# Stated Mission Presbytery Meeting October 17-18, 2025 Cross Roads Church, Windcrest

# Friday, October 17, 2025

Call to Order at 4:00 p.m.

Moderator Dan Milford

Quorum declared and opening prayer Approve the docket Land Acknowledgement Introduction of first-time Commissioners Introduction of Corresponding Members Welcome from the host church

Transitional General Presbyter Bobby Musengwa

Stated Clerk Laurie Palmer

Fiscal Oversight Sandy Nicholson

Presbyterian Women Lori Black

Committee on Preparation for Ministry Doug Dalglish

Break

Commission on Ministry Jack Barden

Connect Committee Jo Ann Currie, Emily Owen, Erica Knisely

Learn Committee Linda Bourianoff, Tom Tickner

The meeting is in recess until 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

Cross Roads invites you to a BBQ dinner in the Fellowship Hall at 6:00 p.m.

There is no charge for dinner.

# Saturday, October 18, 2025

Mission Presbytery reconvenes with worship at 9:00 a.m.

Preacher: Rev. Elizabeth Pang, Hospice Austin

Offering: Mo Ranch and FPC, Kerrville, for flood response

General Council Fred Gamble

Committee on Representation and Participation Walt Lee

Synod of the Sun Leader and Stated Clerk Mitch Miller

Youth Connection Caitlin Supcoff

Disaster Preparedness and Assistance Ben Henderson

John Knox Ranch Rob Mueller, Henry Owen

Hispanic Mission Ministries Network Lisa Almon

Serve Committee: Serve Grants Patrick Dennis

Installation of Monica Smith as Moderator Dan Milford

Closing Prayer Monica Smith

# 2026 Mission Presbytery meeting dates

March 6-7, 2026

June 12-13, 2026

October 16-17, 2026

General Assembly:

Online committee meetings: June 22-23

Plenary is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: June 28-July 2, 2026

Stated Clerk's Report Mission Presbytery Meeting October 17-18, 2025

Motion: To approve the excused absences for this meeting.

Friends, because of circumstances outside of our control, the location for the March 6-7, 2026 Mission Presbytery Meeting withdrew.

While Monica Smith and I are thinking about a new location, I ask that you consider hosting the meeting if you can. Melody Gonzalez and I will help you. Melody has written a detailed hosting guidelines booklet. Thank you for considering this, yes, big commitment. We are ever-grateful to our hosts churches.

Peace, Laurie Palmer

# Annual Statistical Report....

will be released in early December. I will send a notice when the site is open.

# Session Minutes Review

Thank you for sending your 2024 (and earlier years, too!) session minutes for review. If you haven't received a letter from me yet, you will soon.

If you think your church should be on this list, email me: statedclerk@missionpby.org The following have had their minutes reviewed:

Covenant, San Antonio Cross Roads, San Antonio

Divine Redeemer PC, San Antonio

Dripping Springs PC, DS

FPC, Austin FPC, Beeville FPC, Brownsville FPC, Collegeport FPC, Copperas Cove FPC, Georgetown FPC

FPC, Giddings
FPC, Karnes City
FPC, Kerrville
FPC, Lampasas
FPC, Lockhart
FPC, Mercedes
FPC, New Braunfels
FPC, Pleasonton

FPC, New Braunt FPC, Pleasonton FPC, Rockport FPC, Victoria Grace PC, San Antonio Island PC, Corpus Christi Leander PC, Leander

Los Angeles Heights PC, San Antonio New Braunfels PC, New Braunfels

Oak Hills PC, San Antonio Round Rock PC, Round Rock San Gabriel PC, Georgetown St. Andrew, Marble Falls St. Andrew, San Antonio

St. Mark, Boerne

Shepherd of the Hills, Austin

The Presbyterian Church of Gonzales, Gonzales The Presbytery Church of Lake Travis, Austin

Tivoli PC, Tivoli

University PC, San Antonio Wimberley PC, Wimberley

Committee on Representation and Participation (CORP) Mission Presbytery Meeting October 17-18, 2025

CORP needs your help identifying ruling elders and pastors with gifts to share with the presbytery. A nomination form is in the presbytery packet. Submit forms and questions to Laurie Palmer, Stated Clerk, statedclerk@missionpby.org.

