

Fairbanks First Presbyterian Church

# FIRST LIGHT

Volume 28, Issue 25

April 2020

## HOLY WEEK

*Easter Sunday  
April 12*

*Palm Sunday  
April 5*



*Good Friday  
April 10*

*Maundy Thursday  
April 9*

# *A Word From The Lord*

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under  
the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I  
trust.

Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome  
pestilence.

He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His  
truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by  
day;

*Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that*  
wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall  
not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the Most High, thy  
habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt  
thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him  
on high, because he hath known My Name.

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will  
deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation.

*Psalm 91:1–16*



## Dear First Presbyterian Family

Yesterday the Coronavirus entered Alaska. I was hoping it would forget us and move on. Obviously, the Coronavirus is an unbiased abuser. Now that it is here, we need to ask what we can do to limit its damage, and how we can be servants of our Lord in this new opportunity to serve. As Jesus said, ***“the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me’”*** [Matt. 25:34-36].

First and most important, BELIEVE! We need to trust in God. God is sovereign. When we do this, we give hope to both ourselves but others who may not know Jesus Christ. God reigns and rules over all things. Scripture tells us that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without God’s consent and permission (Matt 10:29). Even when this world seems out of control, God is firmly in control, working to accomplish His good purpose. If we truly believe this, we will respond in faith rather than fear or panic. In the words of the Psalmist, ***“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”*** (Ps 46:1-2).

Secondly, PRAY! We pray for all those throughout the world who are infected with COVID-19 and we pray for God’s healing and their full recovery. We pray for those who have lost loved ones from this and for God’s comfort and peace. We pray for God to stop the spread of the disease and guide all in the health fields and government and other leadership positions in taking the proper actions. We pray for the economy and rippling effects this has in the workplace and all of society. We pray for accurate information to be shared and a calming of fears and panic, and for people to respond in ways that are appropriate. This is something that is concrete, powerful and can be done from the privacy of our homes.

Third, ACT! There is a plethora of information out there on how to protect ourselves and others. We have changed our worship services to minimize physical contact with one another. However, we urge you to take the following precautions:

1. We are streaming both our worship services, making it possible to worship with us at home. If you do not know how to “stream”, call the office and one of the deacons will stop by to set up your computer and show you how to join us on Sunday morning.
2. Resist shaking hands. Use the elbow bump or just nods will do.
3. Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose, and eyes.
4. If you do cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow (or Kleenex that you then throw away). Wash hands after using a tissue.

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The following are some links that may be useful:

- Situation Summary: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>
- Precautions for those at higher risk: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specificgroups/high-risk-complications.html>

Our custodians have been instructed to do extra cleaning and sanitizing. The situation is constantly changing. If we need to make more changes, we will let you know.

Times such as these are often used by God to shine his light into a fearful and stressed people. Ask God how he can use you to reach out to neighbors and those more vulnerable to be of help to them. As Peter reminds us, “... ***but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect***” [1Peter 3:15]. We know that our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth. “***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***” Philippians 4:7

In His Service,  
Dr Donald Baird

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# First Presbyterian Church

547 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 ∞ 907-452-2402



Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

These are extraordinary times, as our Governor has just issued “social distancing and travel mandates” for Alaska because of the Coronavirus that calls for extraordinary actions. It is appropriate and right that we should honor these mandates both for our social contract with our government (Luke 20:20-26; Romans 13:1-7) and with our brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:31-46). It is with no little surprise and joy that I perceive that God has uniquely prepared us for just this time. Ten years ago it would have been impossible for us to worship together without being in the same room.

Now, thanks to God, we can and are worshipping every Sunday and, even more if we desire, through the internet. “It is in hearing that we believe” (Romans 10:13-17). His timing is perfect. Not being physically present to one another is no longer a prohibition to our being The Church to one another.

I would never suggest that “virtual church” is better than “real church”, but it is better than exposing our most vulnerable members to the coronavirus or no worship at all. As we approach Holy Week, it would be good to explore how we will be celebrating the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ “virtually”. Let me outline ways you can do this:

**PALM SUNDAY:** We will be having virtual church on April 5, Palm Sunday. We are making plans to have palms dropped off at the homes of our children and any other members of our family who might want one. Call the church office so you don’t get missed. During the Palm Sunday worship service, I will be having a “Children’s Message” which at the appropriate moment, will include a “Palm Sunday parade”. I will be marching around my house singing and waving my palm branch and encouraging both children and adults to join me marching around their homes singing and waving palm branches. At the very least, this will be memorable and set this day aside as special. This service, and all of our worship services will be available on our website, Facebook, and YouTube accounts beginning Sunday morning at 8:30am and at your convenience any time after that.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY:** On this day when Jesus first instituted Communion, we will be celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a most extraordinary way. It will be a “virtual Communion” service. Before Maundy Thursday, April 9, go to the store and purchase a small bottle of grape juice and bread. God is not fussy about the brand or the flavor. For those of you traditionalists this is an opportunity to celebrate communion at First Presbyterian Church with wine. Then, at 7 pm on April 9, join us on the internet and, with the Words of Institution spoken, we will all partake of the elements of bread and cup together. At the end of Communion dispose of the remaining elements in a reverent way. In the medieval times the remaining wine was poured into the foundation of the church. At the end of this letter I am including a theological exploration of how we might understand “virtual communion” from a Reformed tradition.

