



**“VIRTUAL” WORSHIP SERVICES
ON
FACEBOOK/FPCOFVICTORIA:
DAY OF PENTECOST,
MAY 31, 2020**

We will celebrate the Day of Pentecost during our worship service for Sunday, May 31, 2020-- always an exciting, an often colorful, day in the life of Christ's Church. If you wish, wear something red as you watch our worship service which, as usual, we will be streaming on the FPC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fpcofvictoria/>).

Our Scripture readings for the Day of Pentecost are: Numbers 11:24-30; and

Acts 2:1-21. The sermon title is “The Birth of Christ’s Church.” You can obtain a copy of the Bulletin here: <https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-05-31-Bulletin-PDF.pdf>

As a special treat, *Becky Richter*, will sing an anthem solo to the glory of God and in celebration of Pentecost. Becky understands that although the Sanctuary will be empty, many members and friends will be watching as she shares her musical gifts with all of us.

One last note: last Sunday, we encountered some minor technical difficulties with our live streaming on Facebook, especially right at the beginning of our service. Frankly, sometimes these problems baffle us because they seem intermittent and brief. Nevertheless, if you experience problems while watching a virtual worship service, first, be patient, as it may quickly resolve itself. Second, however, if the problem persists, please contact the Church Office, and let us know what problems you experienced. The Session has authorized the purchase of some new technical equipment with the funds we received from a Mission Presbyterian grant, and we want to make sure that we are installing the equipment correctly and that it is operating as expected.



A BELATED MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE

Memorial Day seemed to arrive early this year, and we regret that we did not mention the occasion in our last Newsletter.

We must never forget those brave soldiers, of every race and color, who gave their “last full measure of devotion” in the defense of God’s sacred liberty which we cherish and for which they died. Neither must we forget to pray for those valiant souls and their families who have served their country with honor, bravery, and

courage. For them we offer this Memorial Day prayer:

Holy God, You are the God of all time and all places, and Your Word promises that one day every nation under heaven will declare Your name. But today is not yet that day. Your Word promises that one day peace will reign in human hearts, the lion and the lamb will lie down together, and war will be no more. But today is not yet that day. O God, we bow humbly before Your throne of grace and mercy, desiring peace, justice, and liberty for all people. Even so, we acknowledge that because of human sin, today is not yet that day.

Dear God, we give you thanks today for men and women in every generation who have willingly walked into harm's way in order that we might enjoy the liberties so many others only dream of. We pray you will continue to heal their memories, bless their sacrifice, and honor their service. We pray, also, for those families who have lost sons and daughters in war. May they be remembered in this life, even as they are entrusted to You in the life they now live forevermore.

And we pray for those who even now are standing in harm's way for us. We pray for servicemen and women deployed around the globe. O God, be their hedge of protection, provide for them Your constant watch care. Keep them safe, draw them unto Yourself, and work out Your will in and through them. Be with their families today and always, and give them the confident hope that comes from placing our lives fully in Your hands.

Lord God, lead us to live lives that are worthy of the calling of Christ, knowing that today would be the day that His name is declared through us. We ask that today would be the day that peace reigns through us. That today would be the day that Your will is worked out in us. That today would be the day. Amen.

**THANK
YOU!**

THANK YOU, AGAIN! RESPONDING TO THE CALL TO HELP CHRIST'S KITCHEN

The response to our second call last week for cookies, brownies, donuts, cakes, pies, and other desserts to help the volunteers at Christ's Kitchen feed the hungry and the needy in our community was as equally generous as our first call several weeks ago. FPC members made a special trip to the church on Memorial Day, while the Church Office was open from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., to drop off generous quantities of desserts. One member dropped off some "extra" frozen cookies to be put in our freezer and used on short notice in the future if they are needed. Thank you, once again, for this amazing outpouring of generosity!

At this time, Francis Miller (one of but several FPC members volunteering at Christ's Kitchen on Tuesdays) informs me that she is not sure whether Christ's Kitchen will need to make another call for help from our congregation to supply supplemental desserts to feed over 750 visitors that Christ's Kitchen is serving daily. Therefore, Francis and I have agreed that whenever she anticipates a need for more desserts, she will let me know and I will make an announcement to that effect during the "Welcome and Announcements" portion of our worship services.

Meanwhile willing volunteers are always welcome to help on Tuesday mornings (when FPC members are at Christ's Kitchen in force) or on any weekday morning when you can. God bless you for remembering the poor, the hungry, and the less fortunate among us.

CARES AND CONCERNS

We have received an update from Ruth Ann Barnard, who is recuperating from successful knee-replacement surgery. She is at home, resting comfortably when she can, and otherwise working diligently on her physical therapy.

Billy Ruddock, a member of our church who now resides in San Antonio, recently fell-- gashing his arm, breaking his shoulder and three ribs, and cracking a sacrum above his tailbone. In a recent update, Mikey (Billy's wife) reported that while Billy's injuries remain painful, there is good news in the fact that none of his injuries will require surgery. We pray for Billy's speedy recovery and for strength and comfort for both Billy and Mikey. Billy celebrated his 88th birthday two weeks ago, and we pray for him to be with us to celebrate many more!

WHEN SHALL WE RETURN TO WORSHIP IN OUR SANCTUARY?

Your Pastor is concerned about how the exercise of our freedom of worship appears to be becoming politicized in the public arena. From an authentic Christian perspective, Christ's church is never closed, and thus there is no need to argue about when to "re-open" it. Confrontations around such arguments are shallow and, from my perspective, serve no other purpose than to sell newspapers or increase viewership.

The question our Session is prayerfully considering is "when shall we return to worship in our Sanctuary"? The people of God value communal worship in the temple, at the altar, or within a house of worship where they find comfort, joy, and Christian companionship. The church house may be a *place* of worship, but it is not the only *way* we worship. We worship by volunteering at Christ's Kitchen, by feeding the hungry, and by giving of our time and treasure to worship to help those less fortunate than ourselves. If worship were confined to the four walls of a church building, Christ's church would be a pathetic institution, indeed!

If you are interested in how other religious leaders in other communities (in this case, Houston) are evaluating the issue of "re-opening," you may want to read this article from the May 27, 2020 issue of the *Houston Chronicle*: [Faith leaders urge continued closure](#) (please forgive the advertisement in this link; I was unable to remove it).

Our Session has affirmed that it will be careful, and even overly cautious as to when we will open the Sanctuary for worship in person on Sunday mornings. As I have said before, we will be driven by data, not divisive arguments. A key metric (although not the only one) discussed by public health officials in whom we have confidence is to watch for a continuous 14-day decline in the number of new cases of COVID19 locally. Even then, a return to public activities (such as Sunday morning worship) must be accompanied by responsible public health precautions.

For us, that would mean, among other things, social distancing in the Sanctuary, frequent deep cleaning of the Sanctuary, the wearing of face masks by those who wanted to be especially cautious, the placing of the offering plates on tables in the Narthex, no physical contact during the Passing of the Peace, the removal of hymnals (with lyrics continuing to be printed in the Bulletin), and

appropriate safeguards during the serving of communion. If you have any other suggestions along these lines, please do not hesitate to share them with the Session or your Pastor.

And finally, no member, friend, or visitor to our church should feel guilty about not returning to worship in our Sanctuary until they feel absolutely safe and secure in doing so. No one takes attendance; no one judges. God can be found in your home as easily as he can at 2408 N. Navarro. As long as we love the Lord our God, one another, and our neighbors as ourselves, Christ's church will always be "open."

**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.

Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim



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