

Happy New Year

**Joyfully Sharing God's Boundless Love with All in Our Community
without Limitation, Exception, or Condition**

UNIVERSITY PRESS

January 2019

Growing Deeper in our Faith and Relationships

by Dustin Maddox, Associate Pastor

As we start a new year, we are very excited to provide opportunities for everyone to grow deeper in relationship with God and one another! With this in mind, we begin a new sermon series that speaks to those new to faith and those who are lifelong believers and explorers of faith. And not just a sermon series, but a chance to be in a small group to discuss what we have heard and explore our questions.

In addition, beginning this month, UPC will host an Alpha course for those new to the faith.

Please spend time thinking and praying about people you know who may be interested in one - or any! - of these opportunities, and read on for details.

A New Sermon Series | January 7 - February 11 **Stuff Christians Say: Moving from Clichés to Christ**

Christians can have a reputation for saying the wrong things at the wrong time. These are the clichés, religious jargon, and things we think must be somewhere in the Bible. You know, things like, "Everything happens for a reason," "God helps those who help themselves," and, my personal favorite, "The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it."

Without carefully examining some of our religious language and ideas about what the Bible says, we can unintentionally hurt the very people we want to love and serve. From January 7 - February 11, we are taking a playful look at "Stuff Christians Say." We want to move beyond clichés toward the reality of what Jesus has to offer, not only to Christians, but to the world.

This series is designed with your friends and family in mind - especially the ones who don't regularly come to church. We would love for you to invite friends and family to come hear and discuss this series on the dates listed below. Who do you know that might be intrigued by one, any, or all of these topics?

- January 7: Everything Happens for a Reason
- January 14: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves
- January 21: God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle
- January 28: God Said It, I Believe It, That Settles It
- February 4: Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin
- February 11: Moving from Clichés to Christ

Exploring the Series Together with Small Group Opportunities

This sermon series begs for group discussion, and building and strengthening community through spiritually-formative relationships is something we deeply value as central to what it means to be the Body of Christ. So, we have multiple small group opportunities available throughout the week in order to dive deeper into the sermon topics listed above and community with one another.



You are invited to join the group which fits best with your schedule and also invite friends who may be interested in the conversation. Sign up Sunday morning in the Narthex or Great Room by January 7, when the series starts.

Here are the groups:

Sunday Mornings at 10:15 a.m. in the Youth Room | Micah Qualle and Ruth Clayton host a conversation about the sermon as well as some practical tips and ideas that can help us all be better equipped to be ambassadors of Christ.

Sunday Evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the Great Room | Lou and Christi Paradise host discussion.

Wednesday Evenings at 6:30 p.m. | Louis and Hollie Volpp host discussion in their home at 373 W Houston Avenue in Clovis.

Alpha: A Course for Exploring the Christian Faith

Do you know someone who is new to the Christian faith? Rachel Madsen and I are hosting an Alpha Course on Monday evenings at 6 p.m. in the Great Room. Alpha is geared toward people exploring faith and is built on casual conversations around a meal. The course meets for 12 weeks. Signups are going on now.

How you can help us with the Alpha program:

- We would love for you to invite any friends who may not attend church or identify themselves as Christians to sign up to attend.
- We welcome individuals, families, and groups to sign up to provide or sponsor a meal for the Alpha participants.

To volunteer for a meal, and for more information or questions about all of these opportunities, email me at dustin@upcfresn.org, or call me at 439-8807. We are very excited to grow deeper in our relationships with God and one another! Join us on Sunday mornings and throughout the week.

Grace + Peace, *Dustin*

Epiphany Star

The word Epiphany literally means revelation. This year we celebrate Epiphany on Sunday, December 31 with a special revelation from God to ponder and pray over in 2018.

Each person will receive a star with a special word written on it just for you. You are invited to keep this star in a place where you will see it every day and allow God to speak to you through it. Some of you will instantly connect with your word, for others it might take a bit more time. Either way, trust that God has something important to tell you through this word, and remember that God is always speaking.

If you are unable to join us for worship on December 31 for our Epiphany celebration, Star Words can be picked up through January after worship or from the church office.

Ordination of Dustin Maddox | January 13

Praise the Lord! It is with great joy we announce that as of the beginning of the year, our very own Dustin Maddox begins a one-year term as our temporary Associate Pastor! Dustin has had a strong ministry here at UPC serving the youth and families, overseeing Christian Education, working with Missions, offering pastoral care, and helping to lead worship. Now, our Presbytery has the privilege of formally recognizing Dustin's call to ordained ministry and celebrating with us this momentous step both in his life and in the life of our church.