CORP moves the following for nomination:

#### COMMISSION ON MINISTRY (COM)

Class of 2028 Class of 2027 Class of 2026
TE Jon Watt one vacancy two vacancies

TE Gini Norris-Lane
TE Cheryl Homsher
TE Kurt Simon
TE Dave Diercksen
TE John Brantley
RE Steve Frazier
RE Marie Baker
two vacancies

# TRUSTEES (COMMISSION)

Class of 2030 TE Amy Meyer RE Bonnie Wilkinson

#### PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Class of 2029 one vacancy
Class of 2031 three vacancies

#### COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION (CORP)

Class of 2026 Class of 2028
RE Judy Ferguson RE Susan Penrod
TE Michelle Vetters

#### **COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (CPM)**

Class of 2026 Class of 2028
RE Bill Wilkinson RE Martha Sherrod
TE Jim Rigby

TE Margaret Aymer TE Mike Murray

**CONNECT COMMITTEE** 

Class of 2027 Class of 2028
TE Lora East RE Jo Ann Currie
RE Liz Anzaldua RE Grace Bradshaw

# FISCAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Class of 2028 RE Scott Johnson RE Lisa Sandlin

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Class of 2027 one vacancy
Class of 2028 one vacancy

#### JOHN KNOX RANCH COMMITTEE

Class of 2028 TE Nancy McCranie RE Bob Anderson one vacancy

# **LEARN COMMITTEE**

Class of 2028 TE Ann Brizendine RE Hallie Spence

#### **SERVE COMMITTEE**

Class of 2028 two vacancies

Mission Presbytery Treasurer TE Leslie Ellison
MP Assistant Treasurer RE Sandy Nicholson
Moderator-elect RE Gordon Ringler

#### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONERS 2026**

June 22-23 Committees meet online

June 28-July 2 In-person plenary meeting in Milwaukee, WI

Young Adult Advisory Delegate vacant

Ruling Elders
Caitlin Supcoff
two vacancies

Teaching Elders
Gini Norris-Lane
Josh Robinson
one vacancy

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REPORT MISSION PRESBYTERY OCTOBER 17-18, 2025

#### FOR ACTION BY MISSION PRESBYTERY

- 1. Examine Candidate Carlos Baladez for ordination to Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- 2. Examine Certified Ruling Elder Karl Hays to serve First, Cotulla, and First, Luling, as a Commissioned Pastor.
- 3. COM motion: COM requests that Mission Presbytery elect an Administrative Commission to explore and help the ministry at Everlasting Hope, Taylor.

The Commission on Ministry, in its capacity as a commission of Mission Presbytery, has taken the following actions since those reported at the last Presbytery Meeting:

#### FOR COM ACTION

The 2025 Terms of Call/Contracts spreadsheet is a separate document in the presbytery packet. The COM approves terms of call and contracts. This is information for the presbytery.

# 2026 Minimum Terms of Call (10/6/25)

The 2025 minimum terms of call are \$47,500.

A motion was made and seconded to increase the minimum terms of call for pastors as follows:

2026: \$50,000 2027: \$52,500 2028: \$55,000

The motion was approved.

As Pastor Nominating Committees negotiate with candidates in Austin, San Antonio, and the surrounding areas, please note that the cost of living is higher there than in most of the rest of the presbytery.

# **Examinations Committee**

- Sustained the examination of Carlos Baladez and scheduled him for examination on the floor of presbytery at the October 17-18, 2025, meeting. The motion was approved. (10/6/25)
- Sustained the examination of Libby Janes. She will be examined on the floor of the presbytery once she receives a call. The motion was approved. (10/6/25)
- Sustained the examination of Rev. Matt Morse. He will serve Parkway, CC. (8/4/25)
- Sustained the examination of Allen Roberts for ordination. Allen was examined at the June 20-21, 2025, presbytery meeting. (8/4/25)

# **Specialized Ministries Team**

Validated the position of Independent Living Director for Morningside, Menger Springs.
 Patrick Dennis will assume this position soon. He has been serving as Chaplain at Morningside, and will continue to participate in worship and serve the sacraments.
 (10/6/25)

• Validated the position of Chaplain for Morningside, Menger Springs. (8/4/25)

