

# FPC Messenger

MAY 2021 | VOLUME 83 ISSUE 5



Dear Friends,

As I write this, it's been less than a week since I moved from my old home in Meriden to a lovely new home here in Topeka. When I look around my new house, it's so easy to feel completely overwhelmed. There are still so many boxes to unpack, so many little "quirks" to fix, so many errands to run, so many tasks to complete, not to mention finishing the daunting process of clearing out my old house so the new owners can move in.

My family has a saying, started by my dad years ago: "Next Tiny Step." It's not original to him, but it has become a family mantra for us. Essentially it means: whenever we feel overwhelmed, whenever a problem seems too much for us, just take the next tiny step. Don't worry about climbing the whole mountain today. Just take the next tiny step. And the next one. And the next one. And then look back, and be amazed at how far you have come!

Is there something going on in your life right now that feels too big? A project, an illness, a loss, a move, a demanding job, or other challenge? Scripture has so much wisdom for us. There's that wonderful passage in Luke 12, when Jesus says, "Do not worry!" He asks, "Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? If you can't do such a small thing, why worry about the rest?" He reminds us, "Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the kingdom" (don't you love that word, "delight"?).

There are those wonderful words of Paul, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in all things, through prayer and petition, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). And one of my favorites, Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. Know him in all your paths, and he will keep your ways straight."

Today, whatever is going on in our lives, whether in our relationships, jobs, bodies, community, or even here at church, let us stop and give thanks for our blessings. Let us present our requests to God. Let us invite the Spirit to lead us. Let us focus not on the size of our problems, but on the size of God's limitless love for us. Let us take the next tiny step.

Yours in Christ,



Sandra Brown

**Please note: the Church office will be closed Tuesday, May 11 for a staff in-service day.**

*Cover photo: Wednesday food distribution ministry volunteers pray before giving out food boxes.*

We will continue to take donations of non perishable food and clean, gently used clothing for the 5-Sunday Drive for Matthew 25 through May 9th. Please contact the church office if you need your donations picked up from your home.



## All Aboard for Rocky Railway!

Rocky Railway VBS will be part of our virtual Sunday Morning Children's Sunday School beginning May 2 (May 2, 9, 16, 23 and June 6). Sunday School is from 9:15 a.m. – 10 a.m. Sunday School Kits were delivered on April 22 and all children currently receiving Sunday School kits received a VBS kit.

During VBS we will explore the adventures of Ramsey, Ava, Sierra, Finn, and Lawrence Elk. We'll sing new songs and make fun gadgets/snacks during "Imagination Station." We will also learn about steam engines and the Power of Jesus. Then, on Friday, June 11, from 6-8 p.m. we will come together in person at the church for a "parking lot" party to celebrate a successful VBS. See below for more information.



## All Church Party on June 11!

On Friday, June 11, from 6-8 p.m., we will celebrate a successful Vacation Bible School and celebrate the start of summer by hosting an all-church party in the north parking lot.

**Everyone is invited!** We will have pizza, make ice cream floats, sing, dance and play. All are welcome, invite a friend! Please bring your own lawn chairs and blankets.

Watch for more information and a link to sign up so that we make sure we have enough food. This event is hosted by the "Fun" Fellowship Team.

Blessings to all!  
Beth Johnston

save the date!

**All Church Party  
in the Parking Lot!**

**June 11, 2021 6 - 8 p.m.**  
**Everyone is invited!**

pizza and ice cream floats  
music and dancing  
fun, fun, fun!

You can help us plan for how much food we will need by calling the church office to let us know you will attend.

## Faith & Flour will be on May 8

Join the Faith & Flour baking small group on May 8 from 9 a.m. to noon as we make Stroopwafel Cookies! All ingredients will be provided and you can participate in person at the church, or online via Zoom. To sign up, please call the church office at 785-233-9601, or send an email message to Lori at [lhennessey@fpctopeka.org](mailto:lhennessey@fpctopeka.org).