Dustin's ordination takes place at UPC on January 13 at 1 p.m. and all are invited to attend and show support for this faithful servant. There is a reception following in the Great Room to celebrate Dustin's new ministry among us. A basket will be available at the service and reception to collect cards, or you can drop off your kind words with Kerry in the office if you will be unable to celebrate with us in person.

For many of you this process has been more difficult than usual. Unfortunately, the work of the original Associate Pastor Search Committee back in 2014 coincided with difficult transitions both in our church and in the Presbytery. As a result, steps were skipped in the process. This led to miscommunication and pain as new leadership stepped in to try to fix mistakes made initially. We know the intent of the Committee on Ministry was never to hurt Dustin or the church, but to make sure the integrity of

the ordination process was maintained. As Presbyterians, we take seriously the call to ministry, and have a process in place to ensure that everything is done properly and in order. This fall, Pastor Renn and Session representatives have been met with sincere willingness and support from the Committee on Ministry as we have taken this step forward together. We hope celebrating Dustin's ordination and having him serve as our Associate Pastor help heal old wounds and renew the spirit of partnership between UPC and Presbytery.

We want to clarify why Dustin is serving as "temporary" Associate Pastor and what that means for us. Since the church initially asked Dustin to become our Associate Pastor before he was eligible to receive a call, important steps were skipped in the process and a new search committee needs to be called before we can call a permanent Associate Pastor. Asking Dustin to serve as a one year, temporary Associate Pastor was the quickest way to ordain him and recognize his ministry among us, while still allowing the church time to go through the proper steps. In the coming year, Session will continue to evaluate the needs of our congregation, and can call a Congregational Meeting to start a new search process. Since we have gone through this process recently, it should not take as long as it has in the past and our goal is to complete this work during this one-year temporary term. And yes, Dustin is eligible to be considered for this permanent installed position.



If you have any further questions about the process or the upcoming ordination service, please do not hesitate to contact any of us listed below. We are happy to talk with you further, and are overjoyed beyond belief to be able to serve alongside such a gifted colleague and friend.

With joy and gratitude, *Pastor Renn and Elders Rita Dei, Dave Eaton, Sol Eufracio, Winston Fuller, Carolyn Gerheuser, Doug Lowe, Jesse Madsen, Lisa Matson, Scott Matson, Wayne McMillen, Micah Qualle, and Linda Stolling.*

Ordination and Installation of Officers on January 14

As part of our Sunday worship on January 14, we are pleased to be ordaining and installing new officers. Recently elected officers are Elders Leonard Babcock, Melissa Manion, and Wayne McMillen (serving a second 3-year term); and Deacons Edith Barnette, Sue Christiansen, Chanphone Rajsavong (also serving a second 3-year term), Rhea Rehack-Griffith, Dana Rossi, Andrea Smith, and Louis Volpp.

This year, we also welcome Nan Barker as a new member on the Human Resources Committee, and Tim Buchanan as a new Trustee on the Board of Property and Finance. And, we are pleased to have the following members serving on the 2018 Nominating Committee: Donna Brady, Amy Evans, Richard Gist, and Denise Grisez.

Sounds Great!

by Cactus Harris, Director of Music & Arts and Resident Organist

For the past six months, our 11 a.m. Contemporary Worship service has been gathering for Sunday worship in half of the Great Room. This initial "experiment" was meant to create a more intimate space that would better fit the service's attendance. What a success this has been! The energy and attendance has been on the rise. So much, in fact, that we will be using the full space of the Great Room in January!

Thanks to generous donors, we made audio and video upgrades to the Great Room. These upgrades include the addition of a permanent sound system, as well as mounted television screens. Not only is this beneficial for the 11 a.m. Contemporary Service, it also makes the Great Room a more accessible multipurpose room with AV capabilities that can be used for meetings and receptions. How thankful we are to be blessed with wonderful facilities to meet our needs!

Great gets even greater in 2018, *Cactus*

Good News in Uncharted Territory

by The Reverend Renn Serna, Senior Pastor



"We are in uncharted territory trying to lead dying churches into a post-Christian culture that now considers the church an optional, out of touch and irrelevant relic of the past. What do you do?... There is no route in front of us, no map, no quick-fix or easy answer. But... this is good news... [for the church] has always been a small band of people willingly heading into uncharted territory with a mission worthy of our utmost dedication."

Canoeing the Mountains by Tod Bolsinger

All of you are familiar with the challenges facing the Church in the U.S. today: Decreasing membership, older buildings, less young families, tighter budgets. And for some reason, the tools that worked in the past are proving to be less and less effective. There has been a fundamental shift in the culture at large, and somehow the Church needs to adapt if she is going to continue to effectively share the Good News of God's love.

