

**WORSHIP SERVICE ON  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021**

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, January 31, 2021, the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, are: Psalm 111; and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. The sermon title is "The Arrogance of Intellect," and the Bulletin is available here:

[https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-1-31-Bulletin-PDF.pub\\_.pdf](https://fpcovictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-1-31-Bulletin-PDF.pub_.pdf)

<p><i>First Presbyterian Church</i>  <b>Commitment Campaign 2021</b></p> <p><i>Understanding that all we possess is a gift from God,  and that God delights in the generosity of His children,  I/we rejoice in pledging to First Presbyterian Church:</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">\$</div>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">\$</div>	<p>OR</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">Monthly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">\$</div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 2px;">Name(s)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 2px;">Signature</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 2px;">Address</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <span>Phone:</span> <span>E-mail:</span> </div>		

### UPDATE ON 2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, slightly more than two dozen generous and faithful members of this congregation have completed and returned their pledge cards in connection with our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. We are grateful, also, for those who were able to write an additional, supplemental check to help us close the COVID-caused shortfall in our budget for 2020. May God greatly bless you all!

Nevertheless, as, Jim Stokes, our Treasurer, has previously reported, so far we have received only half in number, and only 2/3rds in amount, of our pledges received in 2020. Thus, if you got caught up in year-end distractions, the Session humbly asks you now to fill out your 2021 pledge card and mail it to (or bring it by) the Church Office as soon as possible.

If you have misplaced your pledge card, additional cards are available in the Sanctuary, at the church office, and here (for downloading and printing):

<https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-pledge-cards.pdf>

The Session has already begun to set the church budget for 2021. We cannot plan to spend any more than we can reasonably expect to receive, however, so please help us plan and prioritize our spending for 2021 by sending us your good faith estimate of the financial support you expect to be able to contribute over the course of the year.



Tasha Wolf, our Office Administrator, has prepared and Jim Stokes, our Treasurer, has reviewed the annual Reports of Contributions for each person or family for whom we have a record of making a financial contribution to First Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Texas in 2020. These reports are being mailed on January 27, 2021.

When you receive your form, please review it carefully, and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tasha in the church office (361.575.2441; [info@fpcofvictoria.org](mailto:info@fpcofvictoria.org)).

Once more, thank you for your faithful support of the missions of this church even in a time of pandemic and economic hardship.

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### **SHARING GOD'S KINGDOM**

One of the creature-comforts your pastor enjoys at First Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Texas, is a nice, spacious office with three large plate glass windows that look out onto the stretch of lawn by the north side of our Sanctuary.

My view through those windows of wandering dogs and close-to-home church cats will come as no surprise. Through the seasons, however, many of God's creatures have appeared outside those windows, unaware that their movements were being monitored by a creature of the human variety.

One spring, I watched in fascination over a period of weeks as literally dozens of hummingbirds filled their tiny beaks with nectar from the blooms of the esperanza bushes (also called by some, “yellow trumpet flowers”) outside my office. Flitting around the lush tubular flowers of the bushes, the hummingbirds would almost blur as their tiny bodies darted from one flower to another. Then, stopping in mid-flight they would hover in front of one particular flower or another, while sticking their beaks in to drink their fill of the nectar God had provided.

At more moderate speeds, and with all four feet on the ground, a family of skunks ambled by my windows on a few occasions-- a mother skunk in the lead with her four kits following behind in single file. For a while, their home seemed to be located under the church’s foundation, as they would disappear into a hole beneath the sidewalk that runs beside my office. Eventually they left, however. While they were here, we had an unspoken agreement that I would not bother them, and they would not bother me. It seemed like a very good bargain for me to be able to enjoy a family “skunk parade” from time to time.

Once in the evening a solitary opossum strolled by on his (her?) way from someplace to somewhere. I wish I could have seen more of our marsupial visitor.

Of late, a hive of honeybees has taken up a more up-close and personal residence somewhere inside the church. Fooled by the neon bulbs in a light fixture just outside the church office, many of the honeybees become lost and fly into the fixture believing they are instead flying towards the outside daylight. There they perish, and we periodically clean out the light fixture. Of greater concern, however, a few stray honeybees have begun to fly around in the hallway outside the church office and down the hallway that leads to the pre-school. We love the honeybees, but they are not welcome inside the church! While the honeybees are not aggressive, we must nevertheless avoid the risk of them stinging a child or visitor on our premises.