## Member Spotlight: John Gould

by Carrie Riordan

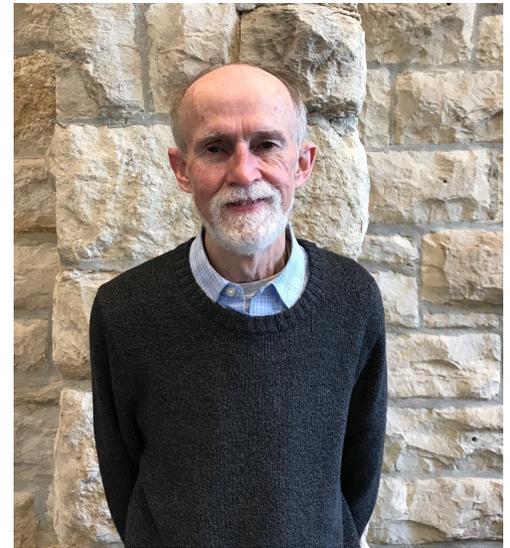
John Gould was born in Paris, France, to missionary parents, spent the first 15 years of his life in the African country of Camaroon, and went to high school in Alexandria, Egypt. Not many can claim such an adventurous start in life! John returned to the states to attend Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, where he double-majored in biology and chemistry. After graduation he took a job in Topeka as a chemist with the state of Kansas Department of Health and Environment, which allowed him to be closer to his parents who had moved to Osage County.

John has always loved music, particularly harmony, and in 1981 joined a barbershop quartet group as a way to meet new people. He found he enjoyed it immensely and still sings in a quartet to this day. In 1987, John met his wife Zelma, who was working as a nurse at Presbyterian Manor. They married in 1988 and John is thankful Zelma shares his interest in music. “The first year we were married, I took Zelma to a barbershop quartet event. We watched 54 groups perform that day. She was a trooper!” The couple also shares an interest in history, geography, and travel and like to explore local historic spots and museums such as the WWI Museum in Kansas City.

John and Zelma became members of First Presbyterian in 2019. John is a member of the Wednesday morning men’s bible study group, and volunteers each Wednesday with the food distribution ministry. “I enjoy this because I wanted to do more with helping people in the community, and this ministry truly does. I like that our church is directly helping people and I enjoy talking with folks as they come through the line.”

One of the moments John recalls best from volunteering on Wednesdays is from “one of our coldest days ever, just bitter, biting cold. On that day we had a group of three people experiencing homelessness who had walked to the church. We gave them boxes of food and milk. They were so thankful. As they turned to leave, Gayle Hunter noticed that one of the men did not have gloves so she went after him and gave him her own gloves. It was just a beautiful moment and what this ministry, and being followers of Jesus, is really about.”

John said he has actually enjoyed some of the “down time” as a result of the pandemic. “It has given me an opportunity to write long, thoughtful letters to family and friends, something I didn’t seem to have time to do before.” John also enjoys reading, especially books about reformed theology. “Right now, I’m slowly working my way through ‘Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church,’ and I recently read ‘The Crucifixion, Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ.’ I’m always working to supplement my understanding of my faith.”



Photos top to bottom: John Gould, John helping pack food sacks for distribution, John and Janet Weatherhogg loading food into a vehicle.

## Session Highlights from April 19, 2021

Session met for its monthly stated meeting on April 19, 2021 by Zoom. Topics discussed include:

- Members are reminded to submit individual progress reports on all church goals so that results can be shared.
- Vacation Bible School will take place during Zoom Sunday School time beginning May 2 and concluding with an all-church celebration June 11.
- Special May Day sack lunches will be provided on May 2 by the Fellowship Ministry team and delivered to Silver Wings members.
- The Faith & Flour small group will resume May 8.
- A joint meeting for old and new Deacons and Session elders will be held on May 17.
- Stephanie Wilson is welcomed as our new accounting assistant.
- The job description for the new videographer position has been approved.
- The Middle and High School Youth are busy planning Spring and Summer activities.