#### Permission to labor outside the bounds of Mission Presbytery

- Amy Meyer, to keynote a pastors' retreat and serve Communion in Sierra Blanca Presbytery on October 13-15, 2025. (10/6/25)
- John Leedy to serve as part-time Executive Director of kin\*dom community, Grace Presbytery (10/6/25)
- Randy McGrady-Beach, John Knox PC, Dublin, CA, for a baptism; San Francisco Presbytery (8/4/25)

#### **Transfer Ministers**

- Thomas Daniel to Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO), Highland Park PC, Dallas (10/6/25)
- John Roberts to New Covenant Presbytery, Heritage PC (10/6/25)
- Marsha Brown to Grace Presbytery (8/4/25)
- Carol Rahn to Twin Cities Presbytery (8/4/25)
- Matt Morse from New Covenant Presbytery (8/4/25)

## Approve and dismiss an Administrative Commission for ordination

Ordination of Allen Roberts on September 14, University, Austin

RE Amy Toulouse, University, Austin; RE Rita Livingston, Central, Austin; RE Gary Mathews, APTS; TE Laurie Palmer, moderate the commission, ask the constitutional questions of the candidate; TE Matt Gaventa, to charge the pastor; TE Bobby Musengwa, installation prayer Guests of the AC: TE Margaret Aymer, preach; TE Fred Morgan, charge to the pastor; TE Ted Wardlaw; TE Consuelo Donahue, to charge the congregation (10/6/25)

### **Administrative Commission**

A motion was made and seconded to request that Mission Presbytery elect an Administrative Commission to explore and help the ministry at Everlasting Hope, Taylor. (10/6/25)

# *BOLD = 2025*

Blank = no report submitted; light type = 2024

BOP not numerically listed

Numbers are rounded

Membership numbers = 2024 Annual Statistical Report

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INSTALLED POSITIONS CHURCH AND PASTOR or ASSOCIATE PASTOR	SALARY		MPLOYING		IC DOD	1/2 550/	ALITO	CONT ED /DVC DI	DOFFCCIONIA	OTHER	TOTAL	MEMBERSHII
Austin, Taiwanese; Tsai, Manjung Matthew, Pastor	72,500		CONTRIBUTIONS	OTHER WAN	28,275	1/2 SEC#	AUIU	CONT ED/BKS PE	4,500	OTHER_	TOTAL 110,821	99
Austin, Central; Katheryn Barlow-Williams, Pastor	38,250		1,600		33,614	6,594			5,475	1,448	134,921	302
Austin, Covenant; Thomas Daniel, Pastor	130,950	48,000	23,000	3,050	56,500	13,426		2,000	7,000	•	283,926	1,919
Austin, Covenant; Benjamin Davison	23,150	,			37,050	7,268		3,000	1,500		143,818	1,919
Austin, Covenant; Jill Williams, AP	62,500	•	15,000		44,655	8,759		3,000	3,000		173,914	1,919
Austin, Faith; Amy Myhand, Pastor Austin, First; Elizabeth McLean, Pastor	21,250 77,247				14,885 48,578	4,380 8 358	250 2,000	2,000 3,000	2,750 1,000		81,515 172,183	118 325
Austin, Hope; Joshua Robinson, Pastor	84,369				in full	6,975	•	3,000	4,500		172,103	261
Austin, Hope; John Leedy, AP, 3/4 time	41,387				in full	3,235			1,500			261
Austin, Shepherd of the Hills; Leon Bloder, Pastor	57,722				37,968		5,000		15,900		188,998	443
Austin, St. Andrews, Jim Rigby	73,543				35,718	·	•		2,677		105,020	361
Austin, University; Matt Gaventa, Pastor	67,594	49,756			51,396	8,977		2,284	2,546		182,553	436
Austin, University, Carter Grant, Associate Pastor	49,613	22,032			17,236	5,481			6,000		100,362	436
Austin, Westlake Hills; Emily Wright, Pastor												1,697
Austin, Westlake Hills; Stacy Ikard, Associate Pastor												1,697
Austin, Westlake Hills; Stephen Finkel, Designated AP	84,134		4,207		34,453	6,114			7,780		136,688	1,697
Austin, Westlake Hills; Kevin Ireland, Pastoral Resident	63,046				24,588	4,670			7,000		99,304	1697
Austin, Westminster; Bill Clark, Pastor	52,403	70,067			31,842	10,145			4,250		168,707	467
Austin, Westminster; Charlotte Trafton, Associate Pas	tı 49,000	16,000			25,850	5,384			3,000		99,234	467
Boerne, St. Mark; Ann Marie Quigely-Swanson, Pasto	r 64,304	23,566			22,103	6,666	2,000	2,000	2,500	1,350	124,489	280
Canyon Lake; Chad Lawson, Pastor	26,712	33,000			25,676	4,568	2,000	1,500		980	94,436	78
Corpus Christi, Island, Ken Ritchie	29,500	52,000			20,411	6,161	2,000	2,000		6,000	118,072	67
Corpus Christi, Parkway, Matthew Morse	45,500	24,500	5,000		41,493	5,355	3,500	2,500			127,848	370
Cuero, First, Kevin Boyd	48,800	10,200	6,000	4,000 ####	## 30,030					#####	132,776	95
Dripping Springs; Mitchell Kolls, Pastor	56,646	52,288			42,484	4,333					155,751	257
Elgin, First; Amy Meyer, Pastor	17,295	42,435			22,726	2,160			4,620			88
Fredericksburg Memorial; Brian Wiggins, Pastor	58,000	25,000			64,073	6,350					121,000	48
Georgetown, First; Alex Pappas, Pastor	66,300	35,700		1,450	43,860	7,803			4,500	600	160,213	405
Georgetown, San Gabriel; Bill Pederson, Pastor	46,000	60,000	2,000		38,560	9,040			5,360		160,960	209
Giddings, First; Monica Smith, Pastor	54,000		6,000		23,400	4,590			4,400	600	92,990	63
Harlingen, Treasure Hills; David Coello, Pastor	25,000	40,000			37,500	9,945	3,600	600			116,645	167
Junction, First; James Barker, Pastor												143
Kerrville, First; Jasiel Hernandez Garcia	55,000	51,000			39,981	7,880		2,000	3,250	2,250	161,361	430
Lampasas, First; Kevin Jones, Pastor	31,687	21,600			in full	4,076	1,200	750	1,000			70
Leander, Leander; Robert McElwaine, Pastor, p/t	10,212	34,188			21,536	3,397					69,333	50
Marble Falls, St. Andrew; John Brantley, Pastor	39,139	30,000			29,144	5,347			1,000		104,630	70
McAllen, First; Kathryn Escandell, Pastor	30,000	20,000			19,500	3,825	3,000	3,000	5,000		84,325	102

