

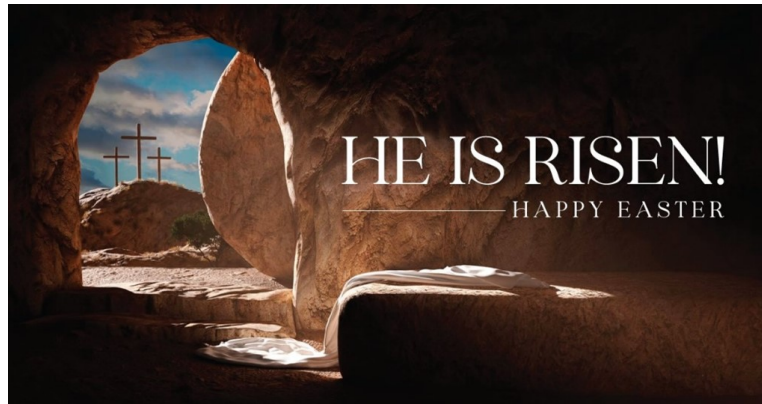
**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
ON GOOD FRIDAY,
APRIL 7, 2023, NOON**

At noon, on April 7, 2023, we will hold a Service of Darkness (a Tenebrae Service) in our Sanctuary to recall the crucifixion of our Lord on that terrible day. It will be a solemn and quiet worship service in keeping with the end of the Lenten observance and the solemnity of the occasion.

During the service, members in attendance will be invited forward, one by one, to symbolically nail their sins to a rough cross on the Chancel steps. To conclude the service, the Seven Last Words of Christ will be read from the Pulpit while the Sanctuary is darkened. We will leave the service in stillness and silence as we contemplate what the world would be like if God had chosen to leave his creation alone, isolated, and in despair as Jesus died on the Cross.

Although our service will be livestreamed over our Facebook page and

website (and a copy of the Bulletin for this service can be found here: <https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-4-7-Bulletin-Good-Friday-PDF.pdf>), the powerful impact of the service is best experienced in person. Please plan to join us in the Sanctuary if you are able; you will find the service to be a powerful preparation for the celebration to come.



HE IS RISEN INDEED!

**EASTER MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE,
APRIL 9, 2023, 10:30 A.M.**

Our glorious worship service to joyfully celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ will be held at 10:30 a.m. this Sunday, April 9, 2023. Bring your family! Bring your friends! All are welcome at First Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Texas!

Our Easter Morning Scripture readings are Psalm 118:1-2, 14-18 ("I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord") and John 20:1-18 (Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, and the "Beloved Disciple" [John] encounter the empty tomb). The title of the sermon is "The Easter Story," and a copy of the Bulletin for this service can be found here: <https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-4-7-Bulletin-Easter-PDF.pdf>.

We will have a special musical anthem performed by our friend and fellow member, Joey Farrell, and of course we will celebrate the Lord's Supper. Lilies will adorn our altar, and the Bulletin will have a list of all those who have been honored or memorialized by the purchase of a lily on their behalf.

If you were present during our celebration of Palm Sunday last week, then I am sure you noticed that our congregation was large in number and

powerful in worship. Do you sense, as your pastor does, that things are beginning to pick up around the church? Greater attendance, greater participation, greater interest in supporting our ministries in the Crossroads Area! As we sense the stirring of the Holy Spirit in our midst, let us continue to build our momentum!

Some of our congregation will be away on Easter Sunday, worshiping with their families in other churches. May your time with family, not to mention your time with family in worship, be a blessing for all. On the other side of that same coin, we look forward to worshiping with our members who will be visited by their families and who will join us on Easter Morning. Wherever you find yourself worshiping on Easter Morning, may we all rejoice in the glorious news:

Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed!



A MOMENT TO SHARE WITH THOSE IN NEED

In the spirit of the Easter Season, we will be taking a special offering on Easter Sunday to support the “One Great Hour of Sharing” of Presbyterian Mission.

Your generous contribution will be used to support the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s efforts to provide disaster assistance, hunger relief, and self-development among “those who have the least.”

The Mission and Outreach Committee of our church would like to encourage you to consider making an additional gift on Easter morning to help build God’s kingdom on earth. Jesus said, “The righteous will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’” And of course, Jesus’ response was “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:37, 40).

Please look for the informational insert in your Bulletin and place a donation in the envelope that accompanies it. This is one important way that we serve the least of the members of Christ's family; this is one sacred way that we honor Christ on the day that we celebrate his Resurrection!



This is the last excerpt from the Lenten Devotional published by the *Vital Congregation Initiative* of the Presbyterian Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We hope these readings have been a blessing to you as you observed Lent during these past forty days.

The complete Devotional can be found here:
<https://fpcovictoria.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 other information to consider during Lent.