## Seven for Study —A Covid Success

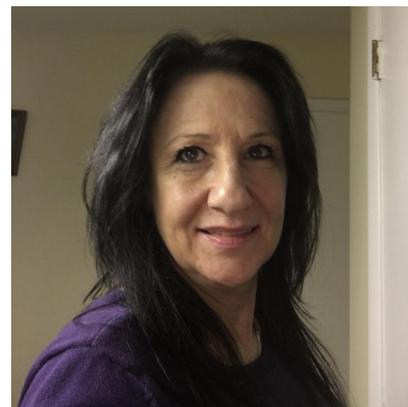
by Anne Baker

Last fall, as an antidote for feeling disconnected from the church during the pandemic, a group of seven women members formed a study group called Seven for Study. It worked! They meet about every other week and have formed vital and trusting relationships among formerly casual acquaintances. Initially they met at the church, but soon moved to Zoom. At the beginning of April, they returned to in-person meetings. If you have an idea for a small group, contact Sandra for assistance in getting started.

Group members discuss their relationship to God and others based upon their reading of books. Their first book was “White Too Long” by Robert P. Jones—a sobering study of the historical connection between Christian churches and racism in the United States. Next, they studied “Decolonizing Wealth” by Edgar Villaneuva—a book recommended by the co-moderators of the General Assembly for Matthew 25 churches. It examines how America’s history of racism and disenfranchisement has infected financial and giving institutions. Currently they are reading “Love Is the Way” by Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry. It is a more optimistic and future looking book about holding onto hope in troubling times.

## Welcome Stephanie Wilson, Accounting Assistant

“It is a great pleasure to meet all of you and be of service to God with you, in the First Presbyterian Church. My name is Stephanie Wilson and I have a few dogs as a result of doing animal rescue. They are mixed breeds and would probably – collectively – represent at least half of the registered AKC breeds. The dominant breed represented is Catahoula Leopard mixed with Golden Retriever and Husky/White Shepherd. They are all fully grown and a bigger enjoyment because they are past the puppy stage! They do a good job of keeping me on a daily schedule—their dinner time is at 5:00 p.m., sharp. Most of my family is deceased in Kansas City. I have an adopted daughter who is grown and living in Arizona, and have enjoyed helping with my friends’ children while they were growing up. Thank you for welcoming me to First Presbyterian!



# Understanding Trauma to Better Serve our Neighbors

## ***Trauma-Informed Training to be held at FPC May 15***

FPC is partnering with the Topeka Rescue Mission to provide free trauma-informed training for our congregation. Receiving trauma-informed training will help us approach our neighborhood ministries outreach work with the understanding that people who are having social, emotional, or learning difficulties are likely to have current or past traumatic experiences. It will help us operate from the mindset that the behaviors we see are ways the individuals have learned to cope and adapt as a result of trauma.

On May 15, 2021 from 9 am to noon, Kourtney Barr with the Topeka Rescue Mission will present an overview and training in Trust-Based Relational Intervention. The training will cover: risk factors for trauma and its effects; brain development and functions; connecting, empowering, and correcting strategies for Trauma Based Relational Interventions; sensory needs; and how to address trauma through the lens of Christ.

We will learn about how trauma negatively impacts our brains, how those negative impacts influence our ability to interact with other people, and how to build relationships with people based on how we respond to those who have experienced trauma. As we continue to build our community outreach efforts we cannot serve others with the idea of fixing them—we must learn how to meet people where they're at.

The science behind the trauma-informed approach correlates directly with God's instructions to us in Colossians 3:12-13: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another and forgive any complaint you may have against someone else. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

The Neighborhood Ministry Team invites you to embrace this unique opportunity being offered to our church and encourages you (guests also welcome!) to sign up for the training on May 15. We will be the first church to receive this training from the Topeka Rescue Mission. To date, TRM has never done this training outside their walls. The training promises to be interesting, enlightening, and will prepare us to better serve our neighbors. This is especially important as we work to provide food and reach out to our neighbors as a Matthew 25 church. To sign up, you can call the church office at 785-233-9601, or email [lhennessey@fpctopeka.org](mailto:lhennessey@fpctopeka.org).

