



**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
ON PALM SUNDAY,
APRIL 2, 2023, 10:30 A.M.**



Please join us for our worship service at 10:30 a.m. this Sunday, April 2, 2023, the Sixth Sunday in Lent, universally known as Palm Sunday. Our Scripture readings are Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (“his steadfast love endures forever”) and Matthew 21:1-11 (Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem). The title of the sermon is “A Glorious Parade,” and a copy of the Bulletin for this service can be found here: <https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-4-2-Bulletin-Communion-PDF-3.pdf>.

Those familiar with church liturgy know that there are two ways to

commemorate Palm Sunday. One is the “Liturgy of the Passion,” which focuses on Christ’s suffering as he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, arrested by Roman soldiers, confronted by Pontius Pilot, and whipped and lashed as he carried his own cross to Golgotha. The other is the “Liturgy of the Palms,” and it is a festive liturgy, marked with the waving of palm leaves and focusing on Jesus’ joyful reception by the crowds in Jerusalem as he entered the city during the week of Passover.

This year we will celebrate the Liturgy of the Palms! We will have palm leaves for every member and guest who worships with us in person, and who knows?, we might just put those palms to good use as we recall the joy with which our Savior was received into the city where, in marked contrast to his original reception, he would ultimately be sentenced to die a horrible death.

Also, as Palm Sunday falls on the first Sunday in April, we will be celebrating communion. This Sunday is going to be a happy time for our church family-- a time of worship and excitement as we anticipate Holy Week and the glory of Easter Sunday to come! Now would be the *perfect* time to invite that friend or neighbor to come join you and experience the warmth and fellowship of our church family. Don’t be shy, don’t be reluctant! We have a beautiful community here at FPC Victoria; it would be such a shame not to share it!



During each week of Lent, we are featuring excerpts from the Lenten Devotional published by the *Vital Congregation Initiative* of the Presbyterian Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The complete Devotional can be found here:
<https://fpcfvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-Lent-Devotional.pdf>,
and your pastor, together with the Mission & Outreach Committee, would like to encourage you to examine the document online. In addition to contemplative Lenten essays, the Devotional contains some fun recipes and information to consider during Lent.

Below is the reflection for the Sixth (and last) Sunday in Lent. We hope that you are comforted and inspired by these words on your Lenten journey.

Caring Relationship

Rev. Amy Delaney
Acting Executive Presbyter
Northwest Coast Presbytery

Psalm 131, NLT

Come, everyone! A Song of Ascents. Of David.

*O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.*

*But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.*

*O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time on and forevermore.*

How do you experience the season of Lent? For me, Lent is when I seek to dwell more closely with God. That takes different forms each year. Most years it includes a Saturday Lenten retreat away from the busy-ness of my ordinary life. This year I am also praying with the Psalms. In the Psalms of Ascent, psalms traditionally sung by worshipers on their way to Jerusalem, we find Psalm 131, a “Psalm of Quiet Trust.” I can imagine Jesus praying Psalm 131 as he ascended the road to Jerusalem with his disciples.

Psalm 131 offers this image of quiet trust: a weaned child with its

mother. I am both a mother and grandmother, so I know first-hand that nursing infants are demanding. A newborn can nurse every two hours - even overnight. But when the young child is finally weaned, the bids for connection are less about food and more about presence. The child seeks to be held, comforted, reassured – or just to be with its mother.

“But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.” Psalm 131:2

Lent is a time be with God.

One Sunday as worship was ending, I stood at the church door. The congregation was doing what it did best - caring for one another. Circles had formed around the people who had shared prayer requests, or with those for whom the passing of the peace just wasn't sufficient to share updates on their lives. No one was checking their phones, disinterested, or in a hurry. Even visitors were noticed and included. The congregation was nurturing and growing their caring relationships by choosing to be with one another.

• This week, take a few minutes to just sit with God in prayer – no agenda, no demands – just to sit and be with God. Perhaps you could share a psalm together.

• And on Sunday, I invite you to notice your congregation. Where do you see circles of caring relationships? How might you “be with” others in your community? How might you encourage others to do the same?



**OUR JOURNEY FORWARD:
YOUR MISSION STUDY TASK FORCE
CONTINUES ITS WORK:
HAVE YOU COMPLETED YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE?**

By now, everyone in the congregation should be aware of the questionnaire that has been prepared and circulated by your Mission Study Task Force. *If you have misplaced your copy, you can find another copy here: <https://forms.gle/mRHNRdyAPCMbXMTPA>.* Paper copies of the questionnaire can also be sent to you from the church office upon request, or you can pick one up off the tables in the narthex and in the entrance to Fellowship Hall. An important detail to remember is that we want a response from each member and friend of our congregation. If two or more members live in the same household, for instance, then we would like to receive a questionnaire from *each* of them.

