

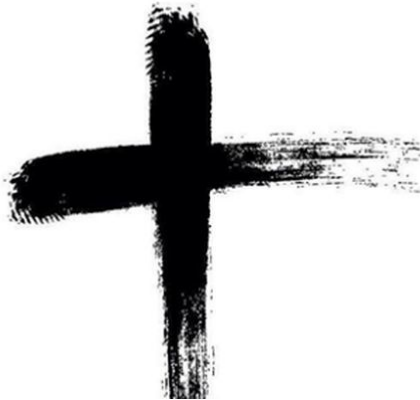
**WORSHIP SERVICE ON
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, February 14, 2021, Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday, are: 2 Kings 2:1-12; and Mark 9:2-9. The sermon title is "When God Appears," and the Bulletin is available here: https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-2-14-Bulletin-PDF.pub_.pdf

Once again, C.F. Schneider will be with us to play the piano. This Sunday, his featured hymn is "Fairest Lord Jesus."

Also, we want to thank Dawn Neel for her beautiful solo last Sunday, "On Eagle's Wings." Not only was it inspiring to hear Dawn sing such a powerful song, the song also so very nicely complemented our Scripture lesson for the morning

("Theological Amnesia"). Thank you, Dawn, for so generously sharing your talent with us!



**PREPARING FOR LENT:
ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICE ON
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021,
AT 6:00 P.M.**

For those who receive a printed copy of our Newsletter, this is the last Newsletter you will receive prior to our Ash Wednesday worship service on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Just as with our Sunday worship services, we will livestream our Ash Wednesday worship service on our website and Facebook page. Please join us "virtually" if you are unable to attend the service.

As is FPC's custom, our Ash Wednesday worship service will be somber and contemplative as we prepare our hearts and spirits for the Lenten Season. Our worship service will include the imposition of ashes, but this year, acknowledging the restraints imposed on us by the pandemic, ashes will be deposited into the cupped hands of those who come forward. There will be no contact between your Pastor and a celebrant's forehead, because obviously we do not want to risk spreading the virus by having one person touch multiple members of the congregation, one after the other.

In addition to Ash Wednesday, please mark your calendar with these important dates:

- Sunday, March 28th: Palm Sunday

- Friday, April 2nd: Good Friday
- Sunday, April 4th: Easter

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.



Did you know that there is an annual “Random Act of Kindness Day”? It is celebrated, worldwide, on February 17th. While I believe it is a good idea to mark the beauty of kindness with a special day, I also believe that for Christians, every day is an opportunity to engage in multiple random acts of kindness.

In our December 13, 2020 Newsletter, I published an address for Mac and Kathleen McCameron, mentioning that they would appreciate receiving a Christmas card or other note during Advent, given that they had relocated to Houston to live with their grandson. This week we received a message from the McCameron’s thanking us for publishing that request and asking us to pass along their gratitude to the *many* members of FPC from whom they had received cards and other expressions of love and kindness.

Kindness *is* magic, and it is especially remarkable since even a little bit goes such a long way! Do you have a loose stamp lying around on your desk? Do you pass the greeting cards display while shopping for groceries or picking up a prescription? Do you know someone who would appreciate receiving a piece of mail that was not a bill?

Inspired by the gratitude of the McCameron’s, let us each consider other random acts of kindness that we can perform as Christ’s followers. Especially during this pandemic, loneliness and isolation are prevalent throughout our community. A random act of kindness can be a beam of sunshine in the darkness, an expression of love when someone may need it the most. Kindness is contagious, and it is as beautiful to the giver as it is to the recipient. We don’t need to mark the calendar to

remember to engage in some random act of kindness; we can make random acts of kindness a year-round habit!



COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENTS VIA THE INTERNET

At our monthly meeting last night (Tuesday, Feb. 9th), the Session discussed the favorable experience that many of us (including your Pastor and his wife) have had in obtaining our COVID-19 vaccinations from the Victoria County Health Department. The vaccination site (at Victoria Community Center; Ben Jordan Street entrance) is operating smoothly and efficiently, with plenty of personnel to guide visitors and answer their questions. People with limited mobility can also count on plenty of help in getting to and from their cars and in being directed around the facility.

During our discussion, several Elders also noted, however, that it is difficult to obtain an appointment in the first instance because so many people (clearly thousands) are trying to sign up for a limited number of appointments. Thus, the sign-up page on the VCHD's webpage is often inaccessible, and the phone number provided for those who do not have Internet service is perpetually "busy." Still, with persistence, some of us have been able to get through.

As we thought about how many church members may be experiencing the same difficulties, we also thought about those of our members who may not have Internet service or, even if they do, may feel intimidated by the seeming complexity of using it. And suddenly, the Holy Spirit provided us with inspiration.

Do you or a loved one (it does not matter whether they are a member of FPC) need help in trying to make an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccination? If so, please call the church office, and we will ask one of the Elders on the Session to contact you to find out how she or he can help. Session members are able to use their own computers to try to make an appointment for anyone who needs it. This is

perfectly permissible from VCHD's perspective, the only requirement being that the vaccine recipient must currently be within eligibility categories "1a" (healthcare workers) or "1b" (over age 65 or otherwise 16 years of age or older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19; for further information:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/immunize/vaccine/EVAP-Phase1B.pdf>).

Please let us help! This is the information we need: name; address (including County; again, does not have to be Victoria); year of birth; telephone number; and, if you have one, email address. Naturally, all we can do is try to obtain an appointment along with everyone else who is doing the same. Thus, we cannot promise success, but we can promise our best effort. Plus, remember that some of us have gotten through before. Let us see if we can get through for you!



**ANNUAL SESSION RETREAT
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021**

The picture above was taken during last year's Session retreat at the Broadax Ranch near Tivoli. All of the Ruling Elders who were able to attend believed that the retreat was a great time for spiritual reflection, for fellowship, and for the important task of planning the church's direction. Unfortunately, none of us knew then that a pandemic was right around the corner-- a pandemic that would upend all our visions, plans, and great ideas for the future of FPC.

A year later, and observing all of the health protocols appropriate to our

gathering, the Session is going to hold a retreat once again at the Broadax Ranch on Saturday, February 27, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. As our church continues to worship and serve during the pandemic, the Session will have a broader perspective, and greater experience, about Christian worship, fellowship, and service during these difficult times.

To help make our retreat as Christ-honoring as we hope it will be, we humbly ask two things from the congregation. First, please pray for the members of the Session and for the church they have been ordained to serve. Pray for guidance and inspiration. Pray for wisdom and discernment. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit among the Session and our congregation as we go forward boldly into the new year.

Second, please also prayerfully consider your hopes and desires for our church. How do you believe we can better serve the Victoria community? What is on your heart, whether positive or suggestive of change, about the future of FPC? What can we improve; what can we leave behind? What can we try that we have never done before? What would you like to change; what would you like to see us do differently?

Your Session (and it is, in the Presbyterian tradition, exactly that-- *your* Session, pledged to lead and serve this congregation) wants to hear from you. Please don't be bashful. Contact the Pastor, the church office, or any one of the currently serving Ruling Elders with your observations, suggestions, and comments. If you wish to do so in confidence, your desires will be honored. Any criticisms will be received as constructive in spirit; *all* suggestions will be considered with a spirit of open mindedness. Please help us build God's kingdom on earth; please share your ideas with us as we prepare for our retreat.



Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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