



# THE FPC JOURNEY

Walking in Freedom,  
Wholeness, and  
Intimacy



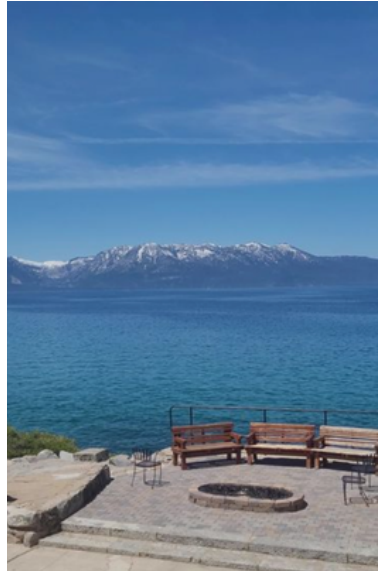
June 2025

[www.ReachingTheValley.org](http://www.ReachingTheValley.org)

# Welcome to:

## The FPC Journey.

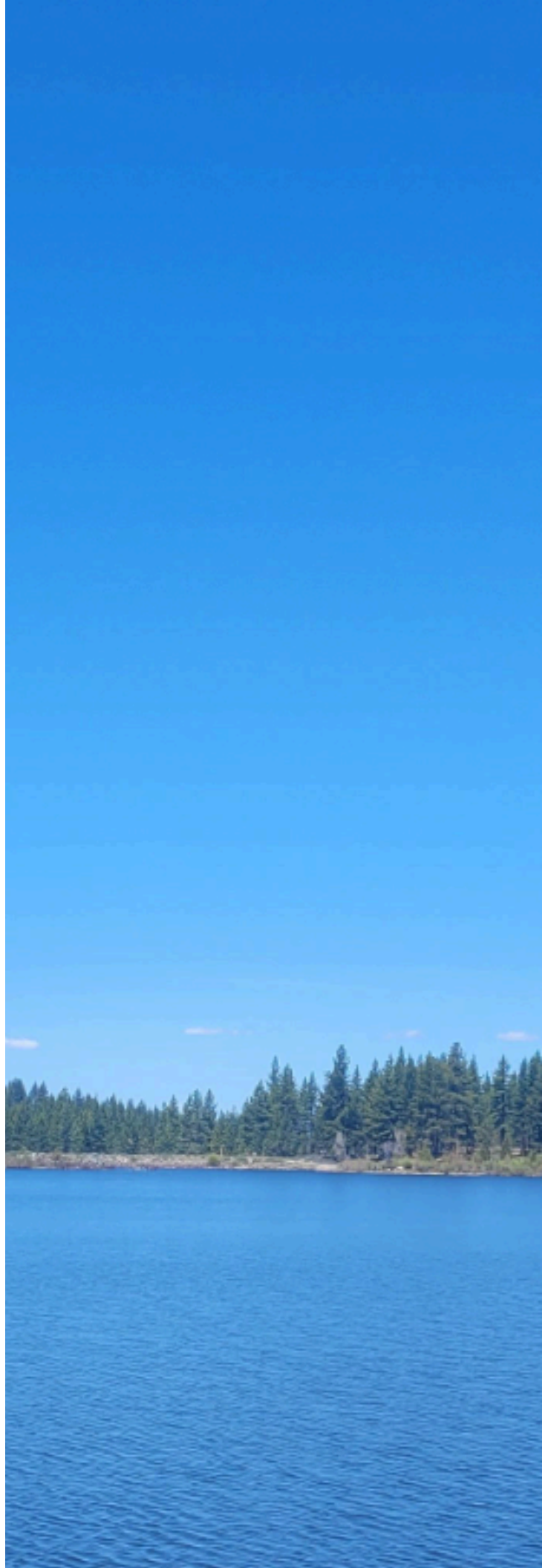
Stay Connected with  
First Presbyterian  
Church of Santa Clara –  
Your Church Family in  
Santa Clara, CA- with  
The FPC Journey



Join us as we share the latest news, events, and inspirational updates in our newsletter. Our newsletter is your go-to source for staying connected with our vibrant community, spiritual growth opportunities, and upcoming programs. Whether you're a long-time member or visiting for the first time, our newsletter aims to keep you informed about everything happening in our church and our local Santa Clara community.

