

# SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



## THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

May 24, 2020  
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas  
Link to worship videos available at: [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

America, The Beautiful

arr. Kevin Costley

WELCOME AND OPENING SENTENCES

We welcome you to worship today.

In Psalms 47 and 48, it is written, "God is sovereign over all the earth and all the nations.

**Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised."**

HYMN

God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand  
**God of our fathers, whose almighty hand  
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band  
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,  
Our grateful songs before Thy throne arise.**

NATIONAL HYMN

**Thy love divine hath led us in the past,  
In this free land by Thee our lot is cast;  
Be Thou our ruler, guardian, guide and stay,  
Thy Word our law, Thy paths our chosen way.**

**From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,  
Be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense;  
Thy true religion in our hearts increase,  
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.**

**Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way,  
Lead us from night to never-ending day;  
Fill all our lives with love and grace divine,  
And glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.**

## PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Let us pray ... O gracious and exalted One, even as we bow in prayer, we magnify your holy name for all of your gifts day by day and from age to age. When we consider our creatureliness, we certainly can list our failings and offenses in relation to you and others, and never be able to remember all of these. Forgive us, though, of all our sin. Hear us now, as we come before you in a time of confession through silence.

As the only Source of true pardon, restore us to a repaired and empowered life, for faithfully serving among all of your people in the way and spirit of Jesus Christ.

Friends, let us hear and share with gladness the blessed news of the Gospel:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 581

Glory Be to the Father

GLORIA PATRI

## SCRIPTURE READING

Jeremiah 29:1,4-11

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Not Leaving Our Well-Being Behind

## SOLO

Blades of Grass and Pure White Stones

arr. Russell Mauldin

*Blades of grass and pure white stones shelter those who've come and gone; just below the emerald sod are those who reached the arms of God. Buried here with dignity, endless rows for all to see; freedom's seeds in sorrow sown, 'neath blades of grass and pure white stones. Blades of grass and pure white stones cover those who left their homes to rest in fields here side-by-side lest we forget their sacrifice. Buried here with dignity, endless rows for all to see; freedom's seeds in sorrow sown, 'neath blades of grass and pure white stones.*

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us begin our prayers of thanksgiving and intercession this morning with each of us praying in silence for self and others . . .

O Glorious and Caring One, We honor you: for your mysteries on earth which are small and large, simple and complex; for gurgling brooks and crashing waves; for wind-blown sands and quiet meadows; for laughter, service, study, sacrifice, and healthy relationships with other persons, in whose company we experience learning, encouragement, maturity, and even delight.

We are grateful for all those, known and unknown to us, who have gone before us and left something of themselves as a legacy of compassion, trust, faith, knowledge, and wisdom. On this Memorial Day weekend, we particularly remember with deep gratitude the mortal life sacrificed by those who have served our nation and fellow-citizens courageously and in defense of democracy.

Great God of the vast universe and of love so dear: together we celebrate the accomplishments of all who have completed a chapter of accomplishment in their education journeys, from pre-kindergarten graduates to doctoral graduates, whether generalists or specialists, among these Luna Curtiss and Cruz Garcia. As you prepare them for each next segment of life's journey, plant in their memory both inspiration and encouragement from those who have loved and supported them throughout the years.

Grant that we may send them forth with all our love, all our reverence, all of our perseverance, and all of our support. May they and we hold each other and your whole world in our prayers and ministry, expecting the spirit of Christ to continually heal, empower, humble, and embolden one and all.

O, our Strength and Sure Defense, anoint with healing all who are afflicted, downcast, struggling, and despondent. Support the oppressed. Deliver the tempted. Sustain the ill and injured. Empower each one beyond tears of bereavement; and daily be to every person a holy shield and guide. Now, again, we pray as Jesus taught...

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN NO. 340

This is My Song

FINLANDIA

This is my song, O God of all the nations, a song of peace for lands afar and mine.  
This is my home, the country where my heart is; here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;  
But other hearts in other lands are beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.  
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover, and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.  
So hear my song, o God of all the nations, a song of peace for their land and for mine.

This is my prayer, O Lord of all earth's kingdoms: thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done.  
Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him, and hearts united learn to live as one.  
So hear my prayer, O God of all the nations: myself I give thee; let thy will be done.

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Faith of Our Fathers

arr. Melody Bober

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CONGRATULATIONS TO  
OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!

LUNA CURTISS; CRUZ GARCIA

Especially in this time, visit the church website, [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org), for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: [www.facebook.com/FPCBryan](https://www.facebook.com/FPCBryan)

**NEW!!!** on **Instagram**: [www.instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com).

Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan\_youth**

Help FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel achieve 400 subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!

On [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology. Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list. The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **NOON, SUNDAY, JUNE 7**, and will be distributed on **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10**. This newsletter will cover news from June 18 to July 1.

**STAY CONNECTED!** with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is "REAL TIME," and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>.  
For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or [office@fpcbryan.org](mailto:office@fpcbryan.org).



# A WARM WELCOME!

*We are delighted to have you worship with us today.*

## WORSHIP NOTES

### PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

### LITURGISTS

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

Rev. Dr. George E. Klett

### MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter,  
*pianist & organist*

Emily K. Béghin,  
*trumpeteer*

David Kipp,  
*Director of Music Ministries*

### COVER ART

Arlington National Cemetery  
Washington DC

### CHANCEL FLOWERS

Easter arrangements  
by Nicole & Bill McKinley

### AUDIO/VIDEO

Emily K. Béghin

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## THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, MAY 24

#### 10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL  
*(Watch your inbox for details via email!)*

### MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 25

#### CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED



### TUESDAY, MAY 26

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

### THURSDAY, MAY 28

### FRIDAY, MAY 29

### SATURDAY, MAY 30

### DAY OF PENTECOST, MAY 31

#### 10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL  
*(Watch your inbox for details via email!)*

For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,  
please be in touch with your group's  
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator  
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.

