

SEPT 2025

THE LATEST @ PRINCE OF PEACE



ASKED AND ANSWERED



ENEWS Be sure to watch for enews from our congregation and staff. Sign up by contacting the church office today!

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ASKED AND ANSWERED

When we came to Prince of Peace back in the spring, we invited you to participate in a group activity with us, allowing us to hear your reflections about where this congregation has been and where we might be headed together. You participated faithfully and your responses have been really helpful as we continue to get acclimated to ministry with PoP. I'd like to share a quick summary of those thoughts, compiled by Pr. Rachel and me as we read them. Here are the themes we spotted:

You want to invite more people. This theme came up again and again from the various responses we received. Sometimes it was aimed at a particular demographic, like when a desire for more young people was

Continued...

ASKED AND ANSWERED *Continued...*

expressed. Other times, the goal was broader, emphasizing an appreciation for what we have and a desire to share it. This is a great goal! Being new ourselves, Pr. Rachel and I agree that PoP is a community that is well worth the time required to participate. Now, obviously, growing means we will be changing a bit. This is a good thing! We can grow as much as we are willing to incorporate the gifts and ideas of the new people who join us. Each new gift and idea can serve as validation that, indeed, God is leading us into a new future. We know that which is new can feel like a threat sometimes, but it doesn't have to. Instead, we can just remind one another: growth requires growth, so let's see what God is up to.

You want to volunteer, to say 'Yes' to new opportunities. We saw several responses that reflected a desire to 'pitch in' if asked. This is an encouraging thing to read and it will be all the more encouraging to see taking shape in the coming weeks and months. Remember, the more we participate, the more we will grow in faith, and grow closer together, too. And I might as well add, there's no need to wait to be asked! Tell us what you'd like to do and we will work with you to find a way to use your gifts for God's glory!

You appreciate fellowship here with the PoP family. So many of your responses included appreciative words about Wednesdays Together, special events, and all kinds of opportunities to be church together. This is clearly a congregation that likes to work together, but also to play, sing, laugh, cry, and

live together. This is what Jesus has intended for the church in his name since the beginning. A congregation cannot be sustained with a bunch of individual connections to the pastor(s); it needs to be interconnected, with people showing care for one another. We welcome each and every effort you put forth to extend pastoral care to the other members of PoP - anyone can be pastoral and everyone should give it a try each day!

You are open to new ideas. You don't want any change at all. Do those two statements seem contradictory? Well, they are. Nevertheless, there were several responses reflecting each of those ideas. Perhaps you will get the sense that there is no way to satisfy both perspectives. Fortunately, we only need to worry about satisfying God's desire for our community of faith. This will mean some change - God always, always instigates some change in the people. Yet at the same time, some things are continually true. We change the hymns every week, but we are always singing something, right? This kind of thing happens in all aspects of ministry, where the core value remains at the center of what we do, even when we adjust our approach to meet some emerging need. When you are overwhelmed by some change taking place, talk to us! We are here to help you navigate whatever may shift. When you are frustrated by a lack of change, we invite conversation for that, too. PoP is not going to be totally different overnight, but it will continue to evolve as all healthy, living things do. Most importantly, we will do this together.



Pastor Gregg

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727.585.9969

Outreach is important to this congregation. This perspective is already evident in the space PoP has made for Ruth's Promise and the Preschool, to say nothing of the continuing efforts of Go and Do Likewise, the work of Hunger Task Force, and so many initiatives (space precludes the list). We felt called to this place in no small part because we knew it to be a generous congregation, concerned that the Kingdom of God would flourish beyond the walls of the church property and within them, too.

You want things from the new pastors, too. **You want us to provide leadership, strong worship experiences, stability, vision, congregational care, youth leadership (and growth), and a great deal more.** Fortunately, this list hits most of our passions and gifts. We are called to provide these things as your pastors, but part of those calls is helping you answer yours at PoP, too! Our strengths will be used in ways that bring these things out of the people who have been here before us and those who will join after us, too. That's the key to successful, healthy ministry - we have to share it for it to work! We will present

opportunities for the people of PoP to grow in these ways and develop their strengths for leading worship, leading on Council, visioning collaboratively, providing care, creating stability (while avoiding stagnation), and continually finding ways to minister to (and with) the Youth and Children of this congregation.

This is only a brief overview of what your participation produced, and it only covers two listening events. We know you have more to say and more to offer, so do not think the conversation is over - not by a long shot! For now, thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts and read the thoughts of others. If you'd like to see the full breakdown of the responses, please let the church office know.

We hope seeing these responses in summary will be for you what it has been for us: encouragement. We are encouraged that the Holy Spirit has called us to a strong ministry together, one which is poised to continue to grow its impact in this community and in the lives of each person who claims this as their spiritual home.