Each month, we will strive to offer insightful devotionals/articles, upcoming event details, volunteer opportunities, and ways to get involved with the church. Stay up to date with our weekly services, youth programs, mission projects, and much more. Be part of the First Presbyterian family and grow in faith, fellowship, and service.

Visit our website at [www.reachingthevalley.org](http://www.reachingthevalley.org) for more details.





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FOLLOW US AT



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
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CLARA**

**OR**



## Hope in the Midst of Grief

By: Vivian Shults in Honor of Dan Casey (8/29/49-10/31/06)

"Who Taught Me How to Live Life to the Fullest

In November of 2004, my husband Dan was diagnosed with nodular malignant melanoma, and there was a 25% chance that it had spread. On April 14, 2006, seventeen months later on Good Friday, Dan had a CT brain scan to see why he was losing some sensation in his left hand. The CT scan showed a one-inch tumor, which was surgically removed on April 25, 2006. The surgery itself was very successful, but the prognosis the doctors gave us was only 6-12 months. At this point, our lives took on a new focus of enjoying every moment as a precious gift from God. On August 22, 2006. Six additional brain tumors were found, and Dan underwent targeted radiation with the Cyber Knife procedure at Stanford Hospital.

After he recovered from the effects of the radiation, we had a wonderful time celebrating our 22nd wedding anniversary at one of our favorite restaurants in downtown Sunnyvale on October 13th. The next morning, however, Dan was not feeling well, so we went to EL Camino Hospital for yet another CT scan. The results showed that a second tumor was hemorrhaging, and the prognosis was that Dan had only "days to weeks" to live.



He was not coherent much of that time, and yet our family had many meaningful moments, some of which I would like to share with you.

10/16 - We were almost asleep that night, and Dan said, **"God's plan is right there...it's pretty cool."**

10/27- I asked him, "How are we doing?" He said, **"We are doing well."** I agreed with him and said, "Yes, we are...and you are doing especially well." Dan said, **"Thank you, sweetheart."** After a pause, he said, **"Like it's prepared beforehand."**

10/28 - I asked Dan, "Are you confused?" and he joked, **"No, but I wouldn't be surprised if I was."** Later that day, Dan said, **"There are a lot of people taking us under their wings."**

10/30 - That evening, Dan asked, **"How are you doing?"** I said, "I'm doing well." Dan said, **"So we shall count this as a blessing!"** He always had a heart of gratitude for all of God's blessings, great and small.

10/19 - That night, I said, "I love you, dear." Dan said, **"I love you, sweetheart."** I said, "I'm right here if you need anything." Dan responded, **"ALL WE NEED IS JESUS!"**



