

The Messenger



25250 Airport Road Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-1959
first@fpcpunta.org. www.fpcpunta.org
Office Hours - Monday - Thursday
9am - 1pm (and by appointment)

Member of ECO (A Covenant Order
of Evangelical Presbyterians)



Why Christians Should Invite People to Church By Ed Stetzer

Article taken and edited from <https://edstetzer.com/>

This month our church celebrates 130 years of ministry in Punta Gorda! As we continue to join with others and do ministry in our community through our partners, it's important to also grow our own local congregation. It's all part of participating in the Great Commission and making disciples. ***So, why invite people to church?***

Well, a Lifeway Research study of U.S. Protestant churchgoers found that 3 in 5 (60%) respondents offered at least one invitation for someone to attend their church over the past six months. That's encouraging news. It goes on to show that evangelical churches are more likely to invite people to services than non-evangelicals, with 24% of evangelicals offering three or more invitations in the past six months versus 15% from others. African-American churchgoers are the most likely to invite others, and younger churchgoers are likelier than older believers to offer invites.

Inviting others to church displays a simple act of hospitality and a deeper expression of our faith. Many churches realize the power of inviting, so they join in things like the annual Back to Church Sunday emphasis.

Even outside of organized efforts, most who read this will recall someone inviting them to church at some point and even inviting someone to church themselves. I believe the practice of inviting others to church is vital today, and here are five reasons why.

1. Fulfilling the Great Commission

Inviting people to our church flows naturally from the Great Commission. As I've said before, Christians inviting others to church shouldn't surprise us because "Christianity is a missionary faith because of the life and teachings of Jesus." Jesus commands his followers to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). While this call includes more than a simple invitation to a church service, it doesn't include less. Pastors who encourage churchgoers to invite others will often see those churchgoers growing to speak up about the good news of Jesus with others.

The Great Commission is neither the Great Suggestion nor limited to pastors or missionaries going to foreign nations. Christ has called every believer to the honor of introducing others to Himself. The mission is both "come and see" (John 1:39, 46) and "go and tell" (John 20:21). Every personal invitation represents a step towards fulfilling our role in God's redemptive plan for the world.

Continued on Page 2

2. Creating a Healing Community

Someone has said the church is not so much a hotel for saints as it is a hospital for sinners. We invite others to join us to find what we already know: that Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf can bring hope and healing into our lives and our world. A church community grows as a family as it reaches out to those who are broken, lost, and in need. The church offers community and a place to form meaningful relationships.

Unfortunately, the Lifeway study shows a shift in the reason churchgoers fail to invite others. In 2017, a similar study found that 17% failed to invite others because they didn't know anyone to invite. This new 2024 study found that number grew to over one-fourth of those surveyed (27%). It's harder to invite someone we don't know to church. Believers should get to know those outside our fellowship. Such intentionality is a vital need today, and believers must push toward growth as we look outside our circles to a world in need.

3. Context for Spiritual Change

Through preaching, teaching, service, and community, churches help Christians grow in their faith, deepening their relationship with God. Inviting others to church opens the door to encounter the transformative power of the gospel. Lives are changed, hearts are healed, and faith is strengthened through the ministry of the local church. One invitation can be the catalyst for someone's salvation and spiritual growth. Inviting someone to church also changes the active churchgoers who do the inviting.

Most of our neighbors seek answers, comfort, and peace, even if we think some seem to have it all together. When we invite people to church, we offer them a chance to meet the One who changed our lives. When we invite others to church, we help create an environment where everyone can find healing and hope in Christ.

4. Building Up the Church

The church is the body of Christ. Every member plays a vital role ([1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)). Not everyone is a pastor, teacher, or gifted to lead in worship. But everyone can offer an invitation to those in their world. In this way, the church widens its impact as members across a given region reach out to others at work, school, and in the neighborhood. Every member can contribute to the growth and strengthening of the body of Christ. New believers bring fresh [joy](#) and passion, and new members bring fresh perspectives, gifts, and talents to enrich the church and its mission. Personal invitations help create a vibrant fellowship that brings glory to God.