While we do not like deadlines, your Task Force would like your responses either by email or U.S. mail by **Friday afternoon, March 31, 2023**, to help us move forward with this important work. That said, in the spirit of grace, we will also accept any questionnaires that are placed in the offering plates or dropped off at the church office on **Sunday morning, April 2, 2023**.

Your Mission Study Task Force is grateful, also, for the response we have received so far, not only in the number of questionnaires that have already been returned, but also in the interest and questions we have received from members of the congregation about the progress of our work. As you may be aware, the Task Force is meeting on a weekly basis, and we are studying a wealth of information and data to help us with this project. Our plan is to present our work, once completed, to the Session and then, after their input and guidance, to share our work with the congregation.

We are not working in secret, and we do not have any hidden agenda. We are engaged in an important and vital step to help our church discern *Our Mission Forward*. At the same time, ours is a work in progress, a task which will require a lot of examination, analysis, and discussion before it emerges in a form we consider ready for the Session and the congregation to consider. Therefore, while praying for us, also please be patient with us. Once our work is completed, we will share it with everyone, hoping that it is pleasing to you and to our Lord-- and knowing for certain that it will mark the beginning, not the end, of the tasks ahead of us.

Meanwhile, if you have any ideas or suggestions for your Task Force to consider, please do not hesitate to speak to any one of us. The members of your Mission Study Task Force are:

Donald H Anderson, Facilitator and Chairperson
Rev. Jim DeMent, Interim Pastor
Roxanna Hauschild, Presbyterian Women Representative
Jim Miller, Congregation Representative
Dawn Neel, Church Treasurer and Presbyterian Women Representative
Patrick Patterson, Active Ruling Elder
Bill Wilkinson, Ruling Elder and Congregation Representative
Gayla Whitaker, Presbyterian Women Representative

Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43:18

I hereby command you:

Be strong and courageous;

do not be frightened or dismayed,

for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
HELD AT MORANCH ON
MARCH 24-26, 2023**

Presbyterian Women from all over Mission Presbytery gathered at MoRanch on March 24-26, 2023 for fellowship and Christian study. The theme of the Conference was "Calm in the Chaos Isaiah," and one of the keynote speakers was the Reverend Kathrine Anderson (the daughter of our own Ruth and Donald Anderson).

Dawn Neel and Martha Tarkington attended the conference on behalf of the Presbyterian Women of FPC, Victoria, and they report that the program was meaningful and inspirational.

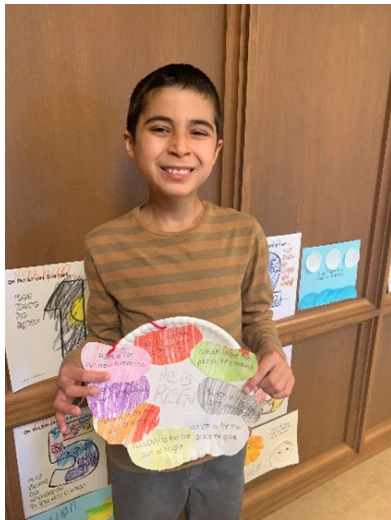
OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR AGES 5-12



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these". Matt 19:14

We are hopping into our Easter series. For the next few weeks we will be reading and singing all about Easter. We have a great interactive book with objects that go with each page and are learning the classic children's hymn, "Jesus Love Me". This past Sunday, we also created our very own Jelly Bean Prayer - which was not only informative, but yummy too! Hope you can join us this week.

Our Sunday school lessons are multi-sensory, which means they are focused on tapping into all 5 sense for learning. Children ages 5-12 are welcome on Sunday mornings from 9:45 am – 10:15 am. Contact Leila Galvan at 956-367-2234 if you have questions or would like to participate. All are welcome!





**REVIVAL OF
FPC TRADITION OF
EASTER LILIES
TO HONOR OR MEMORIALIZE
LOVED ONES**

At a recent meeting of the Worship Committee, we decided that our members had been missing our long-established custom of purchasing Easter Lilies to honor or memorialize friends and loved ones on Easter Morning. We are not sure when or why the custom was suspended, but we blamed it on COVID, an always handy excuse for everything that has gone wrong these past few years!