**GOOD FRIDAY:** We will not be having a worship service on Good Friday, April 10, but it would be a shame to let this day go by without observing its significance theologically, historically and personally. This being the extraordinary times that it is, Good Friday would be a wonderful time to invest ourselves in Prayer and Fasting. Before the sun comes up, have a glass of orange juice and piece of toast [this is not Biblical], and then read the Psalms and the Gospels, Luke 22:66-23:56, Matthew 27:33-44, Mark 15:22-32 and John 19:17-24. Intersperse your reading with prayer for those who are sick, those who God has prepared to serve the sick, those who would lead our church, our state and our nation in these extraordinary times. As the sun goes down, prepare a meal worthy of the day. In a most unusual and wonderful way this will bless your Easter. For those unable to fast from food, we encourage you to fast from screens and the internet (one day won’t hurt too bad).

**EASTER:** Yes, we will be having worship on Easter. Prepare for this day. Gather up any flowers indoors or outside, at home or from the store, and set them out on Easter morning. On Saturday, color Easter eggs with Christian symbols and hide them around the house. Even the littlest one can find a good hiding place for them. Then, on Easter morning, find the eggs and tell or read the story of Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:1-34) and how the stone was rolled away from the mouth of Jesus' tomb, like an egg - which looks like a stone – rolling away, and the tomb is filled with life and the resurrection – like an egg can hatch a chick, emptying the egg. During the Easter worship service, we will be showing the cross filled with flowers, speaking of Jesus' resurrection.

So, here we are. Groping our way into our first virtual Easter. Through our efforts, I do believe we will be discovering some new ways of celebrating and worshiping. At the very least, we are being forced to re-view what we have done in the past, why we did it that way and, maybe, gaining a new appreciation for a faith that gives hope in the worst of times.

God bless,  
Pastor Don

#### **\*UNDERSTANDING VIRTUAL COMMUNION**

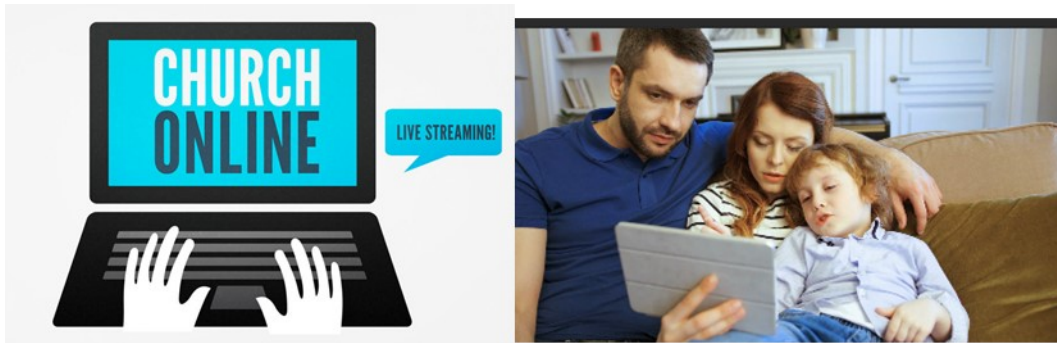
1. 1 Corinthians 11:2-34 addresses the worship of the church in Corinth. "Gathering" is referred to five times; this is understood in the 1<sup>st</sup> century to be physically together in one place. It included anyone within ear shot of the officiant. As verses 17-34 specifically address the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the sacrament may only be administered in a gathering of believers who can hear the Words of Institution and respond to them.
2. In Section 6 of "Holy Scripture" in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (hereafter WCF), liberty is given to work out the principle of Christian worship according to changes in circumstances. In this extraordinary circumstance, in which the church is prohibited from gathering physically to worship, the Confession grants liberty to the church in ordering its worship.
3. While the Confession prohibits private (or individual) reception of the sacrament (WCF, Chapter 29.4), the Constitution makes provision for individuals who want to participate in the sacrament but are not able to join the physical gathering due to circumstances beyond their control. *Book of Worship* 3-3G.1 provides for the celebration of the sacrament for those who are ill. The person who is ill is not physically able to be present to participate in the sacrament due to circumstances beyond his or her control. It is not ideal to administer the Lord's Supper individually for the sick. But it is better than depriving them of the spiritual nourishment and growth that results from participating.

#### **Instructions for a virtual administration of the Lord's Supper**

1. Take special care to give instructions for the proper and reverent preparation of the elements beforehand, as well as of unused elements at the conclusion of the sacrament.
2. In this worship service we will be noting the spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament, the spiritual nourishment and encouragement it provides, the status of the elements used, importance of our faith, self-examination, etc.







