

**WORSHIP SERVICE ON  
SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2021**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, March 21, 2021, the Fifth Sunday in Lent, are: Jeremiah 31:31-34; and Hebrews 5:5-10. The sermon title is “Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest,” and the Bulletin is available here: [https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/3-21-2021-Bulletin-BaptismPDF.pub\\_.pdf](https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/3-21-2021-Bulletin-BaptismPDF.pub_.pdf)

On Sunday, Robert will sing our anthem, “I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry,” and C.F. Schneider will play “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Please join us in person or via the Internet to enjoy the beautiful music with which we offer praise and glory to our God. Also, please read the article below about the sacred sacrament of baptism which we will celebrate during this Sunday’s worship service.



## **SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Many of you who are able to attend our Sunday morning worship services in person have already introduced yourself to our new member, Paul Michael (“PJ”) Monaco and his two sons, Xander and Kellin. PJ is a new member of our church, having been welcomed by the Session pursuant to his Profession of Faith.

Paul and I have been in conversation, and he has asked to be baptized in our church. Of course, we baptize Christians into the body of Christ, his church, rather than into any particular denomination. Still, we are so happy that PJ wants to celebrate his baptism here in the beautiful Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church of Victoria. PJ tells me that he feels very warm and welcomed in our church, and of course I cannot argue with that! I only wish that more in our community could also discover and experience the love and joy that PJ has found among us.

While infant baptism is more common in the Presbyterian tradition, we certainly welcome adults at all stages of life to renounce sin and, in their baptism, to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The Presbyterian liturgy for the sacrament of baptism, for a child or an adult, is particularly moving and deep in its theological and spiritual significance. Importantly, it is an opportunity for us to consider our own baptism (whether we were able to comprehend it or not at the time). During the preparation for baptism, the pastor proclaims:

In baptism God claims us,  
and seals us to show that we belong to God.  
God frees us from sin and death,  
uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

What a beautiful thought, what a wonderful comfort, it is to hear those words, whether we have already been baptized or whether we are preparing to be baptized! Once again, please join us in person or via the Internet to share this joyous occasion in the life of our church.

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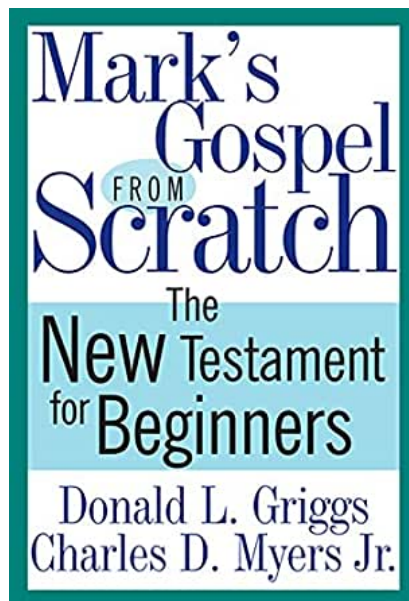
Please mark on your calendar with these important dates during Lent:

- Sunday, March 28th - Palm Sunday - Palm branches will be distributed among the congregation.
- Friday, April 2nd - Good Friday - This will be a Service of Darkness; the Seven Last Words of Christ will be read while the Sanctuary is darkened, and the congregation will be invited forward, one by one, to symbolically nail their sins to a rough cross in the Chancel.
- Sunday, April 4th - Easter Sunday – *Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!*

Lent is a glorious 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!

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**IS THERE ANY INTEREST  
IN A  
SHORT BIBLE-STUDY COURSE?**

Ever since your pastor first arrived at FPC, Victoria, he has been keen to lead a short bible-study course among interested members of the congregation. Adult Bible-study, like adult Sunday School, is a wonderful way to spend time with fellow Christians in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of our faith and of the sacred texts which inform that faith.

Until now, Hurricane Harvey, a Presbytery Meeting, and a pandemic have thwarted my best intentions to lead a Bible-study course, and, in fact, many may consider it still too soon to initiate in-person study while the coronavirus remains so threateningly in our midst. That is why the headline for this note is framed as a question: would you be interested in a short Bible-study course if one were offered by your pastor?

To give you an idea of what I have in mind, I have found an excellent little study guide entitled, "Mark's Gospel from Scratch" (from the "New Testament for Beginners" Series). The book is authored by Donald L. Griggs and Charles D. Myers, Jr., prominent Christian educators and authors. A picture of the cover of their



book appears above.

