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WORSHIP AT FPC

- Sundays at 8:00 a.m., 10:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- All services are available online via livestream.com/fpc-tv

MARRIAGE AND THE ESSENCE OF EDEN

from Jim McCarthy, Senior Minister

Of nature's elaborate courtship displays, none is more elegant than that of the western grebe, a swanlike bird with ruby eyes. Each spring the grebes congregate on the lakes of Oregon to find a lifelong mate. Two by two, the male leads his female to a secluded spot on the water. Their waltz begins with a series of graceful duets, one mimicking the movements of the other. Then the birds proudly display strands of lake-grass in their bills. The dance reaches its crescendo when, as if hearing a starter's pistol, the pair tear into a sprint atop the water, making them the largest water-walking animals on earth. Side by side they run across the lake's mirror surface in perfect synchronization: their necks arched, chests puffed exultantly, wings fanned open behind them forming a feathery train, their webbed feet spraying an arch of white water in their wake.

What a lovely picture of God's grand design for marriage: a husband and wife running the race of faith together to the glory of God. With marriage rates plummeting to historic lows in the U.S., it's critical for Christians to remember why the Lord gave mankind this precious gift in the first place.

For Partnership

As God sovereignly created “all things by the word of his power, in the space of six days” (WSC 9), a refrain rang over the embryonic world: “it was good.” So, it's alarming when for the first time God declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). *Why? What's “not good” about being a bachelor?* It wasn't good for Adam to be alone because he was made in the image of God who eternally existed in blessed communion within himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If Covid lockdowns have taught us anything, it's

that man is an inescapably relational being. We unravel in unbroken isolation. *Could this be why God made the parade of animals pass before Adam?* Not just so that he could name them; not because the hippo ever had a shot of being chosen as Adam's helpmeet; but so that Adam would see the lion with his lioness, the buck with his doe, the rooster with his hen and feel his own aloneness; so that when God brought him the woman he'd handmade from him and for him, Adam might sing, "At last!"

The Lord gave us marriage so that we might have a covenant companion, a life partner to help us fulfill God's purposes for us, a fellowship of the ring to share in the holy quest of Christianity. Alone, Adam was unable to accomplish God's purposes for him. *How could one man "be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it"?* So, God made a helper "fit" or "meet" for him (Genesis 2:18). Eve completed and complemented Adam. They magnified each other's strengths, multiplied each other's efforts, and mitigated each other's weaknesses. They were better together. It's no less true for us today. The partnership of a godly spouse is an asset to personal and professional success, not a liability.

For Protection

In this hypersexualized and shameless culture, we've all cried out with the Psalmist, *"How can a young man keep his way pure?" (Psalm 119:9)*. Thankfully, the Bible thoroughly answers its own question: by steeping our souls in the word of God (Psalm 119:9), by the sanctifying washing of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11), by fleeing temptation (2 Timothy 2:2), by cultivating godly discipline (Titus 2:12) and accountability relationships (James 5:16), and by getting married. Paul said, "because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband... it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:2, 9). Thus, as they considered the seventh commandment, the Westminster Divines concluded that it requires "marriage by those that have not the gift of continency" (WLC 138) and condemns the "undue delay of marriage" (WLC 139). Since marriage was designed to protect us from sexual sin, burning singles who are of age and long for purity ought to pursue biblical marriage with grateful urgency as if they were swimming for shore in shark infested waters.

For Pleasure

God gave the gift of marriage for the pleasure it would bring. William Cowper said, "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss of Paradise that has survived the fall!" The Bible calls this bliss, "knowing"; the deepest emotional and physical intimacy two people can experience. Marriage is the secret society of two soulmates who share their deepest secrets, struggles, and dreams without fear of rejection. This is what we see as creation's curtains close: "the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Of this intimacy, Tertullian said, "How beautiful, then, the marriage of two Christians, two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice. They are as brother and sister, both servants of the same Master. Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in Spirit. They are in very truth, two in one flesh... They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another. Side by side they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations. They have no secrets from one another, they never shun each other's company; they never bring sorrow to each other's hearts... psalms and hymns they sing to one another."

For A Picture

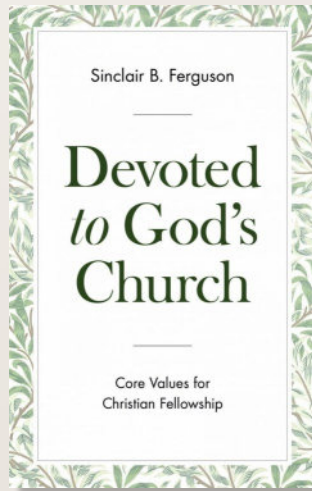
Paul called marriage a profound mystery that "refers to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). Like a masterful muralist, God painted the gospel upon the walls of marriage that our human unions might illustrate the heavenly union between Christ and his people. God calls the wife to graciously submit and respect her husband so that, through her, the world might behold the church's singular devotion to her head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise, the husband's sacrificial love and patient consideration of his bride is a miniature model of Christ's affections for his bride, the church, of whom we sing, "from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride, with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died."

