

*The Connector*

November 2011

“Parson to Person” by Rev. Kirk Morledge

Something happened last month at FPC that I don't think has ever happened before in our 130+ years as a worshipping congregation. It was a thing unlikely to happen in any Presbyterian Church, or, for that matter, in any mainline church today. Sociologists of religion have observed that, over the past 50 years, the “mainline has been becoming the sideline” on the American religious scene. Mainline Protestant churches (UCC, Methodist, Lutheran, American Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational) have been losing members for years. Fewer kids, fewer young families. Fewer baptisms. More and more funerals. More and more empty Sunday school rooms.

But by God's grace and the work of His Spirit, our experience has been the opposite at FPC. Our Sunday school classes continue to overflow. Our Bible school grows every year. At the last Session meeting the Elder for Children's Ministries here at FPC reported she was having to order more tables for our Sunday school classrooms to accommodate more and more kids.

So here's the thing that caught my attention last month: young parents brought us their children for baptism on every Sunday in October. And not just every Sunday, but at nearly every worship service we had last month, of which we have two every Sunday.

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me.” Coming, they are! This is a testimony to the work of God's Spirit through some of the finest Sunday school teachers and children's ministry leaders any church could be thankful for.

A truly memorable moment occurred two Sundays ago, when 11 year old Payton stood before the church to be baptized. She had come into my office that week. Her mom was with her but I could immediately see that Payton was wanting this for herself and asked if she could be baptized. As we talked about baptism and deciding to follow Jesus in our own lives, she asked me if she could share something she wrote with the congregation. I said, “Do you want me to read something for you?” She replied, “Can I read something myself?”

I said, “Sure!” And she did. After that service, more than a few folks suggested that we share some of Payton's inspiring words with the congregation. Here are some excerpts. We give thanks for what God is doing in the lives of our kids and the life of our Church.

I first had an idea about Jesus when I was about four years old, and I was going to church.

I was nine years old when I really started to think about Jesus, because I really started to realize that Jesus will be with me every second of my life.

Some of the ways I learned about God and Jesus are: I listen in services and Sunday school, I read quite a few books that taught me a lot about Jesus, and my parents also taught me some things about God and Jesus.

People who taught me about Jesus are: my mom, my dad, my camp counselors at Bethel Horizons, and also my church family.

I was taught that Jesus ALWAYS forgives our sins. Jesus loves us no matter what we look like, or even if we do something really bad, Jesus still love us.

I thank God for shelter, family, food, my friends, a church family, and my teachers.

Jesus is a very important part of my life. That's why I want to be baptized. I want Jesus to permanently become my Lord and Savior.

My favorite Bible story is the story of Moses

It's my favorite story because I like how the Princess of Egypt risked the chance of getting in trouble by her dad to save baby Moses and gave him to a Hebrew nurse to take care of him.

—Payton, age 11