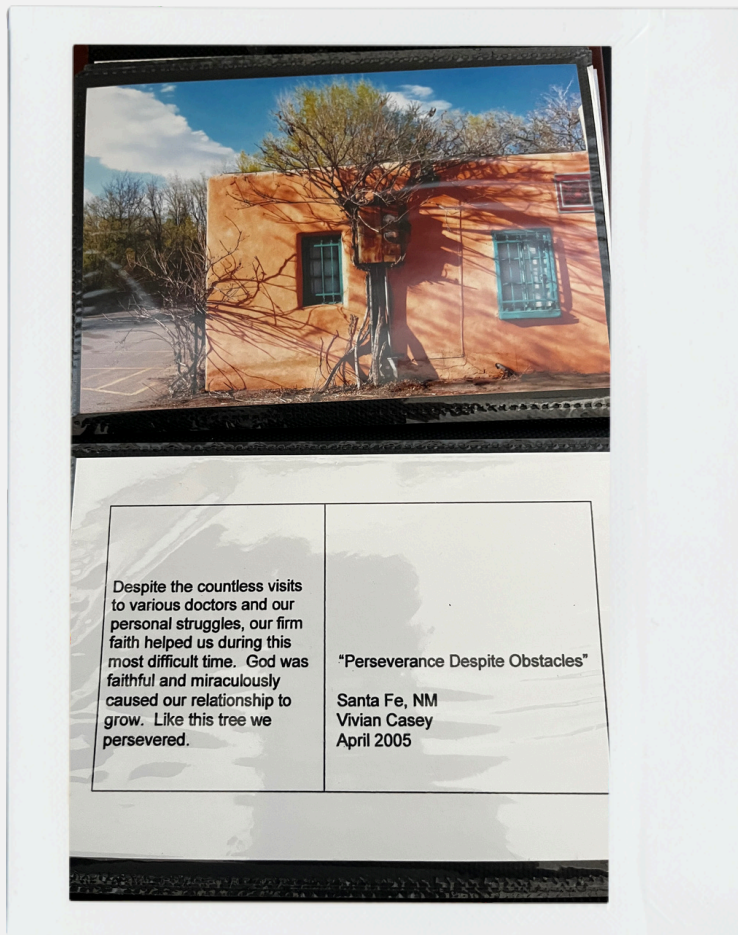
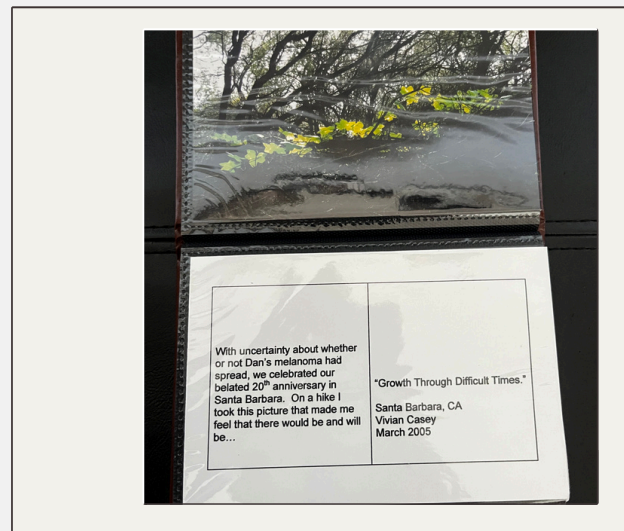
# Hope in the Midst of Grief(cont)

Although our daughters and I miss Dan tremendously, it is truly comforting to know that he died in peace, at home, with the confidence that he would wake up in an even better place.

A special thanks to the hospice workers who came alongside us during this difficult time, and to our friends and grief counselors who continue to support us.

I hope that you will find these photographs and reflections comforting, reassuring and uplifting in some way,

-Vivian



## PAGE 2





Since Dan died, I sometimes find myself lonely but not alone  
"...because God has said, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."  
Hebrews 13:5 NIV

"Hanging On"  
Sunnyvale, CA  
Vivian Casey  
December 2006

Jack London's dream home went up in smoke shortly after it was completed. In light of Dan's death in October of 2008, I find myself feeling like my dreams have been permanently altered and yet I am searching for...

"Beauty Among The Ruins"  
Glen Ellen, CA  
Vivian Casey  
September 1999

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail."  
Isaiah 58:11 NIV

This photograph was taken on a family river-rafting trip along the Colorado River. It reminds me that in a barren land God provided for this flower and I am assured that He will also take care of me.

"Beauty in the Wilderness"  
Moab, UT  
Vivian Casey  
August 2003

If God can do something this "Grand" I am confident that He will continue to shape my life into something beautiful.

"Something Grand"  
Grand Canyon  
Vivian Casey  
December 2001

A Grace Disguised - By Jerry Sittler

"The experience of loss does not have to leave us with the memory of a painful event that stands alone like a towering monument that dominates the landscape of our lives. Loss can also leave us with the memory of a wonderful story. It can function as a catalyst that pushes us in a new direction, like a closed road that forces us to turn around and find another way to our destination. Who knows what we will discover and see along the way?"  
Page 146

"Balance Rock"  
(digitally altered)  
Arches National Park, UT  
Vivian Casey  
August 2003

"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."  
Psalm 25:5, NIV

One of Dan's favorite photographs that I took on one of our weekend trips now represents me...

