

The Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Presbytery

January 2020

We, the PC (USA) churches and ministries of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties, join together to foster vibrant worshipping communities who proclaim and live out the love of Jesus Christ for one another and our neighbors.

Joining Together. Worshipping God. Loving People.

Shining a Light on New Worshipping Communities



Providing a Safe Harbor

As worship begins each Sunday we are reminded in our welcome that “we a community of friends here to support each other and to serve the community in the light of Christ, especially those with needs, gathering to grow our faith with an inspired and illuminated pulpit and to be a safe harbor of love and acceptance.”

Safe Harbor Presbyterian sponsors the Cambria Dinner Fellowship, an ecumenical gathering that meets twice a month to provide fellowship, study and conversation about faith and social justice.

Safe Harbor has joined with others to maintain the “Got Your Back” program in north county schools. We provide food items and pack the back packs that are picked up on Fridays. This provides weekend meals for émigré children who are dependent on food programs that have been cut or eliminated by federal budget cuts. It is a like the summer lunch program we have supported for the last two years.

Members of Safe Harbor again helped provide Christmas Benevolence for émigré families. A CAP SLO social worker reports that in 70 percent of the target families living in a San Simeon Motel, both parents are working, many with multiple jobs in a single room without kitchen facilities. Safe Harbor is cooperating with others to provide reading material and a lending library for Spanish language children and mothers. Our leadership team encourages each of our worshipping community to participate and we are nearing a 100% response.

It is our intent to extend mission outreach to another at need group in Cambria, the lonely and

often shut in elderly. A community survey identified depression and loneliness as the two leading mental health issues in Cambria.

Demographic data underscores those who have lost mates, are in health decline, separated from distant relatives and shut in. We have begun planning and study to learn where and how Safe Harbor can respond. It is our goal to put a mission outreach in place in 2020. Our intent is to be a friend, to visit, to assist, to listen, and perhaps share communion with Christians who are home bound. We are looking at setting up a counseling component.

The congregation uses individual daily meditation guides including Scripture and prayer written for us by our retired mentor pastor Eugenia Gamble. We partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first Sunday of the month.

As one of our leadership team battled illness we provided support to him and his wife. We have provided a “friendship form” of pastoral counseling and continue to do so in the wake of his passing.

Our leadership team meets monthly to guide activities, plan worship and manage finances. Our level of giving has increased every year since 2015. 2017-2018 increase was 225%. For 2018-2019 we are up 128%. Our annual Kirkin’ of the Tartan and Reformation Sunday service draws visitors from the community.

We provide a rich and varied pulpit with the participation of Dr. Dennis Falasco, Dr. Steven Walker, guest preachers including Bonnie Boe, Rafaat Girgis, Denise Diab, Scott Walker, Dr. Brian Palmer and two of our senior Elders, Monty Rice and Tom Cochrun.

We are small and we are without a permanent pastor, but we are indeed a community of faith,

praying, studying, worshiping and serving. We endeavor to live into our name.

Church in the Park from Bob Ramos

In the last 2-2 1/2 years we have been blessed by seeing the fruit of sticking with the ministry. Simply showing up to do a light worship experience, meet new people, and give out donuts and coffee. Many of our homeless friends and others that haven't felt comfortable in a traditional church setting (their smell, their clothes, their poverty, and often their mental illness) gave them the feeling they would be judged or ostracized.

They come each Sunday morning at 11:00 at Veteran's Park in Santa Paula. We have seen the number of regular attenders grow in these past few years to average in the 30's. On any given Sunday, with visitors attendance could easily be above 40. We meet every Sunday, rain or shine, cold or hot. One of mottoes is to consistently show up every week.

We begin at 9:30 (during our service at First Pres. Santa Paula) with a faithful and consistent team of volunteers loading a truck with chairs, worship aids, & coffee and donuts. This team is critical in making the service possible. Once first service is over, I drive the truck to Veterans park, where another loyal team hurry to unpack the truck and set up for church. Donuts and coffee are laid out on a table that often draw folks that are in need of breakfast and often choose to stay for the service. We also draw "walkers by" who join us to see what it's all about.

The service is typical, with worship music, community prayer, a message aimed at the many needs represented there. Lifting up Christ to help empower folks in their lives, to connect to the God that loves them dearly. Communion is served every 1st Sunday, and we close with private prayer where I anoint and pray for individuals with specific needs.

We have been blessed to experience God's faithfulness in many of the prayer requests we have offered. We have seen Juan be prayed over for a job. He had been jobless and struggling financially for close to a year. The day after he came to the Park and was prayed over, he received a call from someone he didn't know and who didn't know his situation, and offered him a full time job which he has had since. Another gentleman who also was unemployed for years was prayed over and found a job that next week. Along with these two, God has

surprised people with housing when they were on the streets for months, if not years.

We have also experienced God's kind touch on people who were in need of physical healing and were healed. What a marvelous privilege to watch our Lord at work in peoples lives. Along with Sunday morning church, we have put together a dedicated team of 10 leaders that meet regularly to help me in thinking and praying how Church in the Park can continue to be a vibrant worship community.

The session of First Presbyterian is very involved in guidance and wisdom, and great support. The team also plans Park Community events, after service meals, karaoke, and game nights. We also support a Domestic Violence workshop for the city of Santa Paula. Through Sunday mornings and these events we have seen a strong sense of community develop these last 2 years. For many of our people community is foreign to them. It is fun to watch them become more and more comfortable with each other, with God, and themselves.

Spiritually, we have had 11 baptisms and confessions of faith. 2 of our leaders were nominated and will be installed as Deacons at First Pres. We have developed a weekly men's and women's Bible study, and, I have witnessed a growing hunger for the presence of God individually and as a church.

Lastly, over the past 2 years we have become part of PC(USA)'s 1001 New Worshipping Communities. Being part of this ministry continues to challenge and grow us in asking what does God have for Church in the Park. I am thoroughly jazzed about what God is doing in our midst, and what He has in store for the Park ministry in the years to come.

This is Your Newsletter

Have an item for the newsletter? Tell us your story. What's your Bright Spot? Send it to the editor, Lee Kirkpatrick at lkksbca@gmail.com. Word format preferred and photos always welcomed.



Next Presbytery Meeting

Saturday 8 February, Coastal Community Church, Grover Beach.