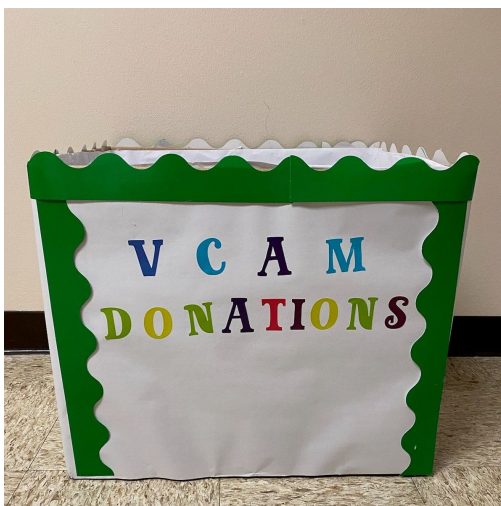
We have called a professional beekeeper, and he has located the gap in our roofline where the bees are coming and going. Undoubtedly there is a hive, with an active queen, somewhere in our rafters, and the beekeeper is returning sometime this week to locate and remove it. He will do so humanely, if he is able. When he removes the queen bee, the rest of the bees will abandon the hive. Then, we will cover the hole in the exterior of the building where they are entering the building and thus prevent their return.

Interestingly, the beekeeper told me that word “seems to get out” among the

honeybees that a particular structure is especially desirable in which to build a hive and go about their work. This is the second time in two years that we have had to remove a beehive from our premises, and the beekeeper told me that he knows several property owners in the area who have experienced this kind of “repeat business.” It is as if once the bees learn of a particularly wonderful place to live, they pass the good news along forever.

This ends my essay (for now) on the joy I have found in observing the comings and goings of God’s creatures, and in sharing God’s kingdom, from the comfort of my office. I had considered calling this “The Preacher’s Essay on the Birds and the Bees,” but then I reconsidered!

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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.

Now is a good time for all of us to be encouraged to engage 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.





We are continually learning how to improve the live streaming of our Sunday morning worship services. Some tinkering here, some experimenting there-- we have worked hard to master the technology of delivering a “virtual” worship service that is as close to worshipping with us in person as possible.

The process has been bumpy as we have encountered 21st century issues that no one had in mind before our traditional worship services were interrupted and we had to scramble to find a way to “keep things going.” With the help of a lot of generous folks, and the patience of our congregation and visitors, we tried one solution after another as we sought to improve both the audio and the video quality of our transmissions. We especially seemed to encounter a lot of audio problems: sound too soft; sound too loud; no sound at all. Of late, we have been noticing a lot of imbalance between the spoken portions of the service and the musical portions. Also, sometimes there was static and distortion in the audio “feed.” This seemed to be a big problem during our worship service last Sunday (Jan. 24th), for example.

Touch wood, but we believe that, after many months of trial and error, we have at last found the solution to our sound problems. The solution is technical (analogue feed vs. digital feed; too high a “gain” setting, etc.), but we hope the results are pleasing to all who continue to attend our worship services from home. This next Sunday morning, please watch our worship service to see if everything is better now. We hope so, but if not, please let us know in the church office. The feedback we receive from folks who are unable to attend in person but nonetheless are hungry for worship is overwhelmingly positive and encouraging. We are going to work on

this until we get it right! May God bless our efforts, and may God bless you for being so patient.

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**CURRENT COPIES OF  
“THESE DAYS”  
AND  
“THE PRESENT WORD”  
HAVE ARRIVED**

The church has recently received the January/February/March 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.

Likewise, the Spring 2021 edition of “*The Present Word*” has arrived, and again, we would be glad to mail this lesson book to anyone desiring it. We continue to coordinate with C.F. Schneider as to when it might be prudent to resume in-person meetings of our Adult Sunday School class-- especially as the COVID vaccine becomes more widely available. Until then, however, please do not hesitate to contact the church office in order to receive a copy of this publication.

Peace, grace, and mercy,

Pastor Jim

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