"Trusting God for What Lies Ahead"  
Point Reyes, CA  
Vivian Casey  
September 2005



# A Theological Reflection on the Biblical Concept of Hope

By: Dennis Woodsmall

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." —  
**Hebrews 6:19**

In an age where optimism is merchandised and despair metastasizes silently beneath the surface of cultural life, the Church must recover and re-proclaim the distinctly biblical understanding of hope. Far from being a form of wishful thinking or sentimental aspiration, **biblical hope is a theological and eschatological virtue**—rooted in the unchanging nature of God and directed toward the consummation of His redemptive purposes. It is not fragile positivity, but confident expectancy anchored in the character and promises of the Triune God.

We often speak of faith, hope, and love—those three great theological virtues named by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13). Faith, in this triad, reaches back: it lays hold of what God has already accomplished—our salvation, our deliverance, and above all, His covenantal faithfulness. Love, which Paul calls "the greatest," occupies the present. It encompasses our love for God, His love for us, and our sacrificial love for both the community of believers and the world beyond. Hope, however, looks forward. It is the grace-enabled trust we place in what is yet unseen but assured: the fullness of God's kingdom, our final resurrection, and the restoration of all things.

The Greek word translated as "hope" (elpis) lacks the ambiguity found in the English term. In classical usage, it could denote any sort of expectation—positive or negative—but in the New Testament, it is sanctified. Elpis consistently refers to the **confident assurance of divine fulfillment**. Karl Barth once noted with characteristic precision, "Christian hope begins where all other hope ends."

Yet hope is no novelty of the New Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures are saturated with it. The psalmist frequently exhorts the faithful to "put their hope in the Lord" (Psalm 130:7), and amid the desolation of Jerusalem, the author of Lamentations confesses, "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:21–22). The Hebrew word *tiqvah*, meaning hope or cord, evokes the image of a lifeline—a thread tying the present to a future held securely in the hands of God.

Israel's hope was historically grounded in covenant. It was not an abstraction, but a response to God's revealed character and promises. Even in exile, the prophets proclaimed restoration—not merely of the nation, but of creation itself. Isaiah's Servant Songs and Ezekiel's vision of dry bones are not quaint religious metaphors, but theological assertions that death is not final when placed within the economy of God's redemptive activity.



## A Theological Reflection...(cont)

The New Testament brings this theme to its fullest clarity. In Christ, **hope becomes incarnate**. Paul speaks of “Christ Jesus, our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1)—not merely the object of hope, but its substance. The resurrection of Jesus becomes the great hinge upon which all Christian hope turns. As Paul declares with urgency, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile... but Christ has indeed been raised... the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15). Christian hope is not a utopian fantasy, but a **resurrectional reality**. It does not deny suffering or injustice, but it refuses to let them have the final word. Because Christ is risen, we too shall rise. Therefore, says Paul, “we do not grieve as those who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

But hope is not reserved only for the afterlife. It infuses the present with endurance and courage. As Paul writes to the Romans, “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope—and hope does not disappoint us” (Romans 5:3–5). This is not stoic endurance, but a deeply spiritual resilience. Hope, forged in adversity, becomes the soul’s anchor—fixed not to the shifting winds of circumstance, but to the eternal promises of God.

The author of Hebrews gives us the great patriarch Abraham as a model: he journeyed “not knowing where he was going,” because “he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). In this sense, **Christian hope lives “between the times”**—secured by Christ’s resurrection, but not yet consummated in His return.

And importantly, hope is not a solitary possession. It is a **communal identity**. The Church is not a gathering of wishful thinkers but a people “born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). In a fractured and cynical world, we are to be custodians and heralds of this divine hope. As Peter exhorts, we are to be “always prepared to give an answer... for the hope that is within” (1 Peter 3:15)—not merely with words, but with lives that manifest resurrection peace, patient endurance, and confident joy.

