

**Transcript – Cindy Cook, Clerk of Session  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
October 28, 2018**

Good Morning,

My name is Cindy Cook and I have the privilege of serving as your clerk of session. Your session is charged with the spiritual leadership and governance of our congregation through prayer and discernment. I want to spend a few minutes sharing about a new season First Pres is experiencing through three different areas of renewal, growth, and stability:

**First**, we are a community being **renewed** through Christ, after a difficult season, moving through the discernment process. God is continuing to heal us. We give thanks to God for all areas of **growth** in the life of FPC. We are thriving disciples expanding God's Kingdom. We are **financially stable**, which I believe is one of many indicators for the health of our church. We are consistently reviewing and shaping our budget, which guides us in how we steward God's resources. We are grateful for the faithfulness of this congregation and your giving. Chris Herbold will discuss our financial state in more detail in a moment.

There are many other indicators of the health and accomplishing our vision in our FPC community. We desire to seek God's Spirit in joining His mission in the world. We see the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of our congregation not just by coming to the church building, but by being Christ's body in the world.

**SO, how do we join Him in what He is doing?** The FPC VISION compels us in three areas: **As we GATHER**, we encourage each other within community celebrating the joys and engaging in the messy and painful places. **As we GROW**, we support one another in our faith journeys in strengthening the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of our lives. **And through this compelling adventure, we are called to GO.**

**As Christ reminds us in Matthew 28:19-20:** "Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

**Whether you're new to the church or are a longtime member** we want to connect you to a relationship with God, other believers and ministry. We have people who would like to visit with you to help you get connected.

**I'm excited to share these new Fall opportunities:**

- In terms of Sunday School classes, we have a diversity of courses to engage and encourage you in your spiritual journey.

- We also have 6-week classes called Equipping Seminars on Sunday mornings that provide relational resources for parents with young children, young marrieds, and stewardship for your fiscal resources.
- We are introducing the initial phase of our Discipleship Groups also known as D Groups. These are comprised of 3-4 people meeting weekly to minister to one another as they engage God and His word. These small groups exemplify God's command to go into the world. We desire for the D Group model to be **continually** replicating in the process of making and sending disciples.
- Main Street Fellowship is another of our newer ministries. It is a collaborative process focused on shaping disciples through experiences of spiritual formation. The curriculum is focused on faith and work, theology and worldviews.

**From Eugene Peterson, we learn that** "Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son." We celebrate everyone's journey and want to walk alongside you with your next steps. God's Word & transformative experiences of Him help us grow and propels as we GO.

**To GO means to** follow Christ into the small places in the world where we are called to minister and love others well. These are sacred spaces. **And so my question is, have you had a transformative experience of God in your life? IF so... we would like to hear about it! You can send your God stories to Celeste Lanier, our communications director, at [clanier@fpchouston.org](mailto:clanier@fpchouston.org).**

**Another question I believe we should always ask is, *what is the evidence that we are a sending church?***

We facilitate the GOING through areas such as:

- **Project Flourish:** Over 150 church members participated in launching 5 new entrepreneurial projects impacting Houston and other communities in the world. We are excited to see how these ongoing projects are impacting people's lives.
- **The Alpha Course** is designed to explore some of life's biggest questions from a Christian perspective. Participants explore how Christian teaching helps or hinders our life experience. Alpha is open to everyone, skeptics to Christians.
- **Another aspect of the health of FPC** is our going into the world to make disciples through **Church Planting** (Matt Lee will present this further in a moment).

**To GO means** obedience to Christ in the daily work of faith as we move from the head to the heart and to the hands. We have many opportunities to participate with local Mission Partners within our community. We want to celebrate our ministry partners as well as highlighting the many ministries founded by the FPC community.

One of our partners, Cullen Middle School, will be highlighted in a video presentation shortly.

We would like to know how we can support you in the places you are already serving. We would also love to engage those of you who desire to connect with ministry through FPC.

**As we go out, Christ is moving through us and shapes us as HIS disciples.** There are many amazing stories of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our members which we will share a few throughout this meeting.

I am so excited to see all the places where God is moving within and through our FPC body.

God surprises us daily with His transformation in the life of FPC as we witness:

- The many new members becoming part of our FPC family.
- Our small groups continuing to thrive and shape Christ-centered community.
- Our Youth Ministry is full of excitement and adventures as they grow in their faith through accountability groups, Sunday School, retreats and mission trips.
- The Children's Ministry amazes us with the growth of our children weekly and our Vacation Bible School that had 400 participants this year.
- The Alpha Course continues to grow and has had over 100 attendees while continuing to reach out to our community.
- Global Mission Trips to Honduras, Africa and the Holy Land give our members a deeper and richer understanding of different cultures along with a greater understanding of our faith. These trips allow us to come alongside our mission partners, encouraging them and seeing first hand both the challenges and fruit of their ministry.

As an **update**, we are in the process of searching for three key ministry positions: the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee for *Pastor of Equipping and Sending* continues their process, as does the search for the *Director of Youth*, and the *11o5 Worship Leader*. Your ongoing prayers for the people God is calling to FPC for these areas are so important!

As First Presbyterian Church continues to grow deeper in our faith, going out to serve and sharing God's transformational love to those we are called to, we continue to lean on the Holy Spirit.

Please join me in praying for all of these amazing places we have the privilege of being a part of.

Our session thanks you for the opportunity to lead this FPC family.

Thank you,

Cindy Cook  
Clerk of Session