Praise God for the good gift of marriage! When the world looks at our marriages, may they see something heavenly and be drawn to Christ. As we work to keep our marriages according to God's word, may he be pleased to perfume them with the essence of Eden.

BOOK REVIEW: DEVOTED TO GOD'S CHURCH

Dear Friends and Fellow Saints at FPC,

As we plow our way into 2022, there is a book I would challenge all of you to read. It is entitled Devoted to God's Church. This masterpiece looks at some core values for Christian fellowship. It has been recently published by *The Banner of Truth Trust*. The author is Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, a great personal friend, esteemed Professor, and wonderful theologian. The book concludes with the following exhortation:



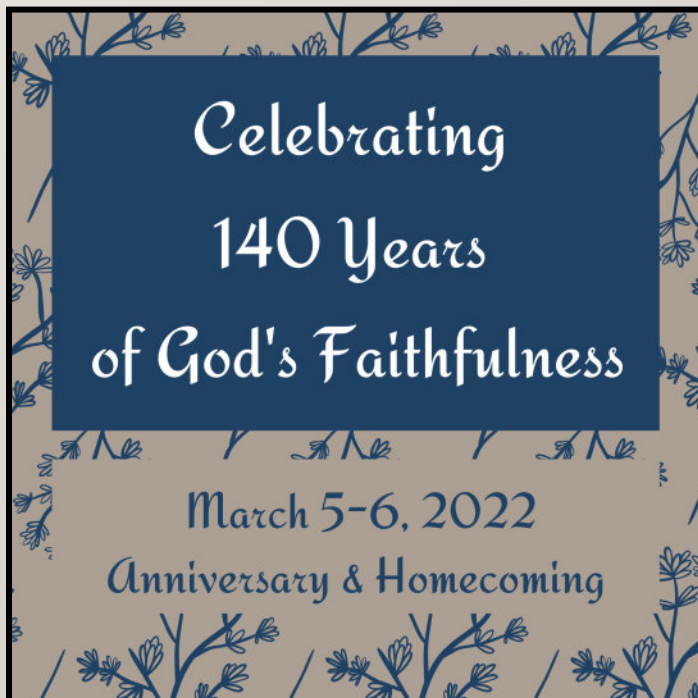
“At the end of the day this is what it means to belong to a church:

- to be part of a fellowship that worships and serves locally, but whose vision stretches to the ends of the earth and to the end of history;
- to be a part of the family of Christ in which brothers and sisters are united in faith, hope, and love.

That is what being *devoted to God's church* is all about.”

I would love for all of us to read this book and feed upon the truths it challenges us to cultivate.

In the bonds of Christ,
David H. Jussely, Minister in Residence



HARVEST FOR THE HURTING

From Knox Baird

Over 12 years ago, Bob Chain, Rob Tatum, Shea McNease and Michael Griffin organized a number of wild game dinners at First Presbyterian Church to highlight their love of hunting. These four men and others in the church sponsored a number of suppers featuring wild game menu items. Visitors, spouses and children, and other members were encouraged to come and eat the delicious food and hear from speakers like Dr. Wilson Benton and Bob Ridgeway.

Out of these events, God laid on the hearts of Bob, Shea, Rob and Michael a vision to help those in need. These four men (who all happened to be deacons) set up the ministry called **Harvest For The Hurting**. They bought a box freezer, put it in the gym, harvested deer, took it to processors, and gave it to the church to help those who were hungry.

Over the years, others have become involved in sharing their deer with Harvest For The Hurting. Countless families, children, and those needing help have been given free food. We thank God for the continuing ministry of Harvest For The Hurting.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food."
Matthew 25:35a



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CHURCH BUDGET UPDATE

Thanks to each of our church families and friends who generously support the ministries of First Presbyterian through your tithes and offerings!

General Fund gifts in 2021	\$2,246,579
Other gifts	\$123,691
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,370,270
Expenses in 2021	<u>\$1,555,254</u>
NET INCOME	\$691,325
Mortgage Balance at 12/31/21	\$432,521

Inquirers Class

Sundays, 9:30-10:30a
starting February 6

If you or someone you know is interested in attending, please scan the QR Code to register.