



**SESSION DECIDES
TO CONTINUE
SUSPENSION OF ON-SITE ACTIVITIES
PENDING MORE AFFIRMATIVE
PUBLIC HEALTH DATA**

Yesterday evening during the monthly meeting of the Session, the Ruling Elders carefully considered when and how best to resume worship services, Sunday School classes, PW meetings, and other such functions on FPC's premises.

The strong consensus of the Session was that it would be premature to set a specific "reopening date" at this time. Incidents of COVID-19 infections and fatalities continue to rise, and public health experts in whom the Session has confidence continue to urge caution as the population, especially members of the population in high-risk categories (age, existing medical conditions, autoimmune weakness, etc.), considers a resumption of public activities.

We prayed for the health and welfare of members of our congregation who are cautiously guarding their health by staying home and avoiding public contact, not to mention wearing facemasks, maintaining social distancing, and observing all the other recommended public health protocols.

We also prayed for the health and welfare of members of our community who have families to support, businesses to maintain, and careers to sustain and thus who face greater imperatives to return to work than we do to return to our

Sanctuary.

For the immediate future, therefore, we will continue to post our Sunday morning worship services on the FPC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fpcfofvictoria/>) while the church remains closed for public gatherings. We thank God for our good fortune in having this means available for the members, friends, and visitors of FPC to “stay connected” in worship, music, and liturgy.

The Session also discussed those measures that we believe should be considered in protecting the health of our congregation once we do resume worshipping in the Sanctuary. Undoubtedly, we will maintain social distancing, and we will adjust our liturgy and worship practices (the taking of communion, the passing of the peace, the collection of the offering, the seating of the choir, etc.) to minimize risks to our health.

Meanwhile, the Session will monitor the current public health crisis, looking especially for signs from the medical community that the risk of illness has significantly diminished, all the while remaining cautious and prudent.



**AREA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES
RECEIVE FINANCIAL GRANTS FROM
MISSION PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD OF THE SON**

In the spirit of “connectionalism” that is at the heart of the Presbyterian tradition, our local area councils, Mission Presbytery and Synod of the Sun, have provided each Presbyterian church in our region with grants of \$1,000 and \$150, respectively. FPC is grateful for these grants which are, in fact, gifts from our fellow Presbyterian brothers and sisters in Christ as we support one another in times of crisis and need.

The Session approved the use of the grant from Synod of the Sun (\$150) to pay for a one-year subscription to “Zoom,” the internet videoconferencing software that allows the Session to hold “virtual” meetings on their computers from home and

that allows your pastor to participate in meetings of the various Presbytery committees of which he is a member.

The Session also approved the use of the grant from Mission Presbytery (\$1,000) to obtain better equipment by which to broadcast our Sunday worship services over the internet. We hope that the improvements we will make will enhance the quality of our “virtual” worship services both while we are away from our Sanctuary and, we pray, even after we return. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that we could continue to broadcast our services to the community even after our doors are once again open on Sunday morning!



**FPC OBTAINS
SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LOAN
TO CUSHION ITSELF AGAINST
FINANCIAL RISK**

FPC and the Presbyterian Day School have been able, thanks to the hard work and dedicated efforts of our friends at Prosperity Bank, to procure Payroll Protection Plan (“PPP”) loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration. If the proceeds of these loans are used for approved purposes (principally to pay salaries and, to a limited extent, utility bills), there is a possibility that the loans will not need to be repaid (thus becoming “grants”).

The PPP loan obtained by PDS was absolutely essential for the school's survival. We thank God for the blessings these funds will provide to our education ministry, especially since the reopening of PDS in August 2020 (public health concerns permitting) is now assured. FPC’s tradition of educating the youngest of Christ’s future disciples in the Victoria community, started in 1946, will continue!

The PPP loan obtained by FPC was in a lesser amount (\$16,400) than the school's loan (\$36,300), although the Session is no less grateful for what it received. Aware of its sacred stewardship responsibilities, the Session has decided to reserve these funds for future contingencies in these uncertain financial times. At this point, FPC members continue to mail in or drop off their pledges and offerings in a steady and faithful manner. At the same time, however, FPC’s total income for 2020 is

behind budget due principally, we believe, to the fact that without public worship services we are unable to collect “loose change” and other spontaneous giving by members and visitors on Sunday mornings. Also, should income from pledges and offerings decline (as sometimes happens, especially during the summer months), the proceeds from our PPP loan might also prove essential for our survival as well.

In short, although our PPP loan is truly a blessing from God (nothing less!), the Session does not believe it to be a “windfall.” We will, of course, use it in the manner directed by the SBA. The savings that we will realize, however, will be retained to cover budget shortfalls, equipment repairs, or other contingencies should they occur. If and as our budget improves, we may likewise consider the opportunity to share a portion of this blessing with others who may have greater needs. In the meantime, the Session prays for wisdom as it manages not only the church’s spiritual affairs but also its financial needs through these difficult times.

**"VIRTUAL" WORSHIP SERVICES
ON
FACEBOOK/FPCOFVICTORIA:
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER,
MAY 17, 2020**

Everyone appears by now to know how to follow our worship services on FPC’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fpcofvictoria/>), although as always, do not hesitate to contact the church office if you have any questions or are experiencing any problems in finding our videos on either our Facebook page or our website (<https://www.fpcofvictoria.org>).

Our Scripture readings for this Sunday, May 17, 2020, are: Psalm 66:8-20; and John 14:15-21. The sermon title is “Living a Life Shaped by Love.” You can obtain a copy of the Bulletin here: <https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-05-17-Bulletin-PDF.pdf>

SEEN “OUT AND ABOUT”

Did you see the article on the front page of the Tuesday, May 12, 2020, issue of *The Advocate*? The article, headlined “Life Challenges,” featured a sweet young woman who was learning important life-skills in order to function well in society with her mild autism. One of the front-page pictures showed this woman helping a customer carry her grocery bags to her car at HEB. The customer was our own Beverly Bright!

Beverly and her helper were both wearing facemasks. Way to go, Beverly-- leading by example! May we all be careful and stay safe out there.

CARES AND CONCERNS

Tina Lawhon, the niece and namesake of FPC member Ernestine Kidder, is having heart surgery today (May 13th) at St. David's Hospital in Round Rock, Texas. She is allowed no visitors other than her husband. Please pray for both "Tinas" and their families that the planned surgery and prolonged recovery will prove successful. Spiritually, emotionally, and physically we commend them all to the Great Healer, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Although we have no further details yet, the Church Office has been informed that the Reverend Carroll Pickett is in hospice care. He was an Assistant Pastor at FPC from approximately 1961-1967. There is more about him (but not about his medical condition) here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carroll_Pickett. When God selects the moment to call his servant home, we know that Rev. Pickett will be received with love, grace, and mercy-- as shall we all someday.

COPIES OF "THESE DAYS" AVAILABLE FROM CHURCH OFFICE

The April/May/June 2020 editions of "*These Days: Daily Devotions for Living by Faith*" have arrived in the Church Office. If you would like a copy, just phone us (361.575.2441) or email us (info@fpcofvictoria.com), and we will gladly send you one immediately. Do not worry about the postage involved, by the way. We have received a generous contribution to our postage budget to help meet our mailing expenses as we try our best to stay in touch with the members and friends of First Presbyterian Church.

Also, if you are interested in online worship devotionals, there is none better than *The Presbyterian Outlook*. Investigate this timely, information, and spiritually motivating publication at: <https://pres-outlook.org/>. I particularly recommend the devotionals presented by Jill Duffield. If you enjoy this publication, you can sign up for a free "internet subscription" and receive the weekly editions by email.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim



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