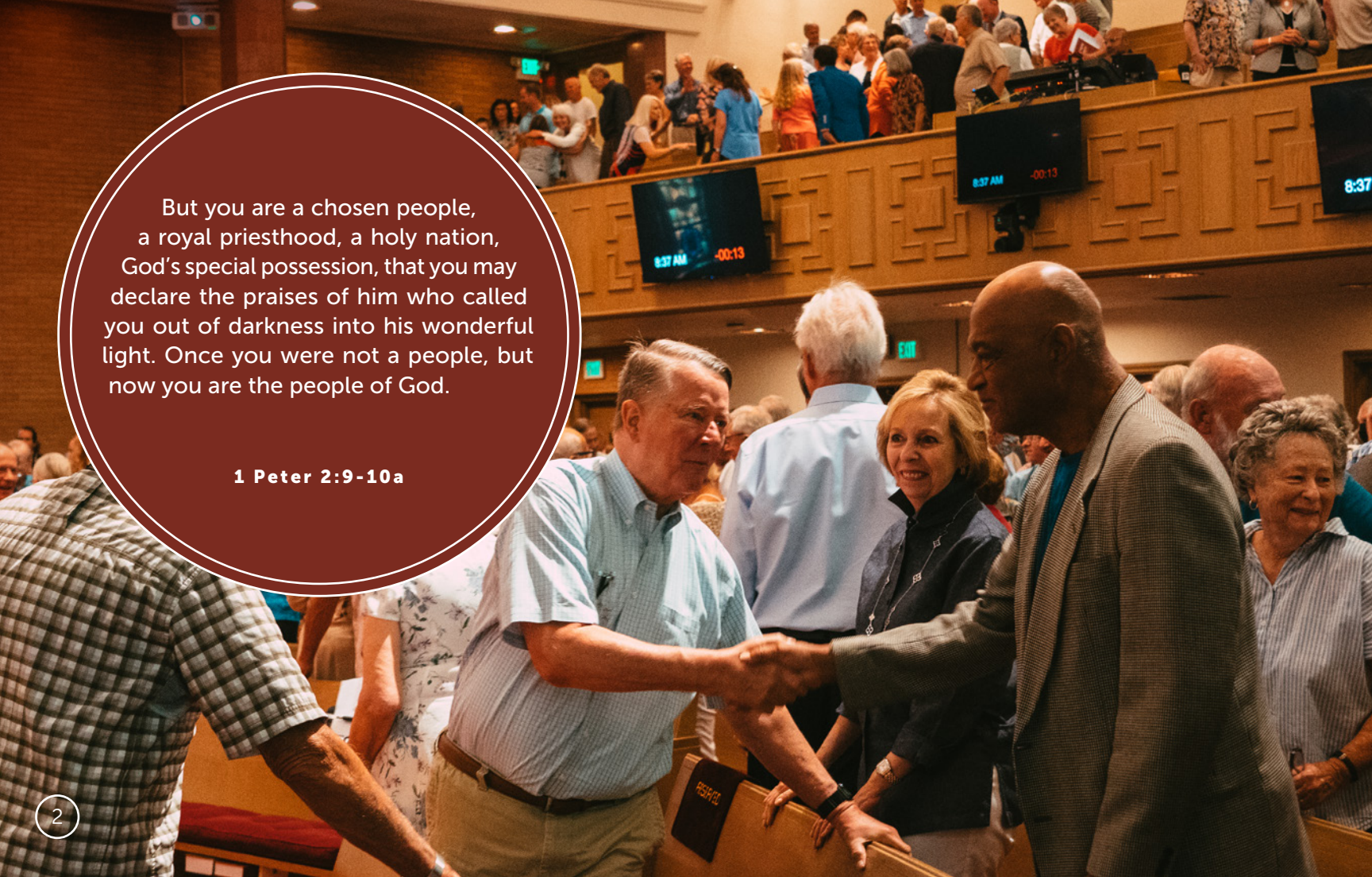




FIRST PRES  
COLORADO SPRINGS

# Commitment 2022

**Creating, Finding and  
Flourishing in Community**



But you are a chosen people,  
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
God's special possession, that you may  
declare the praises of him who called  
you out of darkness into his wonderful  
light. Once you were not a people, but  
now you are the people of God.

