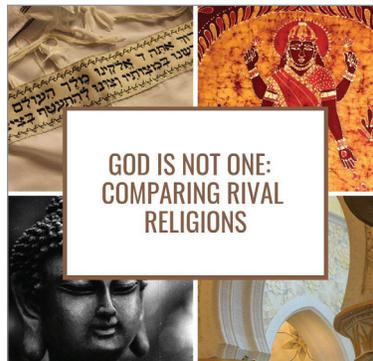
“Destiny Quest” participants (not students pictured) also examined why participating in the life of the church is vital to fulfilling God’s mission on earth. Students met with elders individually as part of the program, too. We’re excited to welcome Hannah Averbeck, Sam Averbeck, Will Averbeck, Barron Jepson, Jack Jepson, and Charles Kirby as members of FPC Santa Rosa.

Adult Education, Enrichment, and Soul Training

Attendance for Adult Education classes has grown significantly the last two years due to the number of gifted teachers. We offered periodic classes at 9 AM as well as a repeat of our 10:30 AM class on Tuesday afternoons at 4:45 PM. Classes in 2019 were: *God Is Not One*, *Calvin*, and *The Bible and The Qur’an* taught by Kent Webber; *Proverbs*, and *Romans 5–8* taught by Tim Stafford; *Epic of Eden: Isaiah* with discussion led by Bev Swift and Steve Vonk; *Between the Bookends of Scripture* taught by Jack Swearingen; and *Hebrews* taught by Jim McAllister.

For fifteen summers, organizers Jack Swearingen and Tim Stafford have invited speakers to share how they serve God in everyday life through their work, interests, and passions. This creative lecture series called, EnlightenUp! encompasses a whole life approach to discipleship by giving thoughtful example of apprenticeship with Jesus without separating what is sacred and secular.

The goal of our Soul Training series is to experience and grow in practices that increase our awareness that God is always with us. A highlight of this past year was the annual Celebration of Thanks—an opportunity to recall the many ways God has shown up in our lives and in our church community in the past year led by Mark Thomas and Margi Vonk.



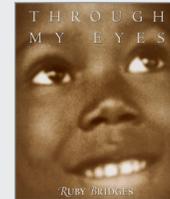
Young Adults Group

Leadership for the formation of this group was made possible by the gift of bequest dollars which Session used to hire Chris Studer for a 24-month pilot program at 10 hours/week. The weekly Tuesday gathering from 6:30—8:00 PM offers 20 & 30-year old adults an opportunity to experience God’s love and grace in a community of faith and to grow together in our shared identity as followers of Christ.

The group also connects for meals, social activities, and scheduled events; such as in-spire at Westminster Woods – a Taizé inspired prayer service intended to provide contemplative space within a Christ-centered community.

One Church, One Book:

Through My Eyes
by Ruby Bridges



In June we read the inspiring true story of six-year-old Ruby Bridges, the first black child to attend an all-white public New Orleans elementary school. Adults and children met to discuss this memoir of courage, faith, and grace in response to hate and how it relates to us now. In July, we gathered in the sanctuary to view the movie. We will long remember the vision of brave Ruby praying for the angry mob as she approached her school.

An Apprentice of Jesus

Allie Shoulders completed the three-year Apprentice Experience training offered by The Apprentice Institute for Christian Spiritual



Formation at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas. In 2018 & 2019, Allie launched and led a cohort of 14 people interested in learning what it is like to experience God’s love every day which we call Apprentice Immersion. This model of Christian formation based on the work of James Bryan Smith emphasizes three main angles of how people grow spiritually: narrative, exercises, and community. A second cohort began in Fall 2019.

We Celebrate

How we use creativity in worship of God and celebration of God's creation.

What Does it Mean to Be Human?

For Winter & Lent Pastors Dale Flowers, Emily Stockert, and Kent Webber continued our study of Luke (Part 2): *Upside-Down ~ The Gospel of Luke and the Unexpected Power of the Kingdom of God*. We learned of Jesus' vision of God's reign as a right-side up alternative to our upside-down experience of this world. After Easter we pondered "What does it mean to be human?" looking at how the Bible explains the nature of this world, our place in it, our dignity and worth as human beings, and our future destiny.

Our Pre-Fall series — *Living in 3D: Dimensions of the Spiritual Life* examined our three primary spiritual relationships, with God, with others, and with ourselves and corresponding practices or disciplines to grow our worship, giving, hospitality, compassion, discipline, and meditation. *Promise & Privilege: Covenant Living Then and Now* was our Fall series which traced the thread of God's redemptive purpose for the world through all the complexities of God choosing a specific people, making covenant with them, and their struggle to fulfill its obligations. We discovered our own connection and continuity with God's covenant people and what it means for us to say yes to God. This covenant theme formed a natural connection with a series for Advent & Christmas which we called *The Power of a Promise* with corresponding profiles of faith given by Eric Rundstrom, Martin Grove, Vicky Lumadue, Erika Wong, and Jim Randall.