New Braunfels, New Braunfels, Adam Smith August 20	58,500	58,500			49,300	8,950 2,50	•		1,284	181,134	286
Rockport, First; Kurt Simon, Pastor	35,280	82,320			45,864	8,996 8,00	0		3000	185,460	121
Round Rock, Grace; Nancy Reeves, Pastor	74,206	30,000			33,346			4,000		141,552	210
Round Rock, Round Rock, Emily Beghin	4,405	72,532	4,223	3,300	30,910	6,461 2,00	•			125,831	73
San Antonio, Boldtville; Susan Royston, Pastor	13,200	45,000			1,302	4,452	1,000			86,842	84
San Antonio, Covenant; Dan Milford, Pastor	26,250	30,500	22,250		24,732	2,639		5,341	891	112,603	292
San Antonio, Cross Roads; Brian Diebold, Pastor	64,000	28,758	4,120	3,880	46,048					146,806	163
San Antonio, First Korean; Peter Sinchan Jeong, Pastor											118
San Antonio, Madison Square, Eunbee Ham, Pastor	44,805	44,805	3,584		34,948	6,855	2,000	4,000	400	141,397	165
San Antonio, Northminster; Dana Pope, Pastor	29,400	48,000			20,124	6,456 1,60	0 500	1,200		107,280	129
San Antonio, Northwood; Jon Watt, Pastor	36,639	23,751		1,000	26,783	4,696 1,00	0 2,400	2,600	600	99,469	110
San Antonio, San Pedro; Bryan Stamper, Jr., Pastor	60,346	42,611	8,528		31,594			2,188		145,002	290
San Antonio, St. Andrew; Doug Dalglish, Pastor	25,100	25,000	12,664		26,988	4,801			5,000	99,553	100
San Antonio, University; Lora East, Pastor	65,000	30,000			8,075	9,265 1,50	0 3,000	1,500		118,340	368
San Marcos, Joshua Sutherlun, co-pastor, 30 hrs/wk	30,975	19,532		3,000	23,008	4,093	1,600	1,600	1,800	85,608	166
San Marcos, First; Amy Sutherlun, co-pastor, 30 hrs/wk	30,975	19,532		3,000	4,388	4,093	1,600	1,600	1,800	66,988	166
Wimberley, Wimberley; Clinton Regen, Pastor	55,000	37,013	350		39,716	7,066 1,50	0 2,500	1,200	3,300	147,645	165
INTERIM PASTORS											
El Campo, First; Jim Dement, f/t	47,500	30,000			n/a	5,929				83,429	144
Gonzales, PC of Gonzales; Cheryl Homsher, p/t	47,650				5,718	3,646 1,77	•	1,875		62,414	96
Helotes, Forest Hills; Patrick Dennis, f/t	24,500	23,000			20,425	3,634 1,00	0 1,000			73,559	45
New Braunfels, NB; Joan Watson, f/t (through Aug 2025)	30,000	48,223		8,664	8,760	6,646				102,293	286
San Antonio, Alamo Heights; David Dierkson, f/t (May	52,500	30,000			36,100	6,311		2,000		126,911	292
San Antonio, Holy Trinity/ Bryan Stamper/5500 mo to Sar											221
Seguin, FPC; Caryn Thurman; f/t	33,700	18,000	15,480		5,598	4,283	1,000			78,061	143
Contracts, Stated Supply											
Austin, Central; Jack Barden: three months	8,131	8,132				1,244				17,507	302
Austin, Genesis; Amanda Richey; p/t	1	34,709			3,471	_,		1,200			22
Austin, Hyde Park; Emily Owen; p/t	36,360	0 .,, 05			3, . , _			_,		36,360	62
Austin, Lake Travis; Tammy Carter, p/t	11,950	12,000			pension	1,827		2000		23,222	53
Austin, St. Andrews, Babs Miller p/t	22,140	12,000			pension	1,027		2000		22,140	361
Austin, St. Andrews, Carol Johnson p/t	22,140									22,140	361
Austin, St. Andrews, Erica Knisely, p/t	7,023	30,000	1,851	698	in full	2,681					361
Austin, Shepherd of the Hills, Rob Mueller, f/t	62,000	30,000	1,031	050	mrum	4,743			12	66,755	443
Austin, University, Allen Roberts, p/t-10 hours/wk	12,500					956	1,000	1,000		15,456	436
Brownsville, Primera Iglesia-Mexico; Joel Martinez p/t	12,500					330	1,000	1,000		13,430	67
Corpus Christi, El Divino Salvador; Kathy Anderson; p/t	21,000				#####		500	500		34,000	49
Elgin, First, Nancy McCrainie, PA, \$150/sermon, when ne	•			1			300	300		34,000	88
Harper, Harper; James Barker	cucu										40
Lockhart, FPC; Cameron Allen p/t 200/worship, 50/mortw	io Sun/mo										24
New Braunfels, New Braunfels; Carl McCauley Parish Asso	•	1,950		650						9,350	286
New Diaumeis, New Diaumeis, Cam Niccaulty Parish Asso	ρcp/t	1,550		030						3,330	200