**1 Peter 2:9-10a**

# What does it mean to belong?

It is more than just not being alone. Belonging is knowing that you are known, knowing that you have a place and knowing that your life counts. We belong to God. We belong to each other in Christ. For those of us fully engaged in the church, we know what it means to belong. It means learning, growing, serving, helping, having a shoulder to cry on, a community to celebrate with—it's a true gift when you find your place. It is a priceless gift when we find our life in Christ.

Imagine if you were on the outside, alone with no community, no one to call you by name, no one who picks up the phone when you are absent.

This is why church matters.

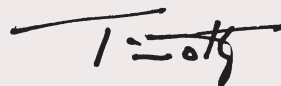
Friends, as you read the next pages, each person interviewed sounds the same idea—living the Christian life is done in community. Who do you know out there who needs the saving grace of Christ? Who do you know out there that not just wants to be known, but needs to be known? Invite them in.

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic and as we continue to navigate these uncertain waters, I am convinced that this is the Church's turn to step up and lead. As you pray over your commitment to the church for this next year, will you step up? For 150 years

First Pres has stood at the center of our city. For 150 years we have opened our doors for anyone who wants to belong. Let's continue God's mission and ministry into our future.

Please be generous this year.  
Thank you.

Yours In Christ,



**Tim McConnell**  
Lead Pastor





## *a seat at the table*

Isaac Eilmes, a 17-year-old junior at Cheyenne Mountain High School, discussed his experience of belonging at First Pres. Isaac has attended First Pres with his family since childhood and now serves faithfully in Student Ministry as a leader of a seventh-grade small group. In this interview he explains not only how he found belonging at First Pres, but how he assists in helping others discover a place of their own.

*How did you first get connected to First Pres?*

I grew up in the church going to Connection on the third floor and moved up through the ranks to the Weber Street Center where I really got connected in the Student Ministry programs. That's where I met a lot of my friends and mentors, and also where my faith really deepened.

*Where did you find community within First Pres?*

For about a week every summer, starting in third grade, I would go up to Camp Elim. I got plugged in with some awesome counselors, met some friends that I still have to this day, and it's really where my faith became my own. It was the place that I accepted Jesus into my heart and began that personal relationship with God.

*Why did you choose First Pres as your home?*

Honestly, it's the people here who have made this place my home, the Christian brothers and sisters who have poured into me. Seeing firsthand the amazing people who show up, pour into others and serve made me realize that I wanted to do the same.

*What does it mean for you to belong to First Pres?*

It means that I always have a seat there. I know there are people at First Pres who care about me, who know me, who genuinely enjoy being with me. Sometimes in my own life, whether in school or at practice, I've felt like the odd man out. But I've never felt that way at First Pres.

*How do you help others belong to First Pres?*

I don't want anyone to be told they don't belong, that they don't have a place, that they aren't wanted. Part of facilitating that sense of belonging is showing up and genuinely caring about people. Like in my seventh-grade group, it's about knowing their interests, knowing what's going on in their lives, praying for them throughout the week. There is so much power in telling someone, "Hey, I prayed for you this week." Ultimately, the reason I do all of this is so people feel they have a place where they are accepted and comfortable, where they can have an encounter with God.

*Have you experienced isolation? If so, how did the people of First Pres help?*

Obviously COVID was a very hard period of isolation. School was

online, I couldn't go to practice, I wasn't able to see my friends, and I didn't have a routine. I would wake up and I wouldn't have any idea what I was going to do that day, and it left me with this feeling of "I can't do anything." It was kind of a place of hopelessness. All the things I was looking forward to got canceled. It was disappointment after disappointment, a really low point in my life. But then I talked to the Middle School director at the time and I told her how I was feeling and asked if there was anything I could do to help out. She got me plugged in with my seventh-grade group of middle schoolers, and it changed the direction of my life and played a huge part in forming me into the person that I am today. I can confidently say that that dark period of my life was changed for the better because of the opportunity that First Pres gave me to serve and do something that I love.



## *finding life-giving community*

Liza Cunningham, a Tennessee native and 2020 graduate of the University of Tennessee, is a 2021 graduate of the First Pres Fellows Program. She talked about what it was like for her to move from the uncertainty and obscurity of being a college grad unleashed into the world to being known and finding belonging and purpose with a new spiritual family at First Pres.

