



**WORSHIP SERVICE ON
SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2021**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, January 17, 2021, the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, are: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; and John 1:43-18. The sermon title is "Remembering Jesus' Call," and the Bulletin is available here:

https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-1-17-Bulletin-PDF.pub_.pdf

Although we lament that, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to have a choir, our Choirmaster, Robert Wyatt, has been working diligently to incorporate special musical presentations into our worship services to enrich our music ministry. This Sunday, *Becky Richter* will sing for us “The Summons,” a traditional Scottish tune arranged by John Bell. Thank you, Becky!

<p><i>First Presbyterian Church</i> Commitment Campaign 2021</p>		
<p><i>Understanding that all we possess is a gift from God, and that God delights in the generosity of His children, I/we rejoice in pledging to First Presbyterian Church:</i></p>		
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UPDATE ON 2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Slightly more than two dozen generous and faithful members of this congregation have already completed and returned their pledge cards in connection with our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. We are grateful, also, for those who were able to write an additional, supplemental check to help us close the COVID-caused shortfall in our budget for 2020. May God greatly bless you all!

Still, Jim Stokes, our Treasurer, informs me that so far, we have received only half in number, and only 2/3rds in amount, of our pledges received in 2020. Thus, if you got caught up in year-end distractions, the Session humbly asks you now to fill out your 2021 pledge card and mail it to (or bring it by) the Church Office as soon as possible.

One member of our Congregation has pointed out to me that so many in our congregation have been ordained as Ruling Elders, even though they may not be in active service on the Session this year. That member also correctly reminded me, and all of us, that “once an Elder, always an Elder,” that is, an Elder continues to bear the responsibilities of his or her office even if not in service on the Session (see *Book of Order G-2.0404*). One of those many responsibilities is to support the life of

the congregation as well as the whole church (*Book of Order G-2.0401*), and one of the many ways to support the life of a congregation is to contribute, to the extent possible, to the financial welfare of the church to which the Elder belongs.

If you have misplaced your pledge card, additional cards are available in the Sanctuary, at the church office, and here (for downloading and printing): <https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-pledge-cards.pdf>

The Session has already begun to set the church budget for 2021. We cannot plan to spend any more than we can reasonably expect to receive, however, so please help us plan and prioritize our spending for 2021 by sending us your good faith estimate of the financial support you expect to be able to contribute over the course of the year.



CARES AND CONCERNS

Regardless of whom we may believe is responsible for the violence that occurred in the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 (the Day of Epiphany on the liturgical calendar), the sight of an angry mob in the corridors and chambers of the “People’s House” was surely shocking to us all.

God has blessed us in this nation with liberty and the freedom to pursue our political beliefs and ideals as each of our consciences may dictate. For those of us who strive to follow in the way of Jesus, however, our first allegiance is to the kingdom of God. Whatever that kingdom may look like, it must surely be a place of peace, tolerance, and love. God must weep when his people riot, destroy property, and take lives in the streets of Portland or in the halls of Congress.

On the day after the riot in Washington, D.C., I came across a prayer for peace in

our land and an end to senseless violence wherever it may occur and regardless of whoever may cause it. The prayer was written by the senior pastor at White Memorial Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, and I have set it out below for our collective reflection. If we believe that Christ is the way, and the truth, and the light (John 14:6), then we must follow his example as we pray for our nation:

O Lord, hear our prayer:

Anger. Dismay. Shock. Lament. How did it come to this?

Almighty God, we confess the sins of the worst parts of our history.

We ask that your Holy Spirit guide us toward a deep repentance.

We confess that all too often we have relied upon temporal promises which come and go with every news cycle.

Instead, help us to rely upon Jesus. Jesus who calls us to love. Jesus who offers grace. Jesus who offers mercy.

We remember your promises of restoration and covenant, and we call upon them now.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will bring a newfound peace to our land. A surprising peace, yes. But a deeply needed one. Peace to heal wounds. Peace to end a time more defined by outrageous rhetoric from both sides of the political aisle than by acts of kindness from those who would follow you.

We remember the warnings of Jesus about violence begetting violence.

Save us from further acts of political and racial violence. Save us from mistrust, chaos, and injustice.

May the coming days be ruled by truth, goodness, and integrity.

From sea to shining sea, from doctrines on the left to doctrines on the right, from small town streets to the halls of power help each and every one of us to walk in the manner of Jesus Christ, in whose name we offer this prayer. Amen.

**CURRENT COPIES OF
“THESE DAYS”
AND
“THE PRESENT WORD”
HAVE ARRIVED**

The church has recently received the January/February/March 2021 edition of “*These Days: Daily Devotions for Living by Faith.*” Upon request, we would be happy to mail a copy to any member desiring one. Also, we will place copies of the Devotional on the tables in the Narthex and in front of the Church Office for people to pick up on Sunday mornings or whenever they are at the church. Especially in these extended times of isolation and separation, the devotionals in this cherished publication are a wonderful source of inspiration, hope, and comfort.

Likewise, the Spring 2021 edition of “*The Present Word*” has arrived, and again, we would be glad to mail this lesson book to anyone desiring it. We continue to coordinate with C.F. Schneider as to when it might be prudent to resume in-person meetings of our Adult Sunday School class-- especially as the COVID vaccine becomes more widely available. Until then, however, please do not hesitate to contact the church office in order to request your copy of this publication.

Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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