## **A Message from Your Stephen Ministers**

Grief is a journey one need not travel alone. We have all felt, or will all feel, grief in our lifetime. The greater the love, the greater the grief. Grief is a natural, normal and necessary process in working through difficult times caused by loss. There are three phases of grief your Stephen Minister helps you through: Shock: The experience of denial and disbelief in response to the loss; Recoil: Shock gives way to the reality of the loss as the person makes emotional adjustments; and Rebuilding: The person begins to adapt and becomes ready to move forward with life. Your Stephen Minister walks with you through this journey, providing a caring relationship. God walks with you, giving you both hope and healing for the loss in your heart.

Stephen Ministers are ready to listen: John Dorsey at 845-1177 or [jwdorsey\\_48@yahoo.com](mailto:jwdorsey_48@yahoo.com); Jane Owen at 862-5959 or [jwowen54@gmail.com](mailto:jwowen54@gmail.com); Pat Yancey at 233-9601 or [pyancey@fpctopeka.org](mailto:pyancey@fpctopeka.org); Sandra Brown at 233-9601 or [sbrown@fpctopeka.org](mailto:sbrown@fpctopeka.org).

# Matthew 25 — All Church Goals

## 2021 All Church Goals

100,000  
meals



Total as of  
April 30:  
**18,435**

100,000  
prayers



Total as of  
March 31:  
**2,367**

1,000  
invitations



Total as of  
March 30:  
**65**

Every member  
receives a visit



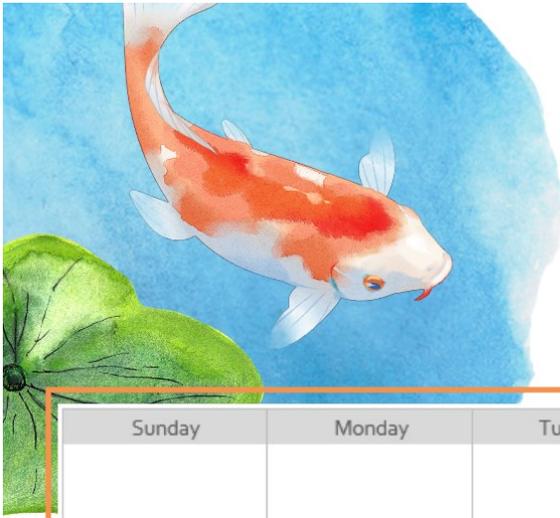
Reporting will  
begin in May

As of April 30 we have provided **18,435 meals** towards our goal of providing 100,000 meals in 2021; we've reported **2,367 prayers**, and made **65 invitations** to others to engage in the life of our church. If you have not yet reported your individual prayers for March (or if you are a committee or team leader and haven't yet reported your group's prayers for March) it's not too late. We will add your prayers to the running total.

It's also time to report your prayers and invitations for **April** by entering your totals using the online form on our website at [www.fpctopeka.org/matthew-25/](http://www.fpctopeka.org/matthew-25/). (There is a form for individuals, and a form for Team Chairs to use). You can also mail your April prayer tracker sheet to the office, or call the office at 785-233-9601 to record your totals. We will report all of the April totals in the June Messenger. On page 8 of this issue of Messenger you will find the May Prayer Tracker. You can also download copies on the Matthew 25 webpage. Thank you to our wonderful congregation for contributing to our 2021 all church goals!