AUGUST CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- + Discussed campus security and voted to look into security cameras for our campus.
- + Installations Service for Pastor Gregg and Pastor Rachel to be held on Sept 21 at 3pm, followed by a reception in the Parish Hall.
- + Approved Tiffany Phagan to the Ruth's Promise Advisory Board.
- + Approved September First Fruits donation of \$500 to Diapers with Dignity.
- + Pastor Gregg shared a new format for council meetings that will be implemented beginning in September.

Ruth's Promise Adult Day Program



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

RUTH'S PROMISE

Ruth's Promise Adult Day Program is seeking caring volunteers to assist with activities for our participants. Just a few hours of your time can bring joy, connection, and support to older adults in our community. For more information, please reach out to Jen Lord, Director, 727.265.2609

PASTOR RACHEL'S REMARKS

We are still unpacking at our house, and I am still setting up my office – we are making good progress, but it's taking longer than I thought it would! I had visions of a week, maybe two, and things would all be neat and tidy in their places, and I'd feel settled in. I don't know why; we've done this before and it's never been that fast. Now, as we approach 4 weeks with our boxes, I am reminding myself to be patient, that getting things done well (rather than fast) is the way to go. If I cram everything into a closet so I can say the box is unpacked, I'm going to find myself on the floor under a pile of whatever fell back out when I opened that door later – which won't help anyone!

I'm feeling a bit the same about getting going at Prince of Peace. I know you all have been waiting a long time for a pastor to arrive, and I want to be fully up to speed! However (and fortunately), you also have a lot going on! And when there is a lot to know (people, programs, history, mission) it takes longer than we think to learn, and even longer to be able to do something with what we learn.

When pastors come into a new call, our goal is often to change as little as possible right away, unless it's truly necessary. This approach allows us to see what's working, ask questions, get to know people, and then work together to determine what's next. And at the same time, I want to jump in and help where I see opportunities. I know that some of you have been waiting for us to come and make changes! Here also I have to remind myself again: be patient. Like unpacking, it's important to be intentional with change, not rushed.

In unpacking with intention, I have found things that I forgot I had, that bring me joy! And I've also found things I can't believe I've kept for so long (Do I still need those flashcards from college? No, I do not.). I think we'll find ourselves doing the same here together, as you help us unpack what makes Prince of Peace the place and the people and it is. It may take a little longer than we all expected, but in the end, we're going to find ourselves well-equipped to chart a path for long-term ministry together, and I'm very excited about that!



Pastor Rachel

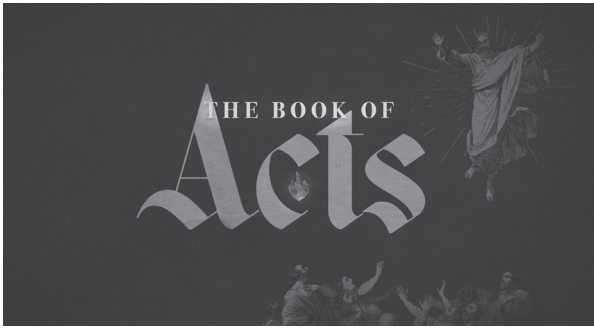
pastorrachel@poplargo.org
727.585.9969



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

POP PRESCHOOL

The "PoPTots" support PoP Preschool children, families, and staff, connecting congregation members to this vital community ministry. We provide refreshments at preschool events, make holiday treat bags, and support our teachers. Or, join us as a Friday morning story reader. We supply the book, and often an activity to go with it. We guarantee a truly fun 30 minutes of interacting with the children and sharing the story of how much God loves each of them. To get involved, contact the church office or talk to Margo Walbolt.



SUN, SEPT 7 / 10AM

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

We'll conclude our study of Acts on September 7. Paul certainly makes us aware that we too can spread the Good News wherever we walk today! We might ask Paul if he ever got tired of walking, of making tents, of preaching? Or we might ask him how he learned to adapt so well? Or we might read some of the letters he wrote to churches around the Mediterranean. Join us as we explore this one more Sunday.



COLLECTING SEPT 7-11 / HOPE VILLAGES

FOOD COLLECTION

Our First Sunday Food Collection for HOVA (formerly Religious Community Services) will run Sept 7-11. Bring food next Sunday or you may drop food off during the week in the church office, Mon-Thurs 8:30am-2pm.



**MON, SEPT 8 / 6-8PM / COMMERCE BREWING
521 S COMMERCE DR, LARGO 33770**

BEER AND HYMNS

Join Shawn Thomas on the keyboard for an evening of Beer and Hymns at Commerce Brewing. This is a community sing-along event that will feature a variety of hymns and other familiar songs. Beer is optional, singing is mandatory! Bria Wood Fired Pizza Food Truck will be onsite, or feel free to bring your own food. Commerce Brewing is located in an adjacent building to the north of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Ample parking available at Prince of Peace.