While inviting others to church is not the same thing as personally sharing the gospel, it is often the first step believers take in their journey to grow in their witness for Jesus. Shifting from an inward focus to an inviting focus creates momentum toward verbally sharing Christ. Sharing the gospel can feel daunting, but inviting someone to church gives a simple way to start the conversation. It allows those we invite to hear the gospel in the context of public worship.

5. Following the Example of Jesus

Jesus called us to be disciples and to make disciples. A disciple is a learner, and a disciple of Jesus constantly seeks to follow his teaching and example. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He invited people from all walks of life and levels of brokenness to follow him and become part of his kingdom ([Matthew 4:19](#), [8:22](#), [9:9](#); [Mark 10:21](#)). As his disciples, we follow his example.

Inviting others to church provides opportunities for discipleship to happen as new believers are nurtured in the faith through mentoring, studying the Bible, and joining small groups. An invitation can lead to lasting relationships that help people grow into mature followers of Christ, who, in turn, follow his example.

Conclusion

Inviting others to church demonstrates our love for God and others. It helps us fulfill the Great Commission, create a healing community, provide spiritual change, and build up the church as we follow the example of Jesus. As we invite others to our church, we participate in God's redemptive work in the world. This month, you can invite someone to your church and watch what God can do through that simple invitation.



*On Sunday, Oct 19, 2025 we will celebrate our church's birthday;
pray about who you can invite to come and participate in our Celebration Sunday.*

WORSHIP MINISTRY



Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service (Also Online)

Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting (On Facebook)

Fellowship Time

*Join us for beverages, cookies and treats
after Sunday's Worship Service*

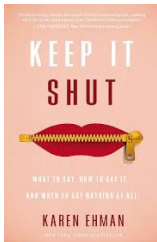
Sermon on the SAND

Every Sunday at 8:00am - 8:30am at Fishermen's Village

Pastor Barksdale will deliver the Message on

October 5th and November 16th

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY



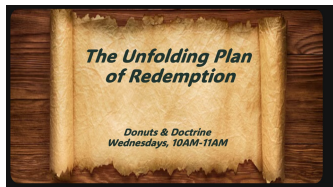
Women's Bible Study - Resumes on October 7th

"Keep It Shut" by Karen Ehman

We meet the first and third Tuesdays each month at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall

October 7th — Session 1

"Sparks, Squabbles, Spats, and Such: Our Words Matter"



Donuts & Doctrine Bible Study

God's Unfolding Plan of Redemption

The story of salvation is more than the Easter story, God's plan of salvation stretches back in the Old Testament. Join us as we explore the characters, events and history leading up to the promised Messiah. Join us for Donuts and Doctrine, Wednesday mornings from 10-11 am.

Inquirer's Class

Interested in the history and beliefs of FPC, or what it means to be a member?

Join us on November 16th after church for this informational meeting.

Lunch provided!



How Spiritual Formation Fuels Disciple Making

The relationship of spiritual formation to disciple making is blurry in many quarters. In fact, most of the popular North American articulations of spiritual formation do not connect it directly to disciple making or they do it poorly. Truth be told, most popular spokespersons and spiritual formation authors are not very effective personal disciple makers themselves. What is up with this reality?

Perhaps the great danger of separating spiritual formation from disciple making is that it becomes an individualistic exercise solely focused on becoming a better person. No doubt, spiritual formation should transform you into a better or more Christ-like person, but it might not be a better person in the eyes of the general population. Many rejected Jesus, and the more we are conformed into His image, it stands to reason that there will be those that reject us.

