



**APRIL 1 - APRIL 7, 2020**

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - - TYLER, TX    WWW.FCCTYLER.ORG**

## JOYS & CONCERNS

**We pray you are safely sheltered and may stay healthy while we are physically apart.**

**JOYS:** We are having 1000 views per week of our worship services on YouTube and Facebook!

### PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH

**FAMILY:** Jennifer Diotallevi, James Hardage, Bob Hunt, Michael Lewis, and Bev Wood

### PRAYERS FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY:

Ruby Camp (Kimball) and Rozann Hassell (Grant),

**OUR SYMPATHIES** to the friends and family of **Jim Crawford**. Jim passed away March 29. No services are scheduled at this time.

## EASTER LILIES

Although we won't have services in our Sanctuary, we'd still like to offer Easter Lilies for dedication. If you would like to dedicate a lily in honor or in memory of a loved one, please call the church office THIS WEEK. Lilies are \$10 each. We want to print and distribute a list of our dedications. Right now our plan is that lilies will be available for pickup somewhere on the FCC campus, on Good Friday, April 10.

## HOLY WEEK BEGINS SUNDAY, APRIL 5

In this most unusual Holy Week 2020, we're finding ways to connect, voices to lift up, and worship opportunities we can share. Plan to join us for our **NOON HOLY WEEK SERVICES** (April 6-10). We will broadcast a short online worship daily at noon (or afterward). Our preachers M-F are as follows: Philip Chacko, Vanessa Bostick, Ron Byrd, Kyle Graham, and Ginger Brandt. We are planning on beautiful music for each service as well. Then, **U2CHARIST** online will air at 7pm on April 10, Good Friday. Finally, for **EASTER SUNDAY**, we're planning 2 online worship services at 9:30am as usual, and we're hopeful local regulations will also allow for some form of drive-in "church" moment. More details to come, as soon as we can firmly plan them.

## LENTEN BLOG "GROWING SEASON"

Meanwhile, to keep the cabin fever at bay, keep your mind busy, and focus in on the season of Lent, check out our **FCC Blog**: [fcctyler.org/growingseason](http://fcctyler.org/growingseason). We're dipping into some of the "big words" of church and suggesting a few spiritual practices you may find helpful (now more than ever before!). And, we look forward to your comments!

## ONLINE PROGRAMMING

We dearly miss you coming through our doors, and we can't wait to be together, in person, again! But until then, we're crafting regular online programming.

- 1) **Children's Church with Mrs. Vicki:** Now available for all ages! Look for this video after each worship service on Sundays, around 10:40am.
- 2) **Monday Musings:** Each Monday morning, start another work week with Rev. Ginger as she comes to Facebook Live from her back patio, 9 - 10am.
- 3) **Breakfast and Bible Study:** will continue on Wednesday mornings. Just eat your breakfast at home, while you tune into Rev. Ron Byrd on Facebook and YouTube.
- 4) **Church Check-in:** Look for a live video of us on Facebook each Thurs. at 11 am -- sometimes with both Rev. Ginger Brandt and Dr. Chris Pulliam, and sometimes with only one minister.
- 5) **All-Church Sunday School:** Finally, keep your eyes peeled to our online spaces for our "Connection Class". We'll have daily prompts on Facebook (mailed by request). Plus, expect snippets of daily life posted weekly from your staff and ministers, tailored to children, teens and adults.

**Palm Sunday**  
**Scripture? Mark 11:1-10**  
**Dr. Chris Pulliam**  
**April 5, 2020**

Read Scripture here

Some of you may be familiar with a trilogy turned movie called "The Hunger Games." It was popular a number of years ago.

It is a post-apocalyptic story in which "The Capitol" (those in charge) rule with a harsh hand over the "Districts." As a reminder to the Districts of the Capitol's control of their lives, each year, each District had to produce (by a random drawing) 2 young people to represent that District in a "fight to the death" contest...produced for the entertainment (and gambling fun) of those in the Capitol. Two lives given for the "greater good."

In ancient Greece, when faced with a plague, pandemic, or other "unfortunate" season, a couple from the community would be chosen at random. The couple would be wine and dined, then paraded around the city before being cast out never to return. (hmmm...we are in the midst of a pandemic...any volunteers?). By getting rid of the couple, the remaining people believed they were then free from all ills.

In ancient Judaism, on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)...the high priest would bring 2 goats to the Temple. He would then cast lots between the goats, choosing one as a sacrifice to the Lord and the other as a living sacrifice to be sent away...this second goat is known as the "Scapegoat."

In the worship service, the sins of the community became the burden of the scapegoat. A scarlet ribbon was tied around its neck. After the ceremony, the high priest was to

take that goat away from the Temple, out of the city far enough away that it would never come back. Figuratively speaking, the sins of the community were gone.

One more fact, the priest always took the scapegoat out of the city thru the Eastern Gate (that will be important in moment).

In the Christian faith, on Palm Sunday, Jesus of Nazareth came to Jerusalem against the collective will of his disciples, and made his so called, "Triumphal Entry" coming down from the Mount of Olives on the East side of the city and entering thru the...you guessed it...the Eastern Gate.