If you were in church last Sunday (March 26th), you will have seen the customary order form for the lily plants that we will display in the Chancel on Easter Morning. The form will also be inserted in our Bulletins next Sunday (April 2nd, Palm Sunday), and, for those who receive this Newsletter by mail, the form will be included in your envelope.

The deadline to return the form is **Tuesday, April 4th**, in order to be sure that the names of those who are honored or memorialized can be listed in the insert that will be included in our Easter Morning worship bulletin.

While we believe this is clear, we also want to mention that this is not a fundraising project. The lilies are being offered at the church's approximate cost (\$10) as an opportunity to remember those whom we love and admire.



**OUR HEARTS ARE BROKEN ONCE AGAIN
BY MADNESS AND
GUN VIOLENCE**

Perhaps like you, your pastor's emotions ranged from despair to rage as news reports flowed in about the massacre of God's innocent lambs at a Presbyterian Day School in Nashville, Tennessee, on Monday, March 27th. I thought I had become immune to mass murders in grocery stores, night clubs, schools, and churches (depressingly resigned to the state of our society's insensitivity to the evil of gun violence, I would have to say), but this one hit too close to home. Murdering children in a Presbyterian Day School!

Your pastor has his own views on mental health assistance and responsible gun control, but, because these issues are so politicized, so emotional, so ossified and entrenched among politicians, activists, and pundits on cable news networks, I see no need to discuss those views when minds are already made up. I will preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and trust this intelligent, loving, caring congregation to sort things out, according to their own conscience, in the political arena. I will volunteer, however, that a society that cannot protect its children (those of whom Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven") should fear God's wrath even more than we fear the next mass shooting (Matthew 18:10; Mark 10:14-16; Luke 17:2).

By way of assurance, I also want to mention that I have spoken to Melissa Samudio, Director of our own Presbyterian Day School, and as fate (aka "God"!) would have it, the school had already planned to have a "lockdown drill" (aka, an "active shooter drill") on the day following the tragedy in

Nashville. Members of the Victoria Police Department had also been scheduled to come to the school to offer suggestions and comments about the security of the church building and the school's procedures for a lock-down drill.

Representatives of the VPD did meet with Melissa and your pastor on Tuesday morning, March 28th, and those representatives were both thorough and helpful as we walked with them through our halls to survey the security of our church building. Melissa will be bringing their good suggestions to the attention of the PDS Board, and I will be meeting with the Building & Grounds Committee next week to go over security issues as well. Nothing we will be able to do will assure our young disciples of 100% security, but we can improve our security, hoping to deter some madman or madwoman from committing murder and suicide on our property.

In certain quarters, the phrase "thoughts and prayers" has a hollow ring to it, especially when uttered by those who have the power but not the will to increase mental health resources and reduce gun violence in our nation. Among Christians, however, prayer is a powerful tool of mourning for the death of innocents, of compassion for those who have lost those whom they cherish, and of hope for God's recuperative power of healing among us.

Here is a prayer of lament based on Psalm 13. It was published on the day after the Nashville massacre in our own *Presbyterian Outlook* (<https://pres-outlook.org/2023/03/a-prayer-responding-to-the-nashville-covenant-school-shooting/>). Pray for our nation, pray for our children, pray for our salvation:

How long, O Lord? How long must we bear the pain of yet another mass shooting? How long must we lament the killing of school children? How long must guns be exalted over the lives they take? How long must politicians debate common-sense mental health and gun-control laws for this uncommon American problem?

Righteous God, we cannot take this anymore. We stand defiant. We protest in rage. We are sick over our school children hiding beneath their desks, teachers sacrificing their lives to protect them, our schools becoming fortresses to keep the evil out.

Give light to our eyes, Holy One, or we will continue to sleep the sleep of this death. Help us find a path to end this madness. Lead us in productive,

resource-full ways to treat mental illness. Exorcise us of our addiction to guns. Soften the hearts of those who stand in the way of good solutions and who withhold resources to implement them.

Hold those who grieve and groan, God. Steady our PCA siblings of Covenant Presbyterian Church in the aftermath of this shooting. Support the families, the teachers, and the administrators as they walk this road, broken and traumatized. Remind them that nothing can separate them from your love.

How long, O Lord? Do not hide your face from us. Intercede in this madness. Change us and restore us to your path of peace.

Amen.



**LATE-BREAKING NEWS!
HARPER EDWARDS WINS AGAIN!**

As this Newsletter “goes to press,” we have learned that Harper Edwards has won another golf tournament! Details are sketchy right now, but what we know so far is that yesterday Harper won a “District Championship Tournament” (maybe UIL-sponsored?) in Corpus Christi which qualifies her to move on to the “Regional Tournament” next week.