*How did you first get connected at First Pres?*

It was through the Fellows Program. It was my senior year that I first heard about the program through my good friend Calvin Conn, who did the program with me. It was a crazy time in my life. College was ending and I wasn't sure what I was going to do. It was in the midst of COVID, I was new in my faith, and I felt a lot of pressure to start my career. I never envisioned myself doing the Fellows Program, but Calvin connected me with Floyd Sebald (Director of First Pres Fellows) and from our first phone call I immediately loved the guy. He had me crying in the first 10 minutes, just speaking life into me. He

was the one person who made me feel known and listened to my concerns. It was through those conversations that I realized I needed to join the Fellows and my journey at First Pres began.

*What's it like for you to belong to First Pres?*

I think it just means that I have a place to come to be known and to be loved. I think that true belonging isn't just to a singular church body. I think true belonging is in Jesus alone, because He's the foundation of all these relationships and the thing that ties us all together. I think belonging at First Pres is an extension of my belonging in Christ and I would say that

I feel that sense of belonging at First Pres because I've seen so many people be like Jesus to me.

*How did your experiences in Fellows help you adjust to a new location, and did it help you find a deeper community, both in making friends and discovering a spiritual home?*

Now that I'm on the other side of the Fellows Program I can truly say that it was one of the biggest life shifts for me because I didn't realize what true community and belonging was until I came here to Colorado. I met people who invested in me, who built me up, and pushed me to be the best version of myself.

*Now you're helping others find that same community by serving on the leadership team of First Pres' Young Adult Ministry. What's that like?*

I'm getting to help launch this new program where we seek out and invite young adults who desperately need community and a place to belong, not just within First Pres but within the universal Church. I get to help facilitate that same life-giving community for them that First Pres gave to me. One of the coolest things about helping with this ministry is seeing people who have been yearning for relationships get the chance to enter into a spiritual community. And I get to be a witness to it.



## *“mirror churches” offer sense of belonging*

While First Pres’ relationship with the Christian community in Egypt began in 1995, it was in 2011 that our Egypt connection really blossomed—thanks to our church-to-church partnerships within our global relationships and particularly because Eddie and Mona Yassa introduced First Pres to their childhood home church and place of belonging, Heliopolis. Located in Cairo, Helio is one of the largest Christian churches in Egypt and has a thriving congregation on mission to its local community along with 12 churches supported financially and spiritually.

Both Eddie and Mona grew up in Christian households in Egypt. They both went to church at Heliopolis Evangelical Church, or Helio for short, while attending Sunday School and Youth Group together. They experienced a Christian community that was strong in faith, kept the Sabbath and reached out to those in need in their Cairo community.

Mona moved first, leaving Egypt for California in 1985. Eddie followed, and eventually the two married and moved to Colorado Springs in 2005. While looking for a church, they were introduced to the First Pres Missions Pastor, Rev. Nancy Fox. First Pres was already connected in Egypt and Eddie immediately jumped to join the team. Eddie and Mona joined First Pres in 2006, put down roots in Colorado

Spring and continued their mission work as they formed Touch of Love International and distributed that organization's first microloans in 2006 through a relationship with Habitat for Humanity Egypt.

Truly world citizens, we asked Eddie and Mona what it is like to belong to two Christian communities with an ocean between, different languages and customs, but the same God.

Eddie and Mona talked a lot about their place of belonging, now First Pres. "We are between two communities. Each church has a different meaning in our lives, and we love them both." They said Helio and First Pres have lots of similarities—big churches, strong biblical base, and a love for being on mission. Both churches have a vision to reach beyond the borders

and boundaries of the church. They both love their pastors. Both Eddie and Mona feel like Helio and First Pres are mirror churches.

"It's in this place, growing up in one country and finding a similar church home in a different country, that we now know what it means to belong to God's family," said Mona. Both feel strongly that learning and growing in the Lord compels Christians to serve. This cycle of going out to serve and coming back to learn and grow is a cycle constantly played out in our Christian lives. A cycle that they experience at First Pres and Helio. But these things can't be done alone. Learning, growing and serving must be done in community.