Five days later, like the scapegoat of Judaism, Jesus took upon himself the sins of the whole world and gave himself as a sacrifice for sin, dying on a cross. In so doing, Jesus atoned for the sins of the world ("atonement" meaning = "at-one-ment" – making one out of two separate things/ persons ...in this case God and humankind). \*\*

The old city of Jerusalem is a walled area within the much larger city today. It has 7 working gates and strangely, an 8th gate that is blocked in. Want to guess which gate is blocked? You guessed it (even when you're not sitting here, you're keeping up... well done!)...the Eastern Gate.

To review, what happened at the Eastern Gate? 1) The high priest exited there with the scapegoat, and 2) Jesus entered there on Palm Sunday. \*\*

A group of us from the church visited the Holy Land in 2018. The Lord willing, we are going again in October of 2021...if that trip is on your "bucket list."

Our first day in Jerusalem we went to the Temple

Mount...where the Jewish Temple that Solomon originally built was before it was torn down and the Muslim "Dome of the Rock" was constructed.

**SLIDE:** pic of gold domed building (Daniel Johns)

Interestingly, we exited that area on the East side...thru a beautiful old archway assuming we would exit by following the path. But no, we then turned left and walked another 5 minutes to the Lion's Gate.

It didn't hit me then, but I caught on the next day as we were on the Mount of Olives on the hillside to the East of the Old City.

I have shown you these pictures before...

**SLIDE:** pic of the gate from way off

**SLIDE:** zoomed in shot of the blocked Eastern Gate?

**SLIDE:** pic of the gate with 3 Carols

**SLIDE:** zoom in on the gate centered above their heads

**SLIDE:** stock photo of the Eastern (Golden) Gate

These pictures are of the Eastern Gate (or the "Golden Gate" as it is often called), blocked up as it has been for the past 700 years. No wonder we couldn't go out that way from the Temple Mount.

Biblical prophecies state that the Anointed One (the Messiah...the Christ...of God) will one day return...and when the Messiah returns, he will enter thru this gate.

Muslim Leader Sultan Suleiman solved that problem by having the gate blocked in. J Problem solved!

What I didn't realize is that this gate...the Eastern Gate...is the Palm Sunday gate...the gate Jesus would have entered during his

"Triumphal Entry." It does make sense since the Bible says Jesus came from the Mount of Olives (east side) and that he entered very near the Temple. CHECK!

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What's your Sunday School image of Palm Sunday?...of Jesus' triumphal entry? ...a few people along the road, or was he working his way thru a crowd?

My SS vision has Jesus riding on a donkey down a winding dirt path. A handful of people line the way waving palm branches... everyone is smiling and shouting nice things Jesus' way.

More recently, I have seen an image from that day that shows Jesus just inside the city gates, with walls all around and a crowd of people filling the busy streets of a big city...a few people holding palm branches.

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What would J's triumphal entry been like in the midst of the Corona Virus? ...people would be watching from behind windows... the few people in the street would be wearing masks, daring to lay a palm branch in Jesus' path, yet keeping their social distance! I'd rather by 6 feet apart than 6 feet under!

If you're wondering, here's what sanctuary worship looks like during the Corona Virus.

**SLIDE:** pic of me preaching to lots of empty pews

And here are some of your pics from your own places of worship...

**SLIDE:** pic (online worship)

**SLIDE:** (chalice with cross),

**SLIDE:** (goldfish and 3 cups)

**SLIDE:** 3/22 worshipers

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Back to the story. The prophetic pieces of this story are: 1) Jesus riding on a donkey, 2) Jesus entering thru the gate that the

Messiah will enter from someday, & 3) the people shouting, "Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" There's a lot going on here...and none of this escaped Jesus' plan...none of it was by accident.

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Wow, preacher. That's a lot of information. What am I supposed to do with all of it?

A lot of times when I pray out loud at a meal or meeting, I'll pray something like, "Lord, thank you for Your calling upon our lives!" ... referring to our joy...that we get to be "in on" what God is doing in our world.

Have you thought of it that way? When we say "yes" to God in our actions and attitudes...in our love and compassion, we are "in on" what God is doing in the world.

For years I had this prayer hanging in my closet where I dressed each morning. The prayer read,

**SLIDE:** "Lord, may I be in on what you are doing in the world today."

I love it! Print that out and hang in your dressing space or bathroom mirror.

But this week it hit me, that for Jesus, God's calling led to a cross. It hit me that though God's calling on our lives is without a doubt a calling to the best life we can live...that life may not be all victories and good times. (up and to the right!).

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It's a fair question, "Why would anyone do that?" Why would anyone go to Jerusalem...say nothing in response to his trial... and hang on a cross until death?

Did Jesus have a choice? Oh yes, I believe he did.

Why? Because Jesus had accepted God's calling upon his life. He knew the part he was given to play...and Jesus knew that his death on the cross was a key piece in God's plan/Kingdom going forward. Not a "Scapegoat," but a willing sacrifice bearing the sin of the world on his shoulders.

For that (sacrifice) we can only give thanks...we did nothing to deserve it, but have gained "atonement with God" because of it.

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To be sure...to follow Jesus will always involve sacrifice...in some way. Very few, if any, of us will be called to die on a cross... but we are all called to "take up our cross and follow Jesus." ...to join him in his sacrifice.

So on this Palm Sunday...the first day of Holy Week, let us do just that..."take up our cross and follow Jesus." Let us join him in his sacrifice.

...and what better place to begin than here at the Table...