Spiritual formation – properly defined – is the process by which a follower of King Jesus is conformed into His image through imitating and obeying Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Another way of saying it, spiritual formation is taking part in those activities demonstrated by King Jesus through which the Holy Spirit is able to transform a believer back into the image of God that we were originally created to be. It is through this transformation that believers are able to bear, reflect, and render unto God the glory that He is due. Spiritual formation is how we as human beings fulfill our created purpose of being God's image bearers. Therefore, it's important.

However, even when the world was still perfect, and the first man, still in the image of God, was alone, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). While silence and solitude are certainly important spiritual practices of King Jesus, it is not good for a believer to be alone. Therefore, spiritual formation should not be framed as an individual exercise. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that two people will always be at the same place in spiritual maturity in every facet. With that said, spiritual formation should always involve an interaction between someone who is further along in their spiritual formation than the other. This interaction is disciple making.

Scripture is not written to individuals. Scripture is written to humanity as a whole. More particularly, the main intended audience of Scripture is the church. The church is the bride, the body, and the temple of King Jesus. The Holy Spirit indwells the church. The purpose of church leadership is not only to ensure that individuals are conformed into the image of King Jesus, but that local churches as a collective are transformed into His body, His physical presence here on the earth (Ephesians 4:11-16). That cannot happen if each person is individually focused on conformity to the image of Jesus with no concern if their fellow believers are being conformed as well. Moreover, it would be impossible for the leadership of the church to individually disciple every member of the church. It will have to be a group effort.

Here is perhaps the most important point: focusing on individual spiritual formation is one of the issues that has created the problem of non-discipleship in our modern churches. It is a mistake to think that I can be concerned with my spiritual formation alone, and if no one else is, that is their problem. Part of my spiritual formation is to engage in the spiritual formation of the local body of believers to which I belong. If the local church to which I belong is not making disciples of Jesus and I recognize it, it is incumbent upon me to seek to address the problem. How that works out and what you need to do if the local church rejects spiritual formation and disciple making as a whole is perhaps a subject for another article, but the solution probably does not include you hanging around focusing on your spiritual formation while giving up on everyone else.

As a human being, Jesus made disciples. He spent a great deal of His public ministry focusing on making disciples – some estimate 65-75% of his public ministry time was focused on making disciples. As Mark recorded, "[Jesus] did not say anything to [the crowd] without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (Mark 4:34). Jesus spent more time and effort on discipling disciples than He did on reaching the crowd. Jesus understood the math that if He focused on developing His disciples into His image, that they would be able to collectively reach more people than He alone could. As we are conformed into the image of King Jesus, we should increasingly do what He did; make disciples.

Continued on Page 5

At the same time, when we examine Jesus' life, we note that He was fully engaged in what we describe as spiritual formation. He fasted for 40 days at the front end of His ministry (Luke 4:1-13), He regularly got up early and went off to a quiet place to pray (Mark 1:35), He spent an entire night praying before picking His disciples (Luke 6:12-16), He read and memorized scripture (Matthew 21:41; 22:29, etc.), and He withdrew to the garden of Gethsemane in His time of trial (Matthew 26:36ff)... just to mention a few of His key practices.

Jesus was fully engaged in spiritual formation, but – and this is important – He did so because it was the fuel for His ministry.

Jesus is the example of how disciple making and spiritual formation intertwine and how spiritual formation should fuel disciple making. Our end goal should be that we join the mission of Jesus and that we help as many people as possible to be conformed into His image. We should practice the spiritual disciplines of Jesus such as silence, solitude, prayer, and fasting to become more like Him. But then, we need to practice the other spiritual disciplines of Jesus such as being in a relational small group and having a small circle of fellow disciples with whom we share our greatest spiritual battles. Finally, we should keep the explicit command of King Jesus to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

In our best selves, we want to excel at Spiritual formation because it will fuel the spiritually powerful disciple making activities of our ministries and churches.