STARTING SEPT 14 / 10AM / PARISH HALL

WHO WAS LEVI?

Levi's other name was Matthew. He was a Jewish tax collector, despised by many, maybe even his own family because he was the tax man for the Romans. His gospel is the first in our NT but probably NOT the first one written. Why did that happen that way? Well, come hear those answers when we dive into his account of the life of Christ. He gives us a portrait of Jesus, the promised Messiah, the compassionate one, the One who established and is establishing God's Kingdom on Earth. We'd love to have you in the Peace Room with us.



WED, SEPT 17 AT 7:07PM / INVITE FRIENDS

PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS

Prayer Around the Cross is a brief time in the middle of our noisy, busy weeks to enter a quiet moment of prayer, song and scripture with all our siblings in Christ. We sit and listen together, voicing our own prayers in silence, while the pastor speaks prayers for us all. During our time together, friends rise and light candles, placing them around a cross laid across the chancel steps as they bring loved ones before the Lord. Join us on this special evening, after our meal and classes, as we end the day together in prayer.

RSVP TODAY!

SUN, SEPT 21 / 3PM / SANCTUARY

INSTALLATION OF REV. GREGG AND REV. RACHEL HOFFMAN

Save the date for the Service of Installation of Rev. Gregg Hoffman and Rev. Rachel Hoffman as pastors here at Prince of Peace Church. Bishop Pedro Suarez will preach and preside. A reception follows in the Parish Hall. RSVP is requested.

**Installation of
Rev. Gregory Hoffman &
Rev. Rachel Hoffman**

September 21 / 3pm / Sanctuary



THURS, SEPT 25 / 6PM

BOOKED FOR DESSERT

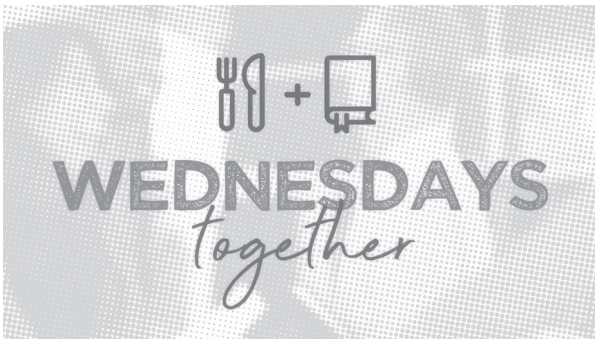
The book chosen for September is "Wandering Stars" by Tommy Orange. All are welcome to join the group in the Parish Hall for fellowship, lively conversation and refreshments, whether or not you have read the book. Contact the church office for information.



SEPT 26 / 10AM / PARISH HALL

CARD PRAYER MINISTRY

We gather in thoughtful prayer and conversation to send words of love, hope, and encouragement to members who are unable to worship with us in church. These cards bring joy to those who are homebound, ill, new to our worship family, or enduring challenging times. Please join us in Parish Hall. Any questions, please contact Debbie Freedman or call the church office.

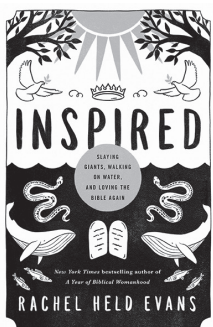


WEDNESDAYS / 5:15PM / PARISH HALL

WEDNESDAYS TOGETHER

Wednesdays Together mark the center of our week at Prince of Peace. Dinner is served at 5:15pm (\$6/adults, \$3/kids), then we move to activities for youth and children, as well as adult Bible Study, at 6pm. Choir rehearsal follows at 7:30pm. Please join us for a delicious meal and good conversation!

Interested in helping with dinner? Setup, serving, or cleanup, there is room for you! Mark your Sunday attendance sheet if you are available to lend a hand on a weekly or monthly basis. Thank you!



ADULT EDUCATION ON WEDNESDAYS

SEPTEMBER STUDIES

What a blessed time Wednesdays Together will be this month! Join us for a fellowship meal followed by Pastor Gregg leading our discussion of Rachel Held Evans book, "Inspired..." It doesn't get much better than an evening like that. The author tackles the issues of doubt and some other "thorny" issues in the Bible. One reviewer used the phrase, "and she brings us back to our stunning God." What more could we ask for--fellowship, thoughtful discussion and a relationship with our God? You are so welcome to join us!



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SEPT BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES

Chloe Tyner

Amelia Dahlvik

Simone Rumbaugh

Cara Cannady

Carson Carmody

Nils Sheppard

Megan Holland

Sue Mendenhall

Michael Belskey

Lisa Beck

Rene Lowry

Renae Barth

Melony Leidy

Barry Herter

Adele Luxa

Linda Zachow

Karen Webb

Sam Phillips

Kathleen Sweetman

Judith Wilkowski

Ruth Fleisher

June Lankenau



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