The book has six discrete chapters, each of which lends itself to a one-hour class and study session. I am open to suggestions as to a good time and day of the week to hold the class, but my initial suggestion would be to hold classes over the noon hour (12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.) on each of six successive Tuesdays (for example, beginning on Tuesday, April 14th, and ending on Tuesday, May 19th). I realize that holding this class during the noon hour would preclude participants who work during the day, but if the classes work well, perhaps we could later repeat them during evenings in the Summer or Fall.

I believe this class would work best if all participants (a) read the entirety of the Gospel According to Mark in advance (it is not too terribly long) and (b) arrived for class having read the chapter in our study guide that was assigned for that class. I also believe it would be best if, as a class, we spread out in Fellowship Hall with appropriate social distancing. Those who were reluctant to participate in person could, if they preferred, join us by Zoom, although they would miss the fellowship “feel” of the class. Of course, there would be no tests or written assignments(!); we would just experience the joy, inspiration, and learning that would come from studying Scripture together.

Please send me your comments, suggestions, or questions at [jimdement@fpcovictoria.com](mailto:jimdement@fpcovictoria.com). I may not be able to respond to each and every one of them, but I promise you I will read and prayerfully consider all of them. In time, I will provide the congregation with more definite plans for this Bible-study if sufficient members express an interest. May the Holy Spirit bless and support us in this undertaking!

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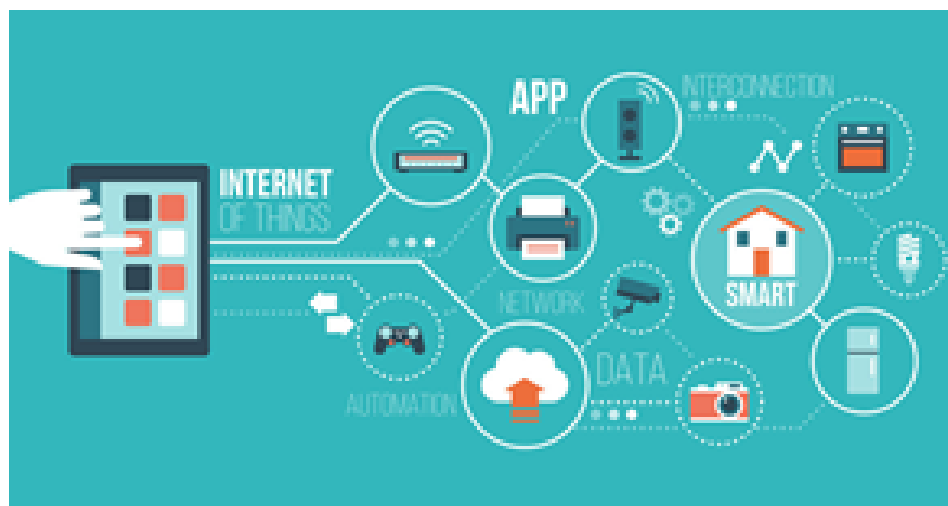


It has been a while since VCAM and Christ Kitchen have been mentioned in this Newsletter, but that does not mean that the needs of those organizations have diminished. If anything, the need for food and clothing has only increased in the midst of the current pandemic and economic downturn.

On the one hand, I want to thank once again those who are faithfully dropping contributions in our VCAM collection box as well as bringing cookies and other desserts to supplement the meals being prepared at Christ Kitchen. Thank you for your generosity and support.

On the other hand, I would also like to encourage you to continue engaging in the Christian “habit” of generosity. If you can spare some prepackaged desserts or some canned goods or dry goods to bring by the church, we will make sure they get delivered to the right place. This is truly a situation where a little goes a long way. Your ability to bring even a small amount of groceries or baked goods will go far to alleviate hunger and suffering in our community. Please prayerfully consider how you can help.

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## COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENTS

As a result of the combined, intentional efforts of the members of our Session, working in close coordination with the Church Office, we have been able to obtain some 8 or more appointments for our members to obtain COVID-19 vaccinations from the Victoria County Health Department. In some cases, Ruling Elders even provided transportation for those members who needed it to get their vaccinations.

Although we do not have any reliable data on which to base this conclusion, as we call around to the more senior members of our Congregation, it appears that the

vast majority of them have been able to obtain their first vaccination as well as their second vaccination (or at least have an appoint to get it).

Therefore, unless the need arises, we will no longer discuss this much in our Newsletter, although we ask all our members to remember that if they, their loved ones, or their friends still have not been able to arrange to obtain their COVID vaccinations, please contact us here at the Church Office. The Session remains more than willing and able to help any who may need assistance in protecting themselves against this deadly pandemic.

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**CURRENT COPIES OF  
“THESE DAYS”  
HAVE ARRIVED**

The church has recently received the April/May/June 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.

Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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