Barbara Stout

The Gallery at First 2019 Line Up

Barbara Stout: *Studies of the Spirit*
Mandy Bankson: *Design, Order & Mystery*
Corrine Haverinen: *Language of Trees*
Ron Berman: *People Will Come*
Barbara Nechis: *Watercolor from Within*

We feature the work of abstract artist and member Mandy Bankson in this report. Mandy was the founder of our Gallery at



First and leads the group of patrons who select our shows, assist with set up, and host artist receptions.



Contours, Mandy Bankson

Musical Arts

Under the leadership, coordination and musicianship of John Pavik we began a monthly schedule of music concerts and presentations:

- July: Choir members and community musicians joined with the organ and piano for an offering of Evensong worship.
- September: An organ recital of French compositions during the close of the 19th century followed by a French-themed reception.
- November: Viewing of the silent, allegorical film, *Sunrise: A Tale of Two Humans*, with live musical accompaniment.
- December: An Advent musical presentation of Lessons & Carols featuring Chancel Choir, Chancel Handbells, and instrumentalists.

Under the Direction of ...

Through June 2019 we employed Daniella Cavaney as Interim Choral Music Director. Before the choral program started again in the Fall, we expected to have hired a new, permanent Director. When that didn't come about, Margi Vonk agreed to serve as our temporary Choral Music Director with support from organist John Pavik while we continued our search.

Meanwhile, under Margi's direction both the Chancel Choir and the Chancel Handbells continued to practice, prepare, and present their musical skills to help lead our worship and praise of God. Margi's commitment to our choral program, her devotion to God and love of worship characterized the music our choirs presented under her direction.

In October we announced David Irvine agreed to serve as our permanent Choral Music Director starting in 2020.



We Support

How we manage resources and structure our organization to support and sustain our mission and ministries.

Gifts That Keep Giving

In the past two years our church was the named beneficiary of four bequests totaling over \$930,000. One gift was designated for missions and the music program. With the remaining sum of \$639,130 Session considered whether to create an endowment or make immediate and mid-term use of the funds. We chose the latter.

With a sense of gratitude for the gifts we received, our first act was to give 10% or a tithe of this amount in support of new church development and community service organizations. Next, we designated a substantial sum to future pastors' housing. We then made a list of maintenance priorities and facility improvements which these gifts could address while saving a significant amount for future projects.

List of Facility Upgrades & Capital Improvements

funded with retained income and bequest dollars:

- Upstairs hallways, children and youth rooms refreshed with paint, some new floors, and furniture
- Upstairs offices refreshed with paint and furniture
- Repurposed Narthex closet space
- Original building repainted
- Sanctuary exterior windows re-glazed for preservation
- Sanctuary carpet runners replaced with wheel-friendly siding
- Main hallway bathroom retiled and refreshed with new fixtures and baby changing station
- Internet network improved and equipment upgraded
- Church office space refreshed with new floor, new paint, new workstations and cubicles
- Pastor's office relocated upstairs and refreshed with new floor, new paint, new office furniture
- Addition of Connect Center, electronic charging station, and chilled water fountain
- New digital display monitors added to Adamson breezeway
- Solar panels installed on Ingram Hall roof



Watery Dreams, Mandy Bankson



2019 General Operating Budget Summary for Annual Report

Income from Contributions	2019 Budget	2019 Actuals
Pledges & Contributions	\$ 1,138,552	\$ 1,091,539
Other Offerings to General Operating Budget.....	\$ 38,000	\$ 74,643
Subtotal of Contribution Income	\$ 1,176,552	\$ 1,166,182
 Miscellaneous Income		
Interest/Investment earnings	\$ 3,000	\$ 10,197
Facility Use Fees/Donations.....	\$ 5,000	\$ 50,768
Subtotal of Misc. Income	\$ 8,000	\$ 60,965
Total Income	\$ 1,184,552	\$ 1,227,147
 Budgeted Expenses		
Personnel	\$ 827,490	\$ 828,914
Children's Ministries	\$ 10,195	\$ 14,367
Youth Ministries	\$ 12,200	\$ 27,538
Adult Discipleship.....	\$ 9,225	\$ 13,214
Caring Ministries	\$ 6,272	\$ 5,695
Worship & Music	\$ 16,050	\$ 14,843
Missions.....	\$ 123,980	\$ 124,269
Building and Grounds	\$ 78,708	\$ 89,616
Admin & Finance	\$ 105,038	\$ 114,466
Total Expenses	\$ 1,189,158	\$ 1,232,922
 Net Revenue Over Expenses	 \$ (4,606)	 \$ (5,775)

The difference in Budgeted Expenses per ministry area/department and the Actual Expenses represents costs which are offset by program fees or related income. The 2020 Budget will reflect this change in budget allocation.

Designated Mission Giving

(Above & Beyond Mission Operating Budget)	
World Mission	\$ 57,486
Local Mission/Community Service	\$ 16,836
Total Designated Mission Giving	\$ 74,322

Fire Relief Fund

Balance at 1/1/19	\$ 191,547
Total Donations (12/31/19)	\$ 4,060
Allocations (12/31/19)	\$ 93,487
Account Balance	\$ 102,120

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Rosa