The Apostle John challenges us with the ethical implications of this hope: “How can we say we love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brother or sister, whom we have seen?” (1 John 4:20). Our hope must issue forth in love. A hopeful Church is not naïve, but prophetic. It dares to live now as though the promised future were already true.

To speak of biblical hope, then, is to speak of God’s unwavering character, the victory of Christ’s resurrection, and the abiding witness of the Spirit. It is to proclaim, even amid darkness, “the night is far gone; the day is at hand” (Romans 13:12). Let the Church be that community which does not yield to despair—for we walk in the light of Him who has conquered death.

As the old spiritual declares:

“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

## A Theological Reflection...(cont)

This hope—biblically grounded, theologically rich, and eschatologically vibrant—shall never be put to shame. And as we live in this hope, we are also called to stir it up in others. For we are not only a people of hope—we are a people for hope, bearing its light until the Day dawns and the Morning Star rises in our hearts.

Let's pray for Faith, Hope and especially Love,

Dennis

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# The Gift of Hope: Anchoring Our Hearts in God's Promises

By: Chrys Sahgal

As we enter this new season and watch members of our church graduate I am reminded of the joyful anticipation that comes with that time and season in life. As we all know there are many seasons in life, both highs and lows, and hope stands as one of the most powerful and enduring gifts from God. More than mere optimism or wishful thinking, biblical hope is a confident expectation, rooted not in our circumstances, but in the unchanging character and promises of God and who He is.

In Hebrews 6:19, we read, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Hope is not something fleeting that drifts with the tide of our emotions or withers away to the wind. But rather, it is an anchor—a steadying force that holds us firm regardless of the storm that may be surrounding it. So, what does this kind of hope look like? And how do we live as people of hope in a world that often leans toward despair?

## Hope as a Person: Christ Our Living Hope

The Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:3, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

Our hope is alive because Jesus is alive. The resurrection is not just a historical event—it is the foundation of our present confidence and our future expectation. Jesus overcame sin and death, and because of that, our hope is not in vain. No matter what we face, we are never without hope, because Christ Himself is our hope. We need to be honest with ourselves and ask : In seasons of difficulty or discouragement, where do we turn for hope? Are we placing our trust in circumstances to change, or in the One who never changes?





## The Gift of Hope...(Cont)



### Hope Anchored in God's Promises

Scripture is filled with the promises of God—promises to be with us, to strengthen us, to redeem our pain, and to bring about a future that is filled with His goodness. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.'"

This hope is not blind, as some might think. But rather, I think this is an informed position that can be seen in God's faithfulness throughout history. From the deliverance of Israel to the coming of the Messiah, God has always kept His word, and that same God walks with us still.

In this world where information comes at us with lightning speed, it is easy to get distracted. However, we should reflect and ask if there are promises of God that we've forgotten or doubted? And as always, when the noise from outside gets too loud, take the time to revisit His Word and remind ourselves of the faithfulness He has already shown in our lives.

### Hope That Endures in Suffering

Romans 5:3-5 offers a powerful insight into the refining nature of hope: *"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame..."*

Rather than extinguishing our hope, suffering, when met with faith, can deepen and refine it. In God's economy, nothing is wasted. Even in our trials, He is forming in us a resilient, tested hope that does not disappoint.

**We often times forget that the Kingdom's economy does not operate the same way as this world.** So when you face hardship, can you see it as a place where hope grows deeper, or will you let it shake your confidence in God? Ask the Lord to help you see your struggles through the lens of His redemption. Take the focus off yourself and turn your gaze to Him.

### Hope that Looks Forward

Titus 2:13 calls us to **"wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."** We are not only looking back to what Christ has done, but also ahead to what He will do. One day, He will return and make all things new. Every tear will be wiped away, every injustice made right, and every longing fulfilled in His presence.