For King Jesus,

Curt Erskine and Bobby Harrington

Discipleship.org

MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * Lt. Col. David Sifferd, Jr., Army Reserve, son of David Sifferd, stationed in Ft. Knox, KY
- * Pvt. Michael Robert Wagner, U.S. Marine Corp., great-grandson of Robert and Jean Humphreys, stationed in Hawaii
- * Second Lieutenant, JTAC, Alexander Kingsbury, Air Force, great-grandson of Tim Ronan, stationed in New York

*Do you have a family member serving in the military?
If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list.
Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer
and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.*

MISSIONS MINISTRY



First Presbyterian Church proudly supports Missions from our church budget. If you would personally like to make additional donations, please make checks payable to FPC and indicate the mission on the memo line.



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (Punta Gorda, Florida)
Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (Port Charlotte, Florida)
Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com



GROUND UP MINISTRIES (Cape Coral, Florida)
groundupministries.org



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)
Misionpeniel.com



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Guatemala)
Eric and Debbie Stone - theantiochpartners.org



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Lima, Peru)
Lisa and Clever Alfonsi - theantiochpartners.org



MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL (Nicaragua)
Chasen and Katie Brokaw - mvi.org / breakingborders.org

**STAND IN THE GAP
FUND**

*The purpose of this fund is to assist supported missionaries and ministries of our church when they face unexpected financial burdens
To donate to this fund, please mark your gift as SITG*

FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



LADIES CARDS FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings from 10am - 12pm - All are Welcome



LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

1st and 3rd Friday of each month - Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, October 3rd at 11:30am - Carrabba's, Port Charlotte

Friday, October 17th at 11:30am - Salty Tarpon, Punta Gorda



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

*Join us on Friday, October 31st
for the morning session*

We will meet at the church at 9:00am

We need 6 people to sign up in the church foyer



GRIEF SHARE a Grief Support Group

Mondays, beginning October 20th from 10:00am - 12:00pm

*Help and encouragement after the death of a spouse,
child, family member, or friend.*

*GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group designed
to help you rebuild your life after losing a loved one.*

*Our group is led by caring people who have experienced grief
and want to help you through the difficult days ahead.*

Sign up in the church foyer.



BURGERS FOR BADGES

Monday, October 20th, 11am - 1pm

*Help us show our appreciation to our local and retired
First Responders as we grill out hamburgers and hotdogs.*

*If you would like to make a donation to help defray the costs
of this outreach event, please designate it as "B4B".*

*Sign up in the church foyer to bring cookies or desserts and
to come for lunch and personally thank our First Responders
(suggested donation of \$5.00 for members)*

FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



LUNCH 'N' LEARN

“Legacy Writing Workshop”

Wednesday, October 29th, 12:00pm- 1:00pm (Sign up now)

Guest speaker from Empath Health

Materials will be provided to help you create a legacy workbook for your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERING - Monday, November 10th

It's time again to resume our monthly Prayer Shawl Gatherings. The first one is Monday, November 10th at 10:00am in our Fellowship Hall. Our shawls are each created to offer comfort and God's love to any who are in need. We have provided them to many of our own covenant partners. Plus we have sent them all over the country and even internationally as part of our mission. We invite anyone who likes to knit or crochet to attend. All are welcome! We will have patterns on hand for those who desire them as well as samples of our shawls for you to see. Should you have your own pattern that would be gladly welcome as well! Please join us for a pleasant morning of fellowship and refreshments. Hope to see you there.

In His Name, Susie Lorenz



Welcome Back Potluck

Wednesday, November 12th at 5:00pm



HANGING OF THE GREENS

Saturday, November 29th at 9:00am



Christmas Dinner

CHRISTMAS DINNER AND MOVIE

Wednesday, December 10th at 5:00pm

MEMBER CARE




EVERY SHEEP COUNTS!
IS YOUR INFO UP TO DATE?