Pipe Creek, Pipe Creek; Rob Lohmeyer and Elaine Murr San Antonio, Divine Redeemer, Kelsey Penn San Antonio, Emmanuel; Frank Vasquez, p/t San Marcos, Memorial; Michael Miller; p/t Schulenberg, St. Paul; JP Kessie, Cumberland PC pastor; p	28,552 66,000	22,000	17,160 2,450	5,049 1,683			28,552 88,209 25,883	71 93 40 61 27
Smithville, First; Kris Brown; p/t Uvalde, FPC, Regina Maas, p/t	6,750	6,750		1,033 2,166		1,200	21,785 <b>17,899</b>	54 51
COMMISSIONED DASTORS (CERTIFIED RIVING FLIDERS)	D/т							
COMMISSIONED PASTORS (CERTIFIED RULING ELDERS) Austin, El Buen Pastor; Lyra Absalon (46 Sundays x 210)	<u> </u>							65
Brownsville, First; Sheri Dittman	30,000						30,000	79
Collegeport, FPC; Bruce Goodlock	30,000						3,300	20
Corpus Christi, Faith Community, Efren Cruzada	24,000						24,000	63
Corpus Christi, Jackson Woods, Kris Bair	20,000			1,530	1,000	500	23,030	47
Cotulla, First; Karl Hays; one Sunday per month at \$165	1,980			2,550	2,000	300	23,030	11
Kingsville, Gethsemane; Arquimedes Martinez	_,,,,,						7,800	16
Laredo, Sinai; Rafael Dominguez	30,720			360	540	400	32,290	90
Llano, First; Ron Anderson	•						27,000	12
Luling, First; Karl Hays one Sunday/mo; moderate sessi	200						200	14
Mission, First; Alexis Templeton	12,000		4,500 #####		1,500		42,000	88
Palacios, First; Colleen Claybourn	7,200						7,200	40
Pleasanton, First; Mark Stoddard	6,916			8,000	250	500	15,666	18
Port Lavaca, First; Bruce Goodlock	1,500						1,500	53
Refugio, First (50 wks x 225);Cindy Myers								39
San Antonio, Grace; Larry Sears	16,767	12,000					28,767	48
San Benito, First; Dylan Vanderford								35
San Antonio, Los Angeles Heights; Jane Davis; volunteer				as	requested			18
Sinton, Sinton, Kris Bair; \$175/svc; allowances for meetings & specia	Il worship service	es						8
Tivoli, Tivoli, Cindy Myers								32
Transitional General Presbyter, Bobby Musengwa	105,000		49,348	#####	1,500		167,848	
Stated Clerk, Laurie Palmer	#######	30,196	31,272	6,000	1,000		117,491	
Mission Engagement Advisor, PCUSA, Lemuel Garcia-A	70,018		##### in full					
CHURCHES WITHOUT PASTORS								
Adamsville								5
Beeville, First								86
Burnet, Burnet								47
Cheapside, Cuero								8
Copperas Cove, First								90
Corpus Christi, Grace								276
Del Rio, FirstWalt Lee, once a month								18
Goliad, Goliad								49

