



First Presbyterian Church

Inspiring Disciples...

Engaging the World

CARING FOR YOU

About FPC's Parish Visitors &
Congregational Care Ministry



1000 Penn Street

Fort Worth, TX 76102

817-335-1231 | www.fpcfww.org

This booklet aims to share information about First Presbyterian Church's Congregational Care Ministry, the roles of its staff, and how you might become involved.

For more information, feel free to contact FPC Parish Visitors Jennifer Pettey (jpettey@fpcfw.org) or Jennifer Regen (jregen@fpcfw.org) in the church office at 817-335-1231.



Bridging the Gap Between Homebound Members and the Congregation

As in Romans 12:12-13, Christians are called to “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer,” and to “Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

One way FPC’s Parish Visitors live out this scripture is by **visiting members** who are unable to fully participate in our church community by attending worship or other activities. These members might be recovering from long-term illnesses, be temporarily or permanently homebound, or are residents of care facilities. When Parish Visitors visit these members, they help keep a fresh connection between them and their congregation. Meaningful relationships and friendships are often developed.

During a typical visit, Parish Visitors informally observe the wellbeing of the member. On behalf of FPC, they can pass along care resources available in our community, share needs with family who are not nearby, and relay important updates to other church staff as needed.

For more information about visits from our Parish Visitors, please feel free to contact Jennifer Pettey (jpettey@fpcfw.org) or Jennifer Regen (jregen@fpcfw.org) in the church office at 817-335-1231.



A Framework of Care & Support

A primary role of the Parish Visitors is to visit church members in need. Through these visits, and with God's help, they begin to discern the needs of that member. Sometimes just being in conversation is what is most needed. The Parish Visitors understand that the sharing of personal information is a precious gift; therefore, information will not be passed on without permission. Some questions might be: *Can we share this information with the pastors? May we add your concern to the confidential prayer line? Would you like for your church family to pray for you through the Joys and Concerns column of the Penn Street newsletters?*

The Parish Visitors have often found it helpful to work with family members near and far. Permission will be asked if the Parish Visitor feels extended family should be included in the conversation. One family reflected: "How can I adequately say thank you for all that you have done for my parents and for our family? Thank you for your sweet comforting words and prayers that gave hope and encouragement. It has been such a difficult time for us and your support helped us get through it. I felt that you ministered to my husband and I as well even though we weren't in your congregation."

The Parish Visitors are staff support to the Congregational Care Committee (CCC), keeping the various sub-committees connected with one another and to the needs of church members. Practical help may be offered by involving these caring ministries. One of

our ministries, the **Neighborhood Care Team**, connects those who want to offer care with persons who need care. This team provides meals, rides to doctor appointments, check-in phone calls, visits, or cards expressing encouragement. The **Mobile Care Team** is utilized for members with urgent needs or for those who do not live within a pre-existing neighborhood care team location.

Additional Congregational Care sub-committees that offer tangible gifts of care and service include the **Muffin Ministry, Card Ministry, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Flower Ministry, and Shuttle Ministry**; just to name a few. More details about these ministries and ways to be involved can be found at fpcf.org/ministries/care-support or speak directly with the Parish Visitors.



Stephen Ministry & Sustaining Care

Members of the church in need of emotional and spiritual help as they journey through life can be connected to FPC ministries with the help of the Parish Visitors.

We have a long tradition at FPC of providing high-quality Christ-centered care to those who are going through tough times through our **Stephen Ministry** program. Stephen Ministers care for people who are grieving, in a crisis, in need of long-term care, dying, hospitalized, divorcing, experiencing losses as they age, or who have family or friends in crisis. Caring visits are generally once

a week. Stephen Ministers receive comprehensive specialized training to listen, care, pray and affirm.

Stephen Ministry recently developed an additional program that recognizes the value of caring during times that are not marked by particular difficulty or crisis. We call it Sustaining Care. This ministry encourages the sharing of stories and provides regular companionship over the long term. Sustaining Care visits are generally twice a month. We have received much positive feedback on this new approach which suggests that it fills a definite need within our congregation. If you know of someone in our congregation who is in need of regular companionship and listening, please let the Parish Visitors know.

Parish Visitors help to identify those who may benefit from once a month social visits from Presbyterian Women's Visitation and Men's Visitation. These dedicated members visit some of our homebound members and keep them connected to the church.

Parish Visitors help connect members, their family, and other members of the community in need to a six-week Grief Support Group. This gathering is offered 3-4 times a year. Watch for details on this group and other offerings in church announcements.

Extending Care During The Most Difficult Times

Jennifer Pettey and Jennifer Regen currently serve as Parish Visitors. They are called to "...care for orphans and widows in their distress..." (James 1:27); and "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (Corinthians 1 12:26)



One of the functions Parish Visitors serve is to coordinate **receptions following memorials and funerals at FPC**. Following funeral and memorial services, bereaved families are able to receive congregants at a reception hosted by our congregation. FPC members lovingly exercise their care and support by offering this important service to families in the midst of loss.

Parish Visitors contact Presbyterian Women Church Circles, Sunday School Classes, Care Teams, and the Congregational Care Committee to enlist volunteers to provide appropriate food and servers for these receptions. Alternately, a meal may be provided for the family in their home or at church.

And More...

Parish Visitors also maintain the **Joys and Concerns** column in the Penn Street Letter/Online newsletters. Births, wedding announcements, deaths, and prayer concerns for members experiencing hospitalization, illness, or recovery are compiled weekly for the publication. Members' privacy is respected by listing names only after permission is granted by the individual. Always feel free to call the Parish Visitor office to be included in Joys and Concerns.

In the hall next to the Chapel is a lovely **cross wall** where crosses may be hung as honorariums and memorials to special people in the lives of members. Parish Visitors receive the crosses from members, log them in a register, and hang them in the hall.

For more information, contact FPC Parish Visitors
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