This hope fuels our perseverance, helps shape our priorities, and keeps our eyes fixed on eternity. It lifts us above the temporary struggles of this life and gives us the strength to keep going.

## The Gift of Hope...(Cont)

We would be wise to live each day in light of eternity and carry ourselves, make our choices, be in relationship, and respond as though we truly embrace the hope of Christ's return. Consider for a moment how this world might look if we all carried ourselves that way.

### A Personal Reflection: Replacing "Hope" with Your Name

If you'll remember, a few issues back, we reflected on the advent topic of Love. Let's take a moment to do the same here using Romans 5:5 and Hebrews 6:19 by inserting our name into these promises:

"[Your Name] has this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

"[Your Name] will not be put to shame, because God's love has been poured out into [his/her] heart through the Holy Spirit."

My son and I do daily affirmations every morning as part of our morning routine, and they have had a profound effect on our interaction. I would invite you to do the same using the above as part of your routine. See if it changes your perspective. Let this serve as a reminder that God's promises are not abstract—they are personal, and they are for you.

### Living Out the Call to Hope

Hope is not passive—it is active, intentional, and transformative. As followers of Christ, we are called not only to hold on to hope but to be carriers of it to a world in desperate need of it. Here are some ways to put Hope into practice in your life.

1. Cultivate a Habit of Remembering: Regularly reflect on God's past faithfulness in your life. Keep a journal of answered prayers, unexpected provisions, or moments of peace in hardship.

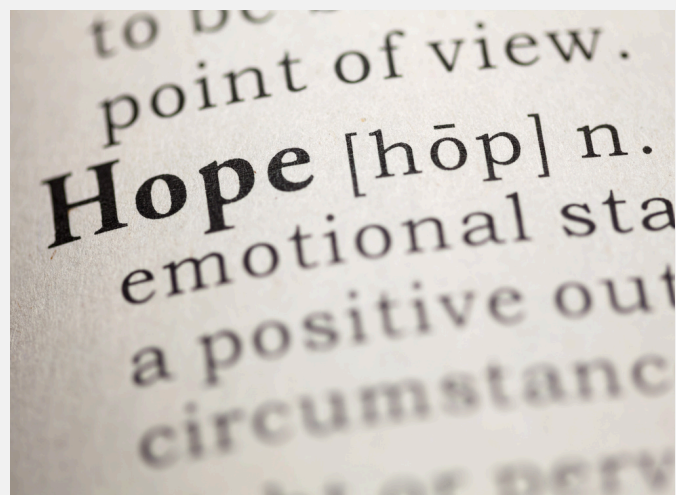
2. Speak Words of Hope: In your conversations, point others to the promises of God. Encourage those who are struggling. Your words can be a lifeline to someone feeling adrift.

3. Practice Hope-Filled Living: Make decisions not out of fear, but out of trust. Whether it's forgiving someone, stepping out in faith, or choosing joy—let hope shape your actions.

4. Stay Anchored in Scripture: God's Word is a wellspring of hope. Meditate on verses that speak to His promises, His presence, and the future He's preparing for us.

As we walk through the highs and lows of life, may we be people who are anchored by the living hope of Christ. Let us reflect that hope in our words, in our prayers, and in our actions. In a world prone to despair, may we carry within us the light of eternal hope—a hope that never fails, never fades, and never forgets us.

**"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." – Romans 15:13**



# Lake Tahoe: A Short Recap

By: Amy Gunaseelan

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The recent Lake Tahoe Retreat touched the lives of everyone who went, no matter where they were in their journey with Christ.

The retreat took place at Zephyr Cove, a Christian camp right next to the lake. On Memorial Day weekend, about 40 people took the time out of their busy, hectic lives to spend a few days with God and a Christian community. From nature walks to beach days to devotionals, the retreat strengthened relationships with both God and the people around us. Christopher Gunaseelan has been going to Zephyr Cove with the church for about 13 years, and noticed that the experience has evolved quite a bit from then.