## Sharefest 2021—Thank you to all who helped at Williams Elementary!





Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.  
-Romans 12:12

# MAY PRAYER TRACKER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

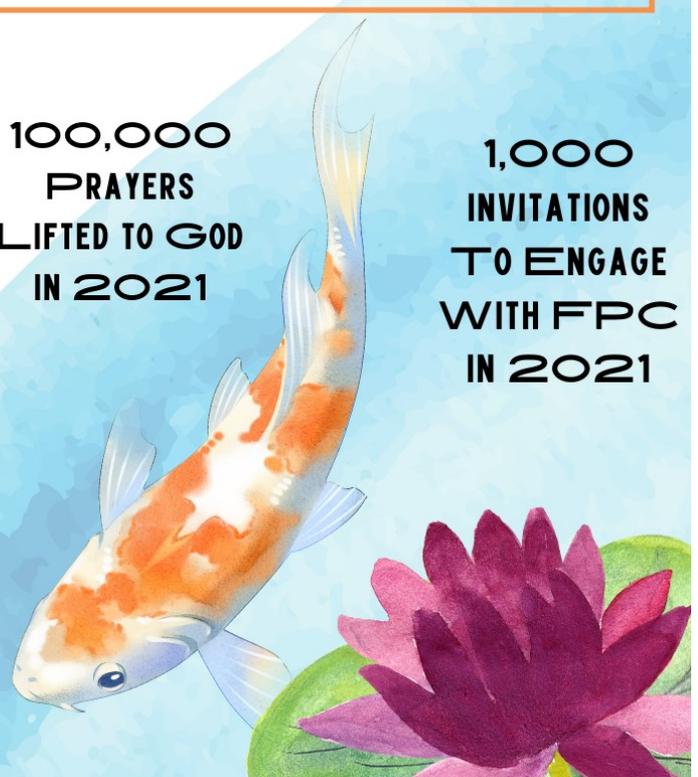
MY TOTAL PRAYERS IN MAY:

## I EXTENDED THESE INVITATIONS TO OTHERS IN MAY:

- \_\_\_\_ To Attend Worship
- \_\_\_\_ To Watch Online Worship
- \_\_\_\_ To Join a Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_ To Volunteer at Wednesday Food Distribution
- \_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_ Other:

**100,000  
PRAYERS  
LIFTED TO GOD  
IN 2021**

**1,000  
INVITATIONS  
TO ENGAGE  
WITH FPC  
IN 2021**



Please track the number of times you pray each day, and any invitations you extend to others to share in the life of FPC. At the end of the month you can mail your sheet to the church, enter your totals on the online form, or call the church to report your totals. Thank you for contributing to our 2021 all church goals!

