MINISTRY HIGHLIGHT:
FAMILY MINISTRIES
DECEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

FEATURE ARTICLE:
New Life for the world
Spero Project
FPCE Volunteer opportunities in welcoming refugees from Afghanistan to the OKC area
VISION MOMENT

Love Your (Afghan) Neighbor

By: Crystal McGee DePue

In August of this year, many of us sat stunned as we watched Afghans clinging desperately to the wheel wells of departing airplanes. What could possibly make someone do such a “crazy” thing? Only one thing: when that drastic act is deemed safer than staying.

We are so blessed that we have trouble imagining such desperation…meanwhile the people who made it onto those planes know, except by God’s grace, that could have been them. Imagine making it onto a plane with just what you could grab and seeing your less fortunate countrymen perishing on the tarmac as you left behind forever your home, country, language, friends, and family to fly to an unknown destination.

Over 200 of those refugees arrived in OKC in October with 800 more expected in the next few weeks and a possible second wave of about as many arriving in the spring.

Knowing that, how can we best
• Follow what Jesus taught (love your neighbor as the Good Samaritan loved his – Luke 10:25-37),
• Apply Clarence Hill’s teaching on November 5 about the Dream Clock steps toward reconciliation.

One o’clock – Know yourself well enough to see your blind spots and others you have considered as “thems” rather than ignoring or overlooking them, and
• Implement our Core Practices of Sharing who we are, Caring for and Investing in others, and Serving Community?

The first step is to PRAY for our Afghan neighbors as they settle in and adjust to this new beginning and for God to clearly show you how He’s calling you to love these new neighbors.

Next, visit the Spero Project website (https://www.thesperoproject.com/about) to see how this group, with help from volunteers like us, comes alongside our new neighbors at the 91st day when government-directed assistance through Catholic Charities ends. Since Spero is used to handling less than 100 refugees a year, there are lots of jobs, from big to tiny that God could be calling you to! Pray as you consider the long list of volunteer opportunities, such as:
• occasionally driving a neighbor to tutoring, a church activity, or appointment
• tutoring a student
• helping with sports programs
• assisting with ESL (English as a Second Language) classes
• making a long-term commitment to help a family or individual learn about our culture and state while you learn about them and their culture
• donating cash or goods

Once you and God have settled on your “fit”, the Spero website will guide you to the proper training for your task. Most of their training is via Zoom and is very helpful in understanding the culture, customs, and fears of our new Afghan neighbors, as well as training you for the specific task you’re interested in. (Even if you’re not entirely sure you want to volunteer, taking the intro Zoom class will enable any participant to pray more knowledgeably and to greet our new neighbors more respectfully when we encounter them in our community!) You can register for that Zoom here: https://www.thesperoproject.com/volunteer

Here are some links to various ways you can donate:
• To help Catholic Charities with initial setup (first 90 days): https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2JT6WI544JQ4R/ref=hz_ls_biz_ex
• To help with settling in (after the first 90 days): https://thesperoproject.kindful.com/
• To help with Kid’s Items: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3SEU0VQU-R8ILL/ref=_wl_share
• To help with Classroom Items: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2HNRFLTNI-5YY0/ref=_wl_share

As you can see, the need is great, but if all of us do what we’re called to do, I am confident the Lord’s body will get the job done and our new neighbors will feel His love through us!
Parking Hosts Needed
Do you have the gift of hospitality or a willingness to share a bright smile? We need a people to serve in our Parking Host ministry on a regular basis. Serving outside on the Rankin curb one or more Sundays a month, it doesn't require much, just a willingness to greet all who come within the sound of your voice to feel welcome and a part of God’s kingdom. For more information or to sign up to support this valuable and rewarding ministry, contact Sharon Boecking at sboecking@fpcedmond.org or Jim Hartzog at jthartzog@aol.com.

FPCE | DISCIPLESHIP
The last official Sunday for 2021 Fall Semester of Sunday School is December 19th. There will be no Sunday school on December 26th, 2021 or January 2nd, 2022. There will be only one worship service on Dec. 26th at 10am. Adult classes are free to meet on those days, but those decisions need to be communicated by the individual teachers to the class. Kids’ Ministry and Student Ministry will start back up on January 9th, 2022. Stay tuned for a new list of spring classes being offered.

Women’s Ministry Event
Please join us for this special event featuring Mona Earnest on December 1 at 9:15am in Rm 2115. Mona will share her message titled, “What Am I Doing Here?” No registration is required, and all are welcome. Bring a friend!
MINISTRY HIGHLIGHT

FPCE Family Ministry
by: Brett Hardy, Director of Emerging Generations

What an interesting couple of years 2020 and 2021 have been, right? So many things have happened that we never would have imagined, and many changes continue to take place right in front of our eyes. For many of us, change is unwelcomed. Comfortable and steady works just fine for us! I am right there with you. I am a creature of habit, and I genuinely enjoy my daily routines. Obviously, there is a lot of change recently that we could have all done without (pretty much anything covid related for me). But sometimes change stretches us and introduces us to things we wouldn’t have otherwise seen or experienced, and that’s not always a bad thing. Certainly, we have experienced some change in our Family Ministry this year. We’ve attempted to put in-person ministry back together after a year and a half of stops and starts, quarantines, social distancing, and the weird effects that the lack of social engagement has had on the next generation. We’ve also experienced some change in our Family Ministry team and have had to adjust to a season of transition. Lots of change! Speaking from the perspective of someone that doesn’t always do change well, I want to let you know that while our Family Ministry team is certainly learning how to navigate some of these changes here at First Pres, we are excited, we are honored to do what we do, and we are anticipating God to move in some truly incredible ways as we look ahead into 2022. It has been absolutely awesome to be a part of the Student Ministry over the past month and to watch our students laugh as they experience community with one another and to see them learn from Dave Lewis each week as he brings the Word. I’ve seen God do some really special things amongst our students over the past few months, and I am confident that our student ministry is going to see God in new and exciting ways in the days ahead. Our Kids Ministry has been hard at work preparing an amazing Christmas musical, and as the dad of one of those kiddos I can’t wait to see it! It always does my heart good to spend time with our Kids Ministry and to see Scripture being taught to them and to watch them come alive as they engage in the programming the Kids Ministry team puts together each week. God has never stopped working and moving amongst us, even as we walk through change; and we continue to see Him binding us together and turning hearts towards Jesus. So, First Pres family, if you are like me and you are tired of all the changes we’ve endured over the last two years, let me assure you that even in our exhaustion God does not grow weary and is active and moving among us! May we as a body of believers lean into all that God is doing and taste and see that the Lord is good!

STUDENT MINISTRY UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 1st: Ice Skating at Mitch Park [6:00-7:30, cost is $14]
- December 8th: WinterFest Christmas Party @ FPCE [6:00-7:00 pm]
- No LIFT December 15, 22, 29, or Jan. 5th
- January 12th: First LIFT of 2022!
- July 10-15th: Generate Camp @ Estes Park, Colorado! Sign up online today!

FIRST, BY THE NUMBERS

- Income
Year-to-date receipts for the 10 months ended October 31, 2021, were $1,867,024 ($163,624 over budgeted receipts of $1,703,400 or 109.6% of budget).

- Expenses
Year-to-date expenses for the same period were $158,150 or 7.5% under budget ($1,962,180 actual versus budgeted expenses of $2,120,330).