

**PDS SUNDAY IS HERE!
SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 2021**

Oh happiness! Next Sunday, April 18, 2021, is PDS Sunday, April 18, 2021. Our young disciples in the Presbyterian Day School will be in the Sanctuary, with their families, to raise their voices in song. We do not know whether we will have five or fifty visitors, but it does not matter. We welcome the PDS students, faculty, and families on this joyous occasion. If you have a chance to thank a teacher for the marvelous job all of them have been doing this academic year notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, please do so. If you get a chance to waive at our young visitors and their families, I am sure they will waive back!

Our Scripture readings for next Sunday, the Third Sunday of Easter, are: Psalm 122; and Mark 10:13-16. The sermon title is "Of Such Is the Kingdom of

God,” and the Bulletin is available here: https://fpcofvictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/04-18-2021-Bulletin-1-PDF.pub_.pdf.

This Sunday, please help us show our support for the Presbyterian Day School by coming to worship our Triune God and to enjoy the beautiful, sweet voices of God’s most precious gift to us-- the children!



ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

In the picture above, one of our “church cats” enjoys the Eastertide enhancements made to the décor of its favorite napping spot!

Unlike Robert Wyatt, our Choirmaster and resident gardener who placed our Easter lilies outside in anticipation of replanting them around the church premises, your Pastor is not a cat person. The three or four cats who have taken up residence on the church grounds seem to know this intuitively. They greet Robert with purrs in anticipation of being fed, but whenever I approach, first they scowl and then they flee!

I embrace the old adage that “dogs treat you like family; cats treat you like staff!” I am aware of the love and devotion that many, including my spouse, have for the feline population, and God bless them. For me, however, give me a slobbering, tail-wagging canine who is unabashed in its devotion to me.

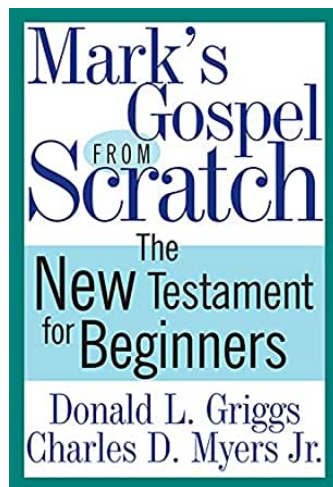
I will confess, however, that I would miss our church cats if, as if to protest the presence of the resident dog-lover in their midst, they independently wandered off to find “more suitable” quarters. It is, in fact, reassuring to see them patrolling our

premises with a watchful eye, and it is comforting to pull up under the porte cochere and find them crouched as sentinels, like the cats who guarded the ancient Egyptian pyramids, keeping track of all who are coming and going (and ever hopeful that Robert or a similarly inclined member of the congregation has arrived to feed them). I must also confess that generally with the presence of church cats, we are spared the presence of “church mice” (poor or otherwise), and that is a blessing of course.

The female Anglo-Irish hymn writer, Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895), wrote the lyrics to “All Things Bright and Beautiful” for children in 1848. It was one of a series of hymns she penned that were based on the Apostles’ Creed. This hymn was intended to expand on the theme, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, *maker of heaven and earth ...*”. Hence, in the refrain we sing:

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Perhaps grudgingly, but nevertheless sincerely, I thank God even for cats, truly among the wise and wonderful creatures made by God who have found a welcome home in the gardens of First Presbyterian Church, Victoria.



**A SHORT BIBLE-STUDY COURSE,
EVERY TUESDAY, FROM 12:00 TO 1:00 P.M.,
IN FELLOWSHIP HALL**

I am happy to report that the initial class of our Bible study on the Gospel According to Mark was well attended and, I believe, a good experience for leader and students alike.

Even if you missed the first class last Tuesday, do not be reluctant to attend the next class (on Tuesday, April 20th). During the first class, we discussed Bible interpretation and other background information regarding Mark's gospel. In the next class, we will begin to study the text itself.

By way of reminder, we are using as our guide, "Mark's Gospel from Scratch" (from the "New Testament for Beginners Series"). The book is authored by Donald L. Griggs and Charles D. Myers, Jr., prominent Christian educators and authors. A picture of the cover of their book appears above, and you can purchase it for about \$10.00 on Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/>) or at the Presbyterian Book Store (<https://www.pcusastore.com/>). Many participants in our first class reported a delay in receiving their orders from Amazon, so it would be wise to order your book (if you have not already done so) as soon as possible.

As I have mentioned in this Newsletter before, the book has six discrete chapters, each of which lends itself to a one-hour class and study session. We are holding our study sessions **over the noon hour (12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.)** on each of the following five Tuesdays, the next class being on **Tuesday, April 13th**, and the last class ending on **Tuesday, May 19th**).

To help prepare your heart and mind for this Bible-study, I believe participants should read the entirety of the Gospel According to Mark in advance. In the five Tuesdays remaining, we will study Chapters 2 through 6 of our book. Each chapter is nicely "self-contained," so should you miss one class, you will not be behind when you return for the next class.

Please come to class with your Bible in hand (the NSRV translation would be best, but of course your favorite translation is also fine) and having read the chapter assigned for the class. We meet in person as we spread out in Fellowship Hall with appropriate social distancing. If anyone would prefer to attend to join us by Zoom, please let me know.

As I have said before, there will be no tests or written assignments(!), and no one will be chastised if they arrive at class without having read the assignment. We just want to experience the joy, inspiration, and learning that I hope will come from studying Scripture together.

Peace, grace, and mercy,
Pastor Jim

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