*Prayer Requests
Hospital and Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org*



*First Pres is on Facebook
[facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda](https://facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-PuntaGorda)*



To watch the current service:

- 1) Follow the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@FPCPG>
(This link is also on our website in the top right corner - simply press the YouTube button)*
- 2) On the FPC YouTube page you will see a small screen with the word LIVE, click it and it will fill up your screen.
The Service begins at 10:30am (Pre-Service at 10:15am)*



WAYS TO GIVE		FIRST PRESBYTERIAN Punta Gorda	
 SEND BY MAIL	 IN PERSON	 IN SERVICE	 ONLINE
25250 Airport Rd Punta Gorda, FL 33950	Office Hours: M-Th; 9AM-1PM & By Appointment	Worship Service 10:30 AM	www.fpcpunta.org

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:7*



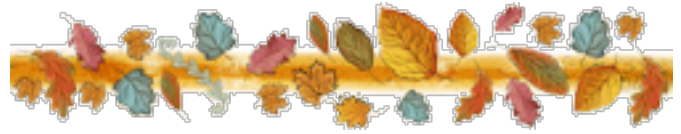
*We want to remind everyone that if a storm is in the area,
please don't travel if you are not comfortable,
but you may still join us online.
Also, we have a text messaging system to notify folks
if Services/Events are canceled.
If you do not want to receive a text message,
please notify the church office.
Please note: You cannot reply to these text messages.*

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....

*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1	Bo & Karen Sostar	11	Laurel Aumend	21	Judith Cornnell
2	Gail Thornton	12	Denny & Minty Ausman	22	Robert Cuzner
3	Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale	13	Roy & Kathy Belville	23	Peter & Donna DeBree
4	Richard & Linda Wagar	14	Shirley Berg	24	Ramona Douglas
5	Don & Mary Anne Washabaugh	15	Rick & Kay Berner	25	Phyllis Ehrhardt
6	Sharon Weed	16	Duane & Wanda Boyles	26	Merrilyn Ellison
7	Donald & Susan Willecke	17	Lili Bush	27	Alan Engstrom
8	Charlie & Evelyn Zietsma	18	Ray & Joan Byron	28	John & Gail Evans
9	Georga Albright	19	Bonnie Carey	29	George & Bev Fallenbeck
10	Rex Anderson	20	Sam & Patti Cessna	30	Bob & Sharon Fant
				31	Sandy Fisher



Congratulations to Jim and Patti Nuznoff
on the birth of their granddaughter Cora Mable Nuznoff
Cora was born on September 23rd to Scott and Hannah

1—Barbara Ryan
1—Teri York
5—Andy Schulte
10—Evelyn Zietsma
13—Kathy Belville
13—Elaine Schultz
17—Merrilyn Ellison



3—Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale—65 yrs.
17—Peter & Donna DeBree—27 yrs.



David Otoupal - May 27, 2025
Jean LaMantia - September 3, 2025



OCTOBER 2025



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



World Communion Sunday

5 Communion Sunday
8:00am Sermon on the Sand
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

Church Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
9:00am to 1:00pm
and by appointment

6

7
10:00am Women's Bible Study
1:00pm Fellowship Team

1
10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry

8

10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry

12

10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

13

10:00am Mission Team

14

10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry

15

10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowship

16

11:30am Ladies Lunch Bunch at Salty Tarpon in Punta Gorda

17

18

19 Deacon's Sunday

10:30am Worship Service
Celebration Sunday
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

20

10:00am GriefShare
11:00am - 1:00pm.
Burgers For Badges
1:00pm Session

21

10:00am Women's Bible Study

22

10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry

23

10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowship

24

25

26 REFORMATION SUNDAY

10:15am Hymn Sing
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

27

10:00am GriefShare

28

10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry
12:00pm Lunch 'N' Learn

29

30

9:00am Mission Trip to Immokalee

31

November 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	2	3	4	5	6	7
	9	10	11	12	13	14
	16	17	18	19	20	21
	23	24	25	26	27	28
	30					