UPC is not alone in facing these challenges, and thankfully, there are many ways we can faithfully follow God in the changing world we find ourselves in. One thing the Session and I are excited about is the opportunity to partner with the Presbytery of San Joaquin to begin talking about what God has in store for us next.

In 2018, UPC along with three other churches in our Presbytery, will be working with a ministry consulting group called Pneumatrix (pronounced NEW-matrix). Under their leadership we will be learning more about our changing world and how we can best respond to the needs of those around us. A team of eight church members, along with Dustin and myself, have committed to meeting once a month with our Pneumatrix coach and learning how we can most effectively minister to the world around us. The focus will be on learning more about the needs of our community and uplifting the strengths of our church, while discerning how we can most effectively carry our rich heritage into tomorrow.



We will be focusing much of our time together around the book *Canoeing the Mountains* in which author Tod Bolsinger challenges us to think creatively about moving boldly into the future. I would invite you to purchase a copy of the book yourself and read along with us. We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas, and share what we have been learning with you as well.

Please be praying for us in the coming year, and start to think about what you might be able to do to share God's love in new ways. We too are heading into uncharted waters, but fear not--God goes with us!

Team Members: Christine Barker, Tony Bounthapanya, Rachel Fern, Melissa Manion, Todd Minturn, Sandie Woods, Linda Jean Voth, Cathy Wingert.

With much love, *Pastor Renn*

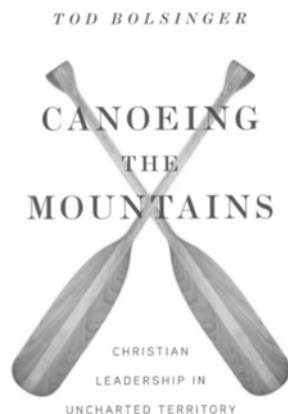
Session Report

by Ceci Johnson, Clerk of Session

Elders and Deacons met together on Tuesday, December 5 for a soup and salad supper followed by their annual joint meeting and celebration to welcome new Elders and Deacons and thank those retiring. Each board then met separately for a monthly business meeting.

Some highlights of Session's recent work:

- Approved Terms of Contract for Dustin Maddox as Temporary Associate Pastor.
- Approved holding Dustin's Ordination Service on Saturday, January 13 at 1 p.m.
- Planned for the January Session Retreat at Calvin Crest January 19-21.
- Approved wording for signs to be displayed on the UPC campus.
- Approved enhancements to the Great Room for sound and visuals.
- Approved Giving Tuesday to benefit Presbyterian Disaster Relief, FIRM, and Calvin Crest.



Thank you to everyone who participated in #GivingTuesday. We raised \$520 in support of Presbyterian Disaster Relief, Calvin Crest, and Firm.

UPC Groups WEEKLY

Contemplative Prayer: Come Mondays at 6:30 p.m. to the Godly Play Room (Rooms 3-4) for Christ-centered meditation. No previous experience is necessary, just a desire to spend quiet, still time with the Divine. For more information, email Cathy Wingert at wingy104@aol.com. The group is not meeting on January 1.

Women's Bible Study: The group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. in the Great Room. After a break for the holidays, they resume their weekly meetings on January 10. They are just starting a new study - Women of the New Testament. Join them and learn about the women of our faith. For more information, email Laura Lindegren at punkin2826@yahoo.com, or call her at 299-1838.

Thursday Evening Bible Study: The group, led by Ceci Johnson, meets for study Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. After a hiatus for the holidays, they will resume weekly meetings on January 11. They are currently "wrestling" with the Gospel of Matthew. They invite you to join them. For more information, email Ceci Johnson at cjartistquilts@gmail.com.

MONTHLY

Young Families Gathering: This event is open to all who want to fellowship with young families. They usually meet the first Monday evening of the month and are not meeting in January, but resume in February. For information, email Dustin at dustin@upcfresno.org.

Intercessory Prayer Service: This is a monthly service where all are invited to come pray for loved ones, members of our congregation, community, and world. They are not meeting in January, but will be back in February. For more information, email Pastor Tedd at teddlyons@gmail.com, or call/text him at 906-1438.

Presbyterian Women (PW): PW meets Tuesday, January 9 at 9:30 a.m. in the Great Room for refreshments and a business meeting. For the morning program, they welcome Pam Riffle, who works with her therapy dog. Bring a friend and join our Presbyterian Women! For more information, email Ruth Kallenberg at rbkallenberg@gmail.com.

Pub Theology: Join the discussion on Tuesday, January 16 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Sequoia Brewing Company (corner of Champlain and Perrin in the Piazza Del Fiore Center). Add your voice to the discussion of a variety of topics concerning faith, religion, and God. Seating is limited so come early to ensure a spot. They meet monthly on the third Tuesday. Listening and discussion are encouraged; drinking is optional. For more information, email Dustin at dustin@upcfresno.org, or text him at 288-0083.



