

Messenger Light

May 25, 2022



Matthew's Sabbatical (3rd and Final Part)

I am grateful for the many responses I've had to the previous two parts of this series explaining and leading up to my sabbatical leave from May 30th to September 5th. In the last installment, I mentioned that the grant from Lily's Clergy Renewal program specified funds for including the congregation in what I am setting out to explore. In short, a sabbatical isn't simply an opportunity for pastors to be renewed for ministry but should allow the whole church to be renewed as well. If this leave only serves me and my family, it will have fallen short of that goal. Just as the dramatic experiments I took part in as a child at the church where I grew up connected me in a new way to the story of our faith, my hope is to offer similar experiences here at First Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque.

Originally, it had been my hope to include a crafted drama once a month in worship while I was gone, so that we could have these experiences at the same time. But it became clear that it would be better for me to be present to help frame and interpret these worship dramas for the congregation. Using a form made popular by Paula Vogel's play *bake-offs* in New York City, a prompt was sent out to writers asking them to incorporate a handful of elements (including a verse of scripture) into a 10-15 minute play. Using this prompt, I have been able to commission two plays so far. One is from our very own Devon Hoffman. I hope to have Devon direct and offer her piece this fall after I return. The other came circuitously from a playwright referred to me by an old friend of someone in the church. Cary Gitter holds a BFA in dramatic writing and an MA in English and American literature from NYU. His full-length plays have been developed by the Penguin Repertory Theater, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, the Chameleon Theatre Circle, the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, EST, the Jewish Ensemble Theatre, the Jewish Plays Project, the Levine Jewish Community Center, New Jersey Repertory Company, NYU, West of 10th, and Wordsmyth Theater Company. He is a two-time O'Neill semifinalist and Jewish Playwriting Contest finalist, and he has received NYU's John Golden Playwriting Prize and honorable mentions for the New England Theatre Conference's Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award and the Kennedy Center's Rosa Parks Playwriting Award. The play he created for us is called *Her Favorite Place* and is about two friends who seek out the favorite place of a friend who has died by suicide to say their own goodbye. It is a beautiful piece about friendship, loss, and our attempts at making peace with what we don't and cannot fully understand. Because some of the subject matter of the piece may be difficult for those who have lost loved ones to suicide, listening groups led by mental health professionals in our congregation will be offered after both worship services. The play will feature our own Elder Amanda Pilcher and Ms. Nicholia Patellis, a humanities teacher in the middle school at Menaul.

I am eager to share this experience with you and to bring back a summer's worth of experience and ideas for how we can continue to expand on the church's historic tradition of using drama to tell our story, inform our faith, and shape us as disciples of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

~ Rev. Matthew Miller

Church Office Hours

**Monday—Thursday
8:00am to 2:00pm**

Our staff members can be reached individually by phone or email between 8am and 2pm, Monday through Friday:

Matthew Miller

505-764-2902

Stephanie Urban

505-764-2903

Frank Yates

505-681-0625

Carolyn Rhodes

505-764-2906

Libby Whiteley

505-764-2924

Niccole Pierre-Williams

505-764-2911

Sharon Baca

505-764-2900

If you have an after-hours emergency, you can reach Matthew through our Help-line at 505-764-2910

**First Presbyterian Church
(USA)**

**215 Locust Street, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-764-2900
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Calendar for the Week

Thursday, May 26th

- ABQ Pipes and Drums Rehearsal, 6:00pm in F.H.

Sunday, May 29th

- Fellowship Choir rehearsal at 8:00am in the choir room
- In-person Fellowship Hall Worship Service at 8:30am
- Youth Group at 9:45am in CE Room 220
- Through the Bible Class at 9:45am in CE Room 219
- Adult Sunday School at 9:45am via Zoom/In-person in Kerygma Room
- Chancel Choir rehearsal in F.H. at 10:30am
- In-person / Livestream Sanctuary Worship Service, 11am

Monday, May 30th OFFICE CLOSED

- Blessed Memorial Day to all!

- NO BELL CHOIR rehearsal

Tuesday, May 31st

- Prayer / Book Study Group at 12:00pm via Zoom
- Recital rehearsal in F.H. at 3:00pm

Wednesday, June 1st

- Personnel Committee in Kerygma Room at 6:30pm
- Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 7:00pm – 8:30pm in F.H.

Thursday, June 2nd

- ABQ Pipes and Drums Rehearsal, 6:00pm in F.H.

Sunday, June 5th

- Fellowship Choir rehearsal at 8:00am in the choir room
- In-person Fellowship Hall Worship Service at 8:30am
- Youth Group at 9:45am in CE Room 220
- Through the Bible Class at 9:45am in CE Room 219
- Adult Sunday School at 9:45am via Zoom/In-person in Kerygma Room
- Chancel Choir rehearsal in F.H. at 10:30am
- In-person/Livestream Sanctuary Worship Service, 11am
- Albuquerque Chamber Concert, at 4:00pm in the FPC Sanctuary

New Adult Sunday School Class Starts This Sunday

How Jesus Became God—Summer 2022 hybrid class and lectures with Prof. Bart D. Ehrman, Ph.D., M.Div. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. If Jesus had not been declared God, his followers would have remained a sect within Judaism. This is the second half of this course and will begin Sunday, May 29th in the Kerygma Room and on Zoom. Contact John Emerson, at jemerson96@gmail.com for the zoom link.