Eddie spoke to his small community that has been

meeting for seven years. "We need to spend time in community; going to church on Sunday is not enough," he said. "You need accountability, you need to be known by name. Reading the Bible every day, that's the base." Mona continued: "The first thing is my relationship with Jesus, my Lord and Savior. Living every day and living today in the presence of God is the main thing. I grow spiritually through serving, in small ways and big ways, and I grow at church and in my community as a Christian."

They both finished with this thought: "Becoming and growing as a believer is not meant to be alone. Spend time in community, grow deeper together. This is how we belong to the body of Christ."

You are invited to pray for God's call on this church and His people for 2022. The daily ministry of First Pres and its call to be **Light and Life for the City** is no less important than it was at the founding in 1872. As you pray over your commitment to the church for this next year, will you step up? Let's continue God's mission and ministry into our future. Thank you!

## Three Options to Complete Your Commitment Card



Complete your Commitment Card and return in the enclosed envelope by mail.

FIRST PRES  
219 E. BIJOU ST.  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80903



Complete your Commitment Card online by setting up a one-time pledge or recurring weekly, monthly or quarterly amount at [MY.FIRSTPRESCOS.ORG/COMMITMENT](https://my.firstprescos.org/commitment)



Place your Commitment Card in the offering plates during a Worship Service worship, or drop it off Monday through Friday at the First Pres Welcome Center from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Commitment Sunday

On October 31, you can drop your Commitment Card in the offering plates during worship.



First Pres ministry is based on an annual ministry operating budget that is formed through annual giving. The church, just as every other non-profit organization, is experiencing inflationary increases in its operating expenses. Will you consider an increase in your commitment this year to assist in meeting the increased expense of ministry? Will you consider a first-time gift to support the ministry of First Pres?

Our mission is clear, by God's grace we are **Light and Life for the City**. This year we open our doors to all who want to belong. Belong to God. Declare Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Find the place where life has meaning, friendships are formed, families are sustained, friends are celebrated, and we recall those dear ones waiting for us in Heaven. This is no small task as we look toward 2022. Please be generous this year.

Thank you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

### I commit to giving to First Pres in 2022:

<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly
<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly
<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly

TOTAL YEARLY GIFT:

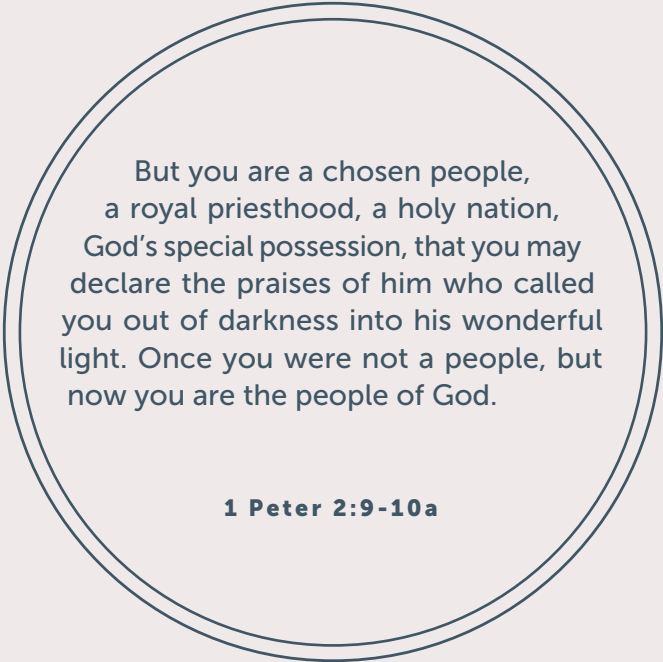
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- ☐ Please send information about setting up auto bank withdrawal.
- ☐ Continue bank withdrawal for amount as indicated.
- ☐ Please order giving envelopes for cash or statement.
- ☐ I have made a commitment for my 2022 giving online.
- ☐ I've never given before. My commitment is to simply begin giving.
- ☐ I plan to give \_\_\_\_\_ percent of my 2022 income.

All financial commitments are confidential and may be adjusted if unforeseen circumstances arise.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_



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**1 Peter 2:9-10a**



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