Clippers: Clippers meet on Friday, January 19 at 7 p.m. in the Great Room for their annual Bunco evening. Bring a small dessert to share and your lucky throwing hand. There are prizes! Please RSVP to Lorna Wendt at 222-3859, or Marcella Onieda at 447-9488. The Clippers are also pleased to announce their 2018 leaders: "Skippers" Cathy and Ben Douglas, "Pursers" Sue and Bob Smith, and "Sunshine Person" Laura Lindegren.

UPC Food Pantry: The food distribution is Saturday, January 20 at 8 a.m. It is held the third Saturday of each month. Come and help by texting Dustin at 288-0083 to volunteer. If you would like to donate to the food of the month item for the distribution, the food item this month is

#GIVINGTUESDAY



canned protein (tuna, chicken, etc.). Bring your donations to the Narthex on Sunday mornings or drop them at the office during the week. There is also always a need for paper bags.

MEETING AT UPC

Sheeper Than Therapy: Enjoy a group of knitters and crocheters whose skills range from beginner to expert. They meet at UPC the first Saturday of the month. Join them Saturday, January 6 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. For

information, click here to visit the Sheepier Than Therapy website at www.sheeperthantherapy.org.

The Pastor is in: Pastor Renn's Office Hours & Contact Info

Monday: Sabbath

Tuesday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Office)

Wednesday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Office)

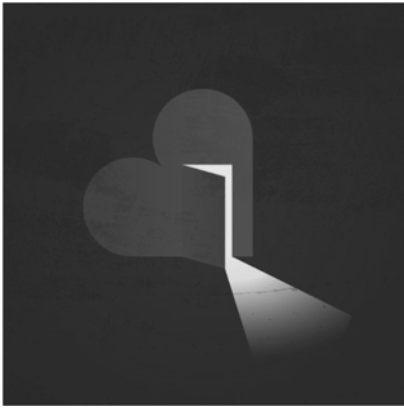
Thursday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Office)

Friday: Sermon preparation (Home)

Office Phone: (559) 439-8812

Pastoral Emergency Line: (559) 387-4250

Email: renn@upcfresno.org



January Birthdays

2 Isabel Aguilera
Donna Brady
Winston Fuller
5 Lorna Bosavanh
Simeon Bugay
6 Chanphone Rajsavong
7 John Bosavanh
Ray Dull
Betty Higdon
9 James Lyons
10 Sophia Fern
11 Chris Gromis
James Orr
12 Kerry Neal
Charles Warnes
14 David Eaton
15 Karen Enns
19 Nathaniel Stephenson
20 Josiah Bosavanh
21 Tom Jones
22 Margil Vanderhoff
Lorna Wendt
24 Marcella Oneida
27 Stephen Wichert
Lorraine Yerxa
28 James Ayars
David Long
29 Chris Dei
John Vencil

January Anniversaries

8 Greg & Shannon Pozovich
10 Scott & Lisa Matson
18 Bob & Wanda Vert
21 Ren & Judy Adams
29 Louis & Hollie Volpp

January Calendar

1 New Year's Day - Office Closed
2 Deacons Meet 7 p.m.
3 Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
4 Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 p.m.
Thursday Bible Study
6:30 p.m.
6 Sheper Than Therapy
8:30 a.m.
8 Contemplative Prayer
6:30 p.m.
9 Presbyterian Women
9:30 a.m.
10 Women's Bible Study
9:30 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
11 Thursday Bible Study
6:30 p.m.
Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
13 Dustin's Ordination 1 p.m.
15 MLK Day - Office Closed
Contemplative Prayer
6:30 p.m.

January Calendar cont.

16 Pub Theology 6:30 p.m.
17 Women's Bible Study
9:30 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
18 Bell Choir Rehearsal
6:30 p.m.
Thursday Bible Study
6:30 p.m.
19-21 Session Retreat
20 Food Distribution 8 a.m.
22 Contemplative Prayer
6:30 p.m.
23 Ministry Meetings
(times vary)
24 Women's Bible Study
9:30 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
25 Bell Choir Rehearsal
6:30 p.m.
Thursday Bible Study
6:30 p.m.
27 Baroque Festival
28 UPC Annual Meeting
10 a.m.
29 Contemplative Prayer
6:30 p.m.
31 Women's Bible Study
9:30 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Sunday Worship Schedule for January

9 a.m. Classic Worship | 11 a.m. Contemporary Service

11 a.m. Lao Language Service | except the 1st Sunday

Pastors

The Reverend Renn Serna, Senior Pastor

The Reverend Dustin Maddox, Associate Pastor

Return Service Requested

Mailing Label Here

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