Harper’s winning ways give us such joy! We will publish more details in next week’s Newsletter, but meanwhile, let’s give a big shout-out of “Congratulations!” to FPC’s newest member, Harper Edwards!



**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING:
THIS FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023, AT 10:00 A.M.**

Our schedule for future cleaning sessions appears below (all dates are on a Friday). If you have some time to help us save money for the church while enjoying fellowship with good friends who love our church, please join us. No prior experience required!

April 14 at 10:00 AM: Office Spaces & Halls
April 28 at 10:00 AM: Kitchen & Fellowship Hall
May 12 at 10:00 AM: Sanctuary & Restrooms
May 26 at 10:00 AM: Office Space & Halls
June 9 at 10:00 AM: Kitchen & Fellowship Hall
June 23 at 10:00 AM: Sanctuary & Restrooms
July 14 at 10:00 AM: Office Spaces & Halls
July 28 at 10:00 AM: Kitchen & Fellowship Hall



**PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN**

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN MISSION PROJECT
APRIL 2023 - THE VINE SCHOOL**

Items needed by The Vine School are:

- * Disinfectant Wipes
- * Dry Erase cleaner (such as Mr. Clean Magic Eraser sponges).
Dry Erase cleaning sprays and wipes are available at Walmart,

Big Lots, Office Depot, and Lowe's.

- *Nitrile disposable gloves, sizes medium and large
- *Baby Wipes (unscented)
- *Body Wash - Fragrance Free, Sensitive Skin
- *Bubbles
- *Large bags of rice and pinto beans for tactile art activities

The Vine School provides a customized learning environment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. April is Autism Awareness Month, so this is a perfect time for Presbyterian Women to assist the Vine School.



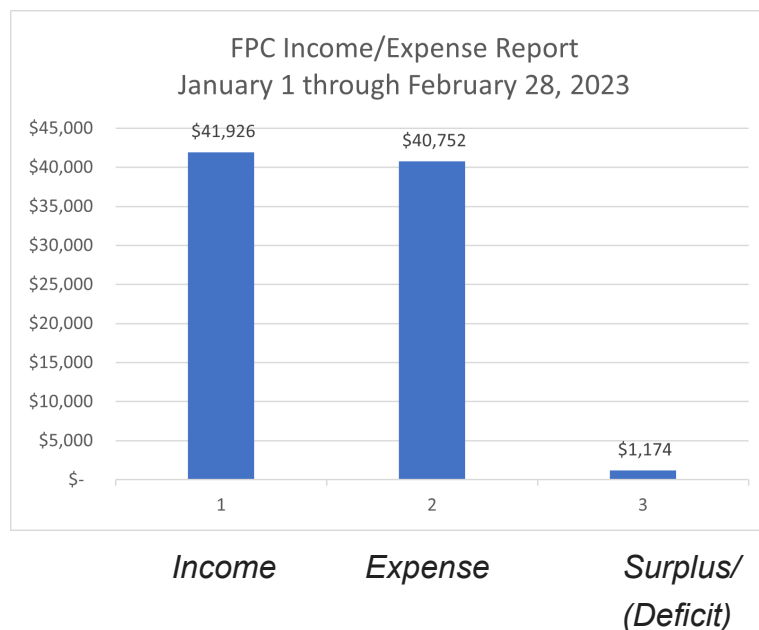
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CALENDAR

- *Sunday, April 2, 2023, 9:30 – 10:15 a.m., in the Parlor:* This Sunday, Dawn Neel will conclude the class's Lenten Study using *Inward Work for Outward Living: 2023 Lenten Devotions*.
- *Looking ahead:* On Easter Morning (April 9th), the Nellie Hudson Adult Sunday School Class will start a new study series called "Prayers and Poetry." Study materials will be provided to all in attendance or, for those anxious to get a head start, the materials can be picked up in the church office now. Given that this is the start of a new topic (on Easter Morning, no less!), this would be an ideal time for interested folks to join the class along with the regulars-- hopefully to become regulars themselves. Please give prayerful consideration to enhancing your Sunday morning worship experience by expanding your Christian study and devotion with other friendly, curious Christians!

- Kingdom Kids: Sunday Morning starting at 9:45 a.m. Come by and experience our multi-sensory lessons.



**PERIODIC FPC FINANCIAL REPORT
TO THE CONGREGATION
(JANUARY 1 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2023)**



*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind,
not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Cor 9:7

Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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