# MAY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2 <b>Communion Sunday</b> Norma Pettijohn, Liturgist 9:00 AM Fellowship in Kitchen - Silver Wings 9:15 AM Children's Sunday School/VBS Zoom Mtg 10:30 AM Worship In Person & Online	3 Jerry Foster-AM Volunteer	4 Marguerite Underhill-Volunteer 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 12:00 PM Fellowship Mtg at Church & Zoom 7:00 PM Stephen Ministry Mtg - In Person and Zoom	5 Bob McElroy-PM Volunteer Sandra out of the office 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study Zoom 4:00 PM Worship Team Zoom Mtg 4:30 PM Neighborhood Food Distribution 6:30 PM Property Mtg, Church	6 Lorraine Hyle, PM Volunteer Sandra out of the office 11 AM - 1 PM National Day of Prayer, Chapel is open for visitors to pray	7 John Conlee-PM Volunteer Pastors' Day Off	8 9:00 AM Faith & Flour Baking Group, in person and Zoom
9 9:15 AM Children's Sunday School/VBS Zoom Mtg 10:30 AM Worship In Person & Online	10 Jerry Foster-AM Volunteer	11 Staff Inservice Day -- OFFICE CLOSED. 5:30 PM Deacons' Meeting	12 Bob McElroy-PM Volunteer 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study Zoom 12:00 PM Finance Team Mtg 4:30 PM Neighborhood Food Distribution	13 Lorraine Hyle, PM Volunteer Melanie McQuere-AM Volunteer 6:30 PM Quartet Rehearsal	14 John Conlee-PM Volunteer Pastors' Day Off	15 9 AM Trauma-Informed Training 4 PM Viera Graduation
16 9:15 AM Children's Sunday School/VBS Zoom Mtg 10:30 AM Worship In Person & Online	17 FPC Messenger Deadline Jerry Foster-AM Volunteer 5:30 PM Session/Deacon Joint Meeting w/dinner	18 Marguerite Underhill-Volunteer 10:00 AM Staff Meeting	19 Bob McElroy-PM Volunteer 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study - Zoom 4:30 PM Neighborhood Food Distribution	20 Lorraine Hyle, PM Volunteer Melanie McQuere-AM Volunteer Sandra out of the office 3:13 PM Adult CE Intentional Faith Development Team Zoom 6:30 PM Quartet Rehearsal	21 John Conlee-PM Volunteer Pastors' Day Off	22
23 Pentecost Sunday 9:15 AM Children's Sunday School/VBS Zoom Mtg 10:30 AM Worship In Person & Online	24 Jerry Foster-AM Volunteer 12:00 PM Personnel Committee Zoom Mtg 6:00 PM Family Ministry Zoom Mtg	25 Marguerite Underhill-Volunteer Sandra out of the office 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 5:30 PM Women's Bible Study, in person 6:30 PM Women's Bible Study, Zoom	26 Bob McElroy-PM Volunteer Sandra out of the office 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study Zoom 4:30 PM Neighborhood Food Distribution 5:30 PM Neighborhood Ministry Team Zoom Mtg	27 Lorraine Hyle, PM Volunteer Melanie McQuere-AM Volunteer	28 John Conlee-PM Volunteer Pastors' Day Off	29
30 Trinity Sunday 10:30 AM Worship Service, In Person & Online	31 Church Office is closed Memorial Day	1 Marguerite Underhill-Volunteer 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 12:00 PM Fellowship Mtg at Church & Zoom 4:00 PM Worship Team Zoom Meeting	2 Bob McElroy-PM Volunteer 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study - Zoom Video Mtg 4:30 PM Operation Food Secure Neighborhood Food Distribution	3 Lorraine Hyle, PM Volunteer Melanie McQuere-AM Volunteer	4 John Conlee-PM Volunteer Pastors' Day Off	5 Pershall/Brunner Wedding

**First Presbyterian Church**

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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TOPEKA**  
Loving God, loving neighbors and living with purpose

PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE

**Ministers**

All the Members of the Congregation

**Pastors**

Sandra Brown, *Pastor*  
Pat Yancey, *Commissioned Associate Pastor*  
Neil Weatherhogg, *Pastor Emeritus*

**Program Staff**

Beth Johnston, *Director of Family Ministries*  
Carrie Riordan, *Director of Communications*

**Music Staff**

Kevin Kellim, *Director of Music*  
Cynthia Neufeld Smith, *Organist*  
Norma Pettijohn, *Organist Emeritus*

**Support Staff**

Lori Hennessey, *Office Manager*  
Mark Ingle, *Maintenance Supervisor*  
Steve Johnson, *Part-time Custodian*  
Stephanie Wilson, *Accounting Assistant*

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**The deadline to submit articles for the June Messenger is May 17, 2021**

**MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES**

- |                       |                   |                           |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Leah Marshall—2       | Steve Crouch—16   | Tom & Sharon Hren—15      |
| Julie Ford—2          | Tom Hren—16       | Ed & Peggy Lakin—15       |
| Fritz Menninger—4     | Jan Benson—17     | Al & Jerriene Harper—25   |
| Bruce Cooper—8        | Ellen Townsend—18 | Scott & Susie McKenzie—25 |
| Ron Kaufman—9         | Lynn Mueller—19   | Kent & Ellen Townsend—25  |
| Beverly Peaslee—10    | Peggy Lakin—24    |                           |
| Gary Nantz—11         | Ethan McGee—29    |                           |
| Susie McKenzie—13     | Ray Frye—30       |                           |
| Bill Ross—13          | Jennie Rose—30    |                           |
| Ashlyn Garinger—13    | Laura Dicus—30    |                           |
| Norma Pettijohn—14    | Andrew Schauer—31 |                           |
| Elizabeth Cochrane—15 |                   |                           |