Ecclesial Health

Rev. Tracy Keenan
Missional Presbyterian
New Castle Presbytery

Ecclesiastes 7:10, NLT

Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?"

Lent used to be a time of giving up something – chocolate, for example - to practice sacrifice and focus energies on God's call. For many it feels as though we've been in a years-long season of the reluctant giving up of How It Used to Be.

We agree that change is needed but can't seem to settle on what that looks like. It's more important than ever that we know who we are and what our priorities are. The mark of Ecclesial Health helps us get real about how we do that.

Ecclesial Health. Granted, it doesn't get the blood running the way Spirit-Inspired Worship or even Caring Relationships does. But Ecclesial Health carries a lot of heft.

It says we know what our values are, and we make our decisions in alignment with them. It says we aren't afraid of transparency and making correction when necessary. It says we care for those who serve us as leaders, being accountable to one another and to God.

There is plenty we can give up for Lent.

We can give up our fear of talking about money.

Healthy giving habits are a sign of spiritual discipline. We can focus our energies on budgets that reflect God's values.

We can give up the notion that our building is the most important part of our faith.

We can focus our energies on building up the Body of Christ instead.

We can give up the idea that 1975 (or even 2019) is coming back.

Covid did its damage and accelerated what many had been experiencing for years. But we can look towards God's future with the confidence of faith.



OUR JOURNEY FORWARD:
YOUR MISSION STUDY TASK FORCE
CONTINUES ITS WORK

Your Mission Study Task Force thanks you for your prayers, support, and especially for your candid and responsive answers to the congregation mission study survey. The Task Force continues to evaluate your answers along with listening to experts that have studied the cases of declining membership in churches across the United States. While it is disappointing to acknowledge that our congregation has declined in membership numbers over the past years, we nevertheless realize that we are not alone. Many churches in Victoria, around the State of Texas, and the United States report disappointing attendance and participation following the COVID pandemic.

Rest assured your Task Force and your Session are fully aware of this condition, and we are moving forward with actions to renew and revitalize our church. Your Task Force is on schedule to produce a report to the Session at its stated meeting on May 8, 2023.

To that end, and encouraged by the interest, support, and enthusiasm of the congregation, your Mission Study Task Force continues to meet on a weekly basis on Monday evenings. We will even meet on Tuesday evening next week when the Session meets on Monday evening. Although not surprising, the work which we have undertaken is challenging and complex.

We are learning a great deal about church growth in general and about our opportunities, in particular, to continue Our Journey Forward in a dynamic and vibrant way-- in a way that is not unrealistic but also in a way that we believe is courageous enough to be open the will of the Holy Spirit present in the midst of the church family we all love so much.

As always, please keep the work of your Task Force in your prayers, and 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

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

Week 2 of our Easter series focused on the tomb and the cross. We used paints to make a beautiful cross as a symbol of salvation. For the tomb, well a chocolate donut and an Oreo cookie (as the stone that moved away), of course. We continued reading our interactive book and singing "Jesus Loves Me" (we have this song down pretty well!).

We will not be having Sunday school on 4/9/2023, but we will be back on 4/16. The story of Adam and Eve is next on our curriculum, so if you know a special kiddo who would enjoy learning with us, please spread the word and send them over. We love having new friends join us!

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 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. 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**

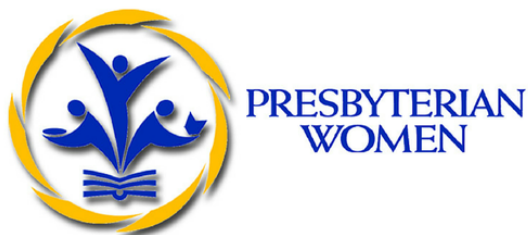
A special blessing to all those who purchased one or more Easter lilies to honor or memorialize friends and loved ones on Easter Morning. As of the date of this Newsletter, we have had over two dozen responses. The names of everyone who has been honored or memorialized will be listed in an insert to our Bulletin on Easter Morning. Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and support. May God bless all those, past and present, whom we love and admire.



HARPER EDWARDS WINS AGAIN!

We have not been able to find any additional information about Harper Edwards' victory at yet another golf tournament last week. All we know is that she has another big Reginal Tournament coming up in McAllen, Texas, on April 17-18, 2023.

It's okay that we don't have more details, however; we love Harper no matter how she is doing in her chosen sport. We know that she is a winning young woman in the game of life, and for that we are grateful to God. Keep winning, Harper! And always, always keep the faith!



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.