Godly Play Sunday School

Godly Play Sunday School has concluded its spring semester. There will be no Godly Play Class until August 2022 when we prepare to kick-off a new school year. Stay tuned for great family and fellowship opportunities with the church this summer!

Giving Options

FPC works in our ministries to reach out to members of the church and our greater community. You can send contributions by mailing checks to the church:

First Presbyterian Church

215 Locust Street NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

You can give online at www.firstpresabq.org, click on the yellow “Give Online” button in the menu bar. Follow the instructions in the new window that opens to make your donations.

MinistryOne App Visit the App Store on your smart phone to find “Church by Ministry One.” Use this app to donate quickly and securely, and access our YouTube channel for videos and sermons.

Isotopes Baseball Game

We are planning a fun-filled summer with many opportunities for fellowship with our FPC congregation. Join us on July 24th for an Isotopes baseball game in Albuquerque. Details and ticket information to follow.



Music Camp This Summer!

We are planning a Music Camp for children and youth this summer, featuring participants from area Presbyterian churches. Mark your calendars for Monday, July 25th to Thursday, July 28th. Camp will be from 9:00am to 12:00pm for ages 3 – High School. Details and registration to follow!

Back to School Picnic

Mark your calendars for August 7th as well. We hope to enjoy a back-to-school picnic with the congregation. Join us from 4:00pm to 6:00pm at Kiwanis Picnic area at the Elena Gallegos open space.



Outdoor Worship Services

Our Fellowship Hall early services will move to the covered patio beginning June 5th. Join us at 8:30am on Sunday mornings for a refreshing worship experience.

A Special Welcome to Our New Music Director, Mr. Leon Lake

Leon Lake is an international recitalist, vocal coach, and conductor from West Texas. Mr. Lake first attended South Plains College where he studied voice with Ruby Moultrie, and piano with Wilma Ryan and Dr. Hye-Gyung Ji. Mr. Lake continued his studies at Southern Methodist University where he studied voice with Barbara Hill-Moore.

Mr. Lake is an accomplished pianist and vocalist who has won many national and international competitions including the Leontyne Price Young Artist Competition and NATS.

Mr. Lake has performed extensively in opera and musical theater. His musical theater roles include: Daddy Warbucks in *Annie*, Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, Fats Waller in *Ain't Misbehavin'*, Father in *Children of Eden*, Juan Peron in *Evita* and Léon in the world premiere of *Two Orphans*, a role written for him by Theresa Rebeck and Kim Sherman. Mr. Lake's opera roles include: Gluck's Orfeo, Oberon from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Britten, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Baba in *The Rakes Progress*, and Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* by Handel. Mr. Lake also works as a champion for the music of Black Composers. As an opera coach and vocal consultant for young professional singers Mr. Lake's students have been in productions on Broadway and in opera houses across America and Europe.

Mr. Lake has served as the Director of Performing Arts at the historic Menaul School since 2016. As a music educator Mr. Lake has taught vocal music, acting, and arts history classes. As a director Mr. Lake has also directed over 30 stage performances.

Mr. Lake has worked in church and sacred music since 2005. In that time, he has worked as a church pianist, accompanist, soloist, arranger, conductor, and music director. Mr. Lake has worked with multiple choirs from almost every denomination and now serves as the music director for First Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque.

Mr. Lake currently lives in Tijeras with his husband Skyler.





Congratulations to Our 2022 Graduates!

During these still uncertain times, we are so excited to celebrate the academic achievements of this year's graduates at First Presbyterian Church. Congratulations to each of you for your hard work and dedication to education! Please join us in honoring the following graduates in our congregation:

Delaney Faith Babenco, graduating from Valley High School

Tyler Duval, grandson of Jane and Curt Moses, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from the Seattle Film University

Natalie Neuschwander, granddaughter of Bob and Sue Bowersock, graduating from Eagan High Scholl in Egan, Minnesota and will attend Normandale Community College to study Theater

Anna Medendorp, completing her PHD in Anthropology from University of New Mexico

Daniel Moses, son of Eric and Stacy Moses, grandson of Jane and Curt Moses, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from New Mexico State University

Julie Dees, daughter of Philip and Becky Dees, graduating from High School

What your FPC staff is reading this month:

The History of Apologetics

Avery Cardinal Dulles was an influential Catholic theologian (and son of John Foster Dulles) who grew up Presbyterian and converted to Catholicism in college. In 1999 he wrote a sizeable tome entitled **The History of Apologetics** which I recently read. It outlines how the church, for 2000 years, has tried to live out the admonition of I Peter 3:15: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is within you." The word "apology" means a defense of your beliefs.

It is amazing how many ways people have chosen to defend the Christian faith: personal experience, the beauty and order in the creation, miracles and prophecies fulfilled, the moral obligations felt in the human heart, the grandeur and power of the life of Jesus, etc. The reason I am reading this book is that on Thursday July 7th at 10am at the Oasis Center in Albuquerque, I will be giving a lecture on this book. This is not an easy read but a very fulfilling one!

~ Frank Yates