Harlingen, Second	19
Karnes City, First	38
Kingsville, FPC	46
LaFeria, New Hope	26
Lockhart, Faith/Fe	34
Mercedes, First	25
New Braunfels, First	45
Rocksprings, First	25
San Antonio, CrestholmeCarlos Baladez, pulpit supply	18
San Antonio, Oak Hills	100
San Benito, Iglesia Getsemani	23
Taylor, Everlasting Hope	52
Victoria, First	65
Victoria, Grace	86

Karl E. Hays 204 Kildeer Drive Buda, Texas 78610 khays.personal@gmail.com

#### Statement of Faith

Whenever I attend a Presbytery meeting, I am always impressed by the statements of faith that are submitted by seminarians who are seeking ordination. I am also slightly intimidated, because often it seems that the authors have a better grasp of the tenets of their beliefs than I do; or, at the very least, they are better at expressing their beliefs than I am. But then I remember the often-told story of what noted theologian, Karl Barth, supposedly said when asked to summarize the whole of his life's work in theology. Barth is reported to have responded that theology could be summed up in one thought – "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." The fact that one of the greatest theologians of the 20th Century truly believed that the fundamental basis of all theology is grounded in that simple concept not only provides solace, it also helps me realize that there is nothing wrong with having simple, basic beliefs.

I believe in one all-powerful and infallible God, who created all things. I believe that we are separated from God by sin and that in the absence of God's intervention, we would remain separated from God. I believe that God has intervened into our lives in order to provide a means of being able to bridge the chasm that separates us from Him. God cares and loves for each of us so much that He has intervened in our lives through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus has been offered up as a sacrifice for the pain and suffering that we should rightfully endure as a result of our separation from God. I believe that God has intervened in our lives, not because we deserve it, or because we have done anything to earn God's favor, but simply because God loves us.

I believe that as God's creation, we are loved by God. I believe that as God's creation, God cares about us. I believe that as God's creation, God wants a relationship with us. God's love for us is so strong that offered up His own son so that the path would be clear for us to be able to grow closer to Him. I believe that just as God was self-less in offering His son as a sacrifice for our sins, we are called upon by God to be self-less, so we can draw closer to Him.

I am grounded by the truth expressed in Deuteronomy 31:8: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.