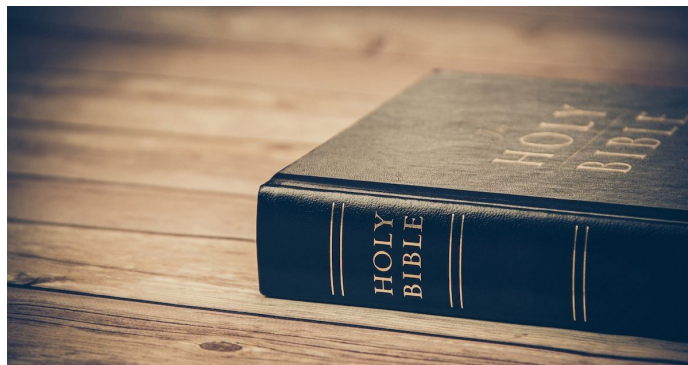
- *Nitrile disposable gloves, sizes medium and large
- *Baby Wipes (unscented)
- *Body Wash - Fragrance Free, Sensitive Skin
- *Bubbles
- *Large bags of rice and pinto beans for tactile art activities

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.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR CIRCLE MEETINGS

The Mary and Martha Circle will meet in the church parlor at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, April 10.

The Adele Carsner Young Circle will meet in the church parlor at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 13.

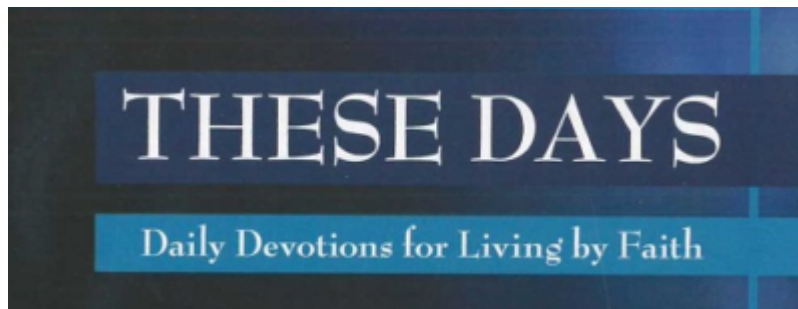


CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CALENDAR

- *Sunday, April 9, 2023, 9:30 – 10:15 a.m., in the Parlor:* This Sunday, Dawn Neel concludes the class's Lenten Study using *Inward Work for Outward Living: 2023 Lenten Devotions*.
- *Sunday, April 16, 2023, 9:30 – 10:15 a.m., in the Parlor:* On the Sunday after Easter, the Nellie Hudson Adult Sunday School Class will commence a new study entitled, "*Prayers and Poetry*." If it has been a while since you have been to Sunday School, this would be a great time to visit with

your friends in the Nellie Hudson class as they begin a new, and surely spiritual, study of the beauty, majesty, and power of prayer. Materials will be provided, and you can be sure of a great time of fellowship and learning.

- *Kid's Kingdom*: **There will be no class on Easter morning.** Class will resume on Sunday morning, April 16, at 9:45 a.m., when we will begin studying the story of Adam and Eve! Come by and experience our multi-sensory lessons.

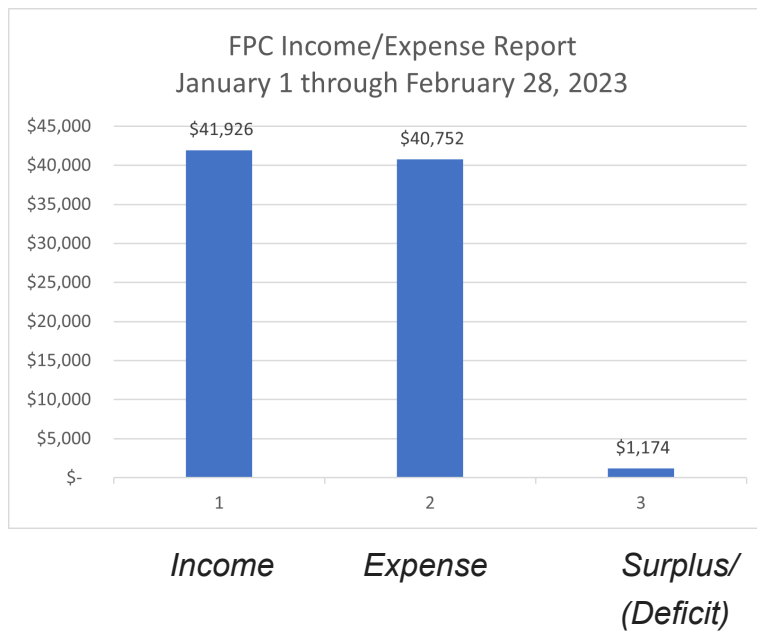


CURRENT COPIES OF "THESE DAYS" HAVE ARRIVED

The church has received the April/May/June 2023 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 *These Days* 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. The devotionals in this cherished publication are always a wonderful source of inspiration, hope, and comfort.



**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