Quite suddenly the entire population of earth is experiencing disruption caused by an organism only 1 micron in diameter. You may be one of those infected or know someone who is. At the very least, you are being seriously inconvenienced by this microscopic virus in your normal life schedule. One of the things that has set Christians apart from others, ever since Pentecost, has been that Christians have never run from helping those in need, no matter the danger or cost. Today is no different, except that the need is greater today than before.

Not only is the need different today, but the method of our participation is also different. The unusual situation created by the COVID -19 pandemic makes our participation in the life and mission of FPC different. For example:

- Participation in Sunday worship is different.
- Participation in Children's Church is different. .
- Participation in Bible Study Classes and Life Groups is different.
- Reaching the needs of people in our community is different
- Communicating with and caring for each other is different
- Meetings of Session and committees are different.
- Presenting our Tithes and offerings is different.



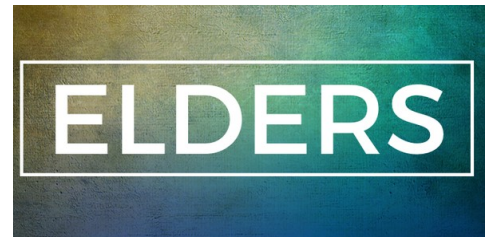
On-Line Adult Sunday School  
& Life Group

These differences have increased the costs of being The Church. In addition to the increased costs, the way we participate financially might also need to be different. The switch to on-line streaming of our worship service has caused a precipitous drop in offerings. We normally average \$12,000 per Sunday. Last Sunday we only received \$1,000. The previous Sunday we received roughly \$3,500. You are encouraged, as you are able, to continue presenting your offerings to God as an act of worship. The Coronavirus may have disrupted the way we exercise our faith, but it hasn't changed the content of our faith.

Here are some things you may want to consider

- You can mail checks to the church: First Presbyterian Church 547 Seventh Avenue Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 OR
- Participate in on line giving: Go to <https://fairbanksfirstpres.com/> Near the upper right side of the screen click on the GIVE button This screen will pop up. If you are new to online giving, follow the directions on the left. If you have already signed up and want to make changes. Log in and go from there.
- If you are having difficulty, call Marta at 452-6606 for assistance.

**What follows is a short summary of the decisions and actions of the Session, at the March 17, 2020 Session Meeting. The minutes of the meeting will contain a more complete record.**



Elders attended the meeting, both in person, observing Social Distancing, and over video chat.

The meeting was opened by Ruling Elder Terry Reichardt, with prayer and a devotion based on Exodus 32:1-6.

Pastor Don led a "Pastor's Study" on Matthew 25:31-46. The discussion focused around how do we, as Christians, maintain unity and community in the face of a need or call to isolation.

Elders are individually reviewing the final report of Vital Church Ministries, as Pastor Don prepares to leave his position as Transitional Pastor.

Pastor Don walked Session through the steps to be completed once the Pastor Search Committee identifies a candidate for Senior Pastor.

It was moved, seconded and passed to use a paper ballot during the congregational vote to call the Senior Pastor

A written Financial Report was provided to Session, and Church Treasurer was present to answer questions.

Consent Calendar items were passed as presented. The Consent Calendar items included: Approval of the Deacons January 14, 2020 meeting; Mission, Outreach & Evangelism Committee moved to have a general church fellowship evening in the fellowship hall on May 16<sup>th</sup> with Mike and Tammy Mika, EPC Missionaries from Malaysia; Amend the 2020 MO&E budget by increasing the total budget by \$10,000 to the following missions or agencies: The Door - \$1,000; Love INC of the Tanana Valley - \$2,000; EPC Malaysia Mission, Mike & Tammy Mika - \$5,000; EPC - General World Outreach - \$2,000.

It was moved, seconded and passed that FPC will suspend all in-person gatherings, including worship, until Session makes the decision to resume.

Reports from the Ministry Teams were received.

It was moved, seconded and passed to hold one service each Sunday, at 8:30 am, to be streamed online. The service may be viewed live or replayed later.

The Stewardship and Finance Committee moved to amend the Financial Controls Policy by omitting the strike through text and adding the yellow highlighted text. The motion passed.

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It was moved, seconded and passed, that as of March 19, 2020, the church facility will be closed to the general public and gatherings, until further notice.

It was moved, seconded and passed to contact Rev. Ed Cummings, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest, to ask him to postpone his planned trip to Fairbanks until travel is safe, and at his convenience.

Elders spent time in prayer. After making prayer requests known, elders prayed for one another and for First Presbyterian.

**The next Stated Session Meeting will be held on April 21, 2020 at 6:00 pm in the Church Conference Room.**

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**H A P P Y B I R T H D A Y!!!!**



1	Bill Satterberg
5	Ivory Huffaker
5	Melissa Logan
6	Paul Bonnell
12	Anglea Thies
12	Cora Wietgreffe
13	Jerry Cleworth
19	Marty Foster
19	Sean Williams
20	Robert Askelin
23	Stephanie Rozell
23	Sonia Brown
26	Patricia Fink
29	Merle "Sunny" Fortune III
30	Susan Craft
30	Rosario Sheets

