



**WORSHIP SERVICE ON
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2021**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, February 28, 2021, the Second Sunday in Lent, are: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; and Mark 8:31-38. The sermon title is "Crosses," and the Bulletin is available here: https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-2-28-Bulletin-PDF.pub_.pdf

On Sunday, our music ministry will feature Becky Richter singing "Take Up the Cross" as well as C.F. Schneider playing "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." Please join us in person or via the Internet to enjoy the beautiful music with which we offer praise and glory to our God.



WAS IT COLD ENOUGH FOR YOU?!

We hope all our members and their families are now warm, well-watered, and safe after the Texas-sized cold snap we experienced last week.

As was the case all over Victoria, we lost power and water here at the church. But no water pipes burst, and Robert Wyatt informs me that the organ pipes held up alright as well. We did lose water in the HVAC system, however, so when the power came back on, we had no heat until our service contractor was able to refill the boiler and restart it. All is well now, and if you were with us in the Sanctuary last Sunday, you know that we now have plenty of heat.

The biggest disruption caused for us by the storm was the canceling of our Ash Wednesday worship service on Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. It was disappointing to many of us, I am sure, but without power, we had no lights and no Internet connection allowing us to livestream our service. Moreover, Wednesday evening would not have been a good time to be out on the streets of Victoria. We have saved the ashes we were going to use, and we will have a beautiful service next year when, post-COVID, more of us will be able to gather in person.

The Presbyterian Day School also fell victim to the storm. Following the lead of the Victoria Independent School District, the school was closed all of last week. The young disciplines returned to their warm classrooms on Monday, February 22nd, and the education wing is alive once again with the sound of their happy voices.

Finally, you will have noticed that the Church Newsletter did not get published last week. Thank you for understanding our predicament. No power meant no

access to our computers or to our email system. However, on Friday, February 19th, we were able to print the Bulletin for the following Sunday worship service, and we took the opportunity to send those Bulletins to those on our mailing list. It is likely that the Bulletins did not arrive at their destinations until Monday or Tuesday (after our Sunday worship service), but we know that some people watch the service on our website or Facebook page later in the week. If they do, they will have our familiar Bulletin by their side.



Even though we had to cancel our Ash Wednesday worship service this year, we continue through the Season of Lent as we look forward to these important dates, which you should mark on your calendar:

- Sunday, March 28th: Palm Sunday
- Friday, April 2nd: Good Friday
- Sunday, April 4th: Easter Sunday

Lent is a solemn time when we recall Christ's passion and crucifixion and prepare ourselves through meditation, contemplation, and other spiritual practices for the redeeming, live-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior!



COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENTS VIA THE INTERNET

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 as discussed in our last Newsletter, one of the Elders on the Session will contact you to ask 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.

Yesterday (Tuesday), marked the third time we have engaged in this effort, and I am happy to report that, while we are not always successful, so far we have obtained appointments for six members of our congregation!

We are getting good at this, so please let us help you or someone you love. This is the information we need: name; address (including County; it does not have to be Victoria); year of birth; telephone number; and, if you have one, email address.

What we are doing 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 and 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>).

Finally, if you have any reservations or anxieties about taking this vaccine (aside from what your doctor made have informed you), I would like you to feel free to discuss those concerns with me. These vaccines are nothing short of God's miraculous gifts to his suffering people. It would be a sin to let gossip, Internet

conspiracists, or other misinformation dissuade any of God's children from accepting such a potentially lifesaving gift.



THE JOY OF GIVING

Usually, it is the Preacher, the Treasurer, or the Chair of the Stewardship Campaign who helps us remember the need for giving in the church that we love so much. But every now and then, it is refreshing to think of giving not as a “need” but as a joy, and it is especially refreshing when that reminder comes from someone sitting in the pews with the congregation instead of someone standing in the Chancel in front of the Congregation.

Jud Austin sent me the following “Open Letter to my Friends at First Presbyterian Church.” This is the entirety of his letter; nothing further needs to be said!

Some will tell you you should
give until it hurts.
Some find pleasure in giving
away other people's money.

Your money is not yours
until you can joyfully
give it away!
Please FIND
THE JOY OF GIVING
for yourself.

Enjoy yourself,
yours in Christ,
Jud Austin 2-14-2021



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

This is brief reminder that, as discussed in our last Newsletter, the Session is going to hold a retreat at the Broadax Ranch on Saturday, February 27, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We will be observing all appropriate public health protocols.

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 us 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 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?

We would like to hear from you. Please don't be bashful. Contact me, 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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