"I think there's a lot more people going now... [there] are people that are older... and all different kinds of people. Earlier it used to be just families with kids. And we have a lot more devotion time now, which is good," Gunaseelan said.

The first activity that took place on the retreat was a nature walk, which was led by Gunaseelan, as he had done that walk many times during the past trips. He enjoys it for both the physical exercise and the friendships it forms with others.

"That's the time that we can go out, you know, sometimes it's better to get out, rather than [staying] in one place...that's when you have time to think and talk with people," Gunaseelan said.

The nature walk showed that one's age can never define their relationship with God, and 9-year-old Mateo Walton further strengthens that point with his experience.





## Lake Tahoe...(CONT)

"It was such a beautiful place. I felt like God was walking right next to me...that's my first time feeling him right next to me," Walton said.

Daily devotionals were also given at the retreat, and they provided a time for the community to hear about individual experiences and ways to strengthen their relationships with God. Susan Thomas gave a devotion on the second night and led the congregation in group meditation.

"[Meditation has] really helped me to kind of calm down, slow down, [and] think about being more present in the current moment. So I just thought it might be a nice addition to a retreat with our church community," Thomas said.

Meditation is proven to be helpful with mental health, but Thomas adds that Christ also supports the mindful hobby.

"I definitely think that self-care is important to God, like God wants all human beings... to be calm and in the moment and aware of the things around us, and to pay attention to the little things," Thomas said.

Many of the FPC family who attended the retreat invited friends and family to join, and these additions further added to the overall experience. Thao Jackson, who was invited by Marlene Arellano, elaborates on her experience as a visitor.

"I know we came here with friends and we did have a lot of fun with our friends, but we also met a lot of people, so it was just very inviting," Jackson said.

Visitor Xavier Luiz felt that the natural beauty of the lake was the main contributor to building and strengthening relationships with the 'future friends' that shared the Christ-centered retreat with us.





## Lake Tahoe...(CONT)

"Anybody that comes here usually takes a minute to look at the beauty around them, and then they look to their fellow parishioners and community, and they start to learn more about each other," Luiz said.

Although the retreat offered a wide range of activities for all ages to partake in, the main aspect of the recent Memorial Day Weekend was targeted at community. Having a strong church community is vital in growing with God, and the Lake Tahoe Trip was dedicated to sharing that message that many received, Jackson being one of them.

"[My favorite part of the trip] was just the sense of community that you guys have here, everyone was so nice and welcoming...everyone just pitching in without needing to be asked...everyone just working together but then just also enjoying that time together," Jackson said.





# Call for Submissions: Share Your Stories with Us!

We'd love to hear from you! The FPC Journey is now accepting story submissions from members of our congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the lives, actions, and experiences of the people around us. However, please note that submissions should focus on stories about others — not about yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to highlight the good deeds, inspiring moments, and heartfelt connections that make our church community so special.

Please submit your stories to Chrys Sahgal : [sahgalchrys@gmail.com](mailto:sahgalchrys@gmail.com) . We can't wait to read your contributions and continue celebrating the amazing people in our congregation!

While we truly appreciate every submission, please understand that not all stories may be included in the newsletter due to space limitations. If your story isn't featured, please know it's not a reflection of its value — we simply strive to include a diverse range of voices and experiences in each issue. Thank you for your understanding and continued contributions!



# JUNE UPCOMING EVENTS

## HERE AT FPC

- Game Night – Wednesday, June 25 | 6:00 PM | Social Hall

Join us for a relaxed and laughter-filled evening of games, food, and fellowship! Bring your favorite board or card games to share, or just come and join in on the fun. This is a great opportunity to connect with others in our church family across all ages. We'll have food, good company, and plenty of friendly competition—don't miss it!

## COMMUNITY AT LARGE

- Central Park Concerts
  - Location: 909 Kiely Blvd.
  - Time: 6:30 - 8 p.m.
- June 13, 2025
  - The Houserockers (Rock & Soul)
- June 27, 2025
  - Chrome Deluxe (R&B, Blues & Swing)