## Not Leaving Our Well-Being Behind

Jeremiah 29:1,4-11

Ted V. Foote, Jr.

May 24, 2020

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

In the current historical period of the COVID-19 virus and economic crises, for three Sundays we've explored if – when and how we move beyond the challenges and losses we've experienced – we might do well not to leave behind three elements of who we are. So, two Sundays ago, we explored not leaving behind our integrity. Last Sunday we explored not leaving behind our brokenness. This week we'll explore not leaving behind our well-being. You may logically ask, “Why would anyone in her/his right mind leave behind well-being?” Perhaps most people would not do that when carefully thinking, but, when experiencing what develops, people do forget well-being as a worthy value.

This is no exact parallel to COVID-19, but 580 years before the time of Jesus, former residents of Jerusalem are under house-arrest in the city of Babylon to where they were deported; and they strongly desire to go home. You and I currently live under “stay at home recommendations.” It's not house-arrest. And it may not be hundreds of miles distance from our home region, nor have we been forcibly brought here/ where we are now. Yet a virus has forced its way into our midst and caused us to heed “stay at home recommendations” when we would prefer to travel out. One of the mantras is “Stay at home now, as long as we need, so we can gather together again sooner rather than later.”

The prophet Jeremiah, left behind and still living in Jerusalem, writes this letter to the former Jerusalemites now under house-arrest in Babylon after Jeremiah hears word that the exiles over there are chomping-at-the-bit to come home. They are ready to get goin' again; and the Word of the Lord speaks to Jeremiah telling him to write to them and say: “Unpack your luggage where you are. Plant gardens. Hang artwork and photos on the walls. Crank up educational curriculum for children and youth. Plan to stay awhile. Invest yourselves with each other and in the well-being of the whole city. Learn what you can as you invest yourself where you are, because you are not going to see ‘Jerusalem-normal’ for quite awhile.” Jeremiah hears from God, and he relays God's message to those former Jerusalemites now in Babylon that change happens, and a rush to leave change behind will gain them nothing.

Don't we know this to be true in our time and place when the invasion has come from a virus not visible to the naked eye? The virus' invasion has taken casualties, resulted in “stay home” orders, taken a serious toll on the economy, and introduced uncertainty about the future – all of this leaving us at a loss.

Yet well-being in any “new normal” (we are learning) is based in the gifts God has given and called on people to share – gifts such as caring, sacrifice, service, respect, empathy, compassion, giving, intelligence, broadly based cooperative efforts – even nationally and globally. To invest in “well-being” for family, friends, acquaintances, and

strangers/ to invest in a sense of others' inherent dignity and worth is essential. Jeremiah reminds the former Jerusalemites that God is with them in their "new normal" right where they are, with the gifts for community and well-being they need. Their well-being is not a matter of history or their personal past – as if well-being has been left behind in the ruins of Jerusalem. God's well-being is possible – God says – right where they are now! But here is another element: If those under new living conditions in Babylon fail to seek the well-being-of-all in Babylon, they will be ill-equipped to seek well-being in some future chapter of their lives, including when they return to Jerusalem someday – or when their descendants return. It is altogether appropriate and important to be most cautious; but if we are obsessive in our worry about (1) dying, or (2) foreigners, or (3) those different from ourselves, or (4) losing what's valuable to us – we will be unable to live fully as God desires, seeking the well-being of folks wherever we are.

It has been said, "People have a failure of nerve because they have no nerve of failure" [Leonard Sweet, "Summoned to Lead," p.84]. We find strength and learning from our failures, and our losses, and our heartbreaks! That's never to imply we want more failure, loss, and heartbreak. It is to say clearly that remembering how we feel in loss and vulnerability opens us for sharing life by the same grace from God which has brought us thus far. If we seek the well-being of all who are where we are, we will be stewards of a community that's learning in God's grace and blessed by God's grace, in ways we may not have dreamed possible, because usually we do not associate heartbreak, grief, vulnerability and arduous survival-challenges (we do not associate these) with grace. We like grace, but heartbreak, grief, vulnerability and arduous survival-challenges we do not like so much.

As God communicated with those of old, God beckons us also to discover in our difficult times the nerve of failure which will give us sensitivity, wisdom, and risk-willingness to seek and invest in the well-being of all. And when the next chapter begins, we shall bring with us the learnings of the well-being which grew in us and around us in this present time. As one example beyond COVID-19, we observe Memorial Day not with the perspective of "I'm glad others gave their lives in their time so I don't have to do that now." Oh, no! We observe Memorial Day with the perspective, "Thank God others gave their lives in their time in defense of wide, sacred democracy, because they teach me and us that it's possible for us to do the same every day, hopefully not with weapons.

With God to thank, we shall bring with us to subsequent new challenges and new normals the nerve of failure and vulnerability which do not defeat us – because we will have learned the shared life and cooperative habits of seeking well-being in every present, whatever new challenges and new normals are being birthed in our midst. Let us not leave behind the learning of pursuing well-being in this time, so we shall be competently equipped attitudinally for our next chapters – as God is faithful to equip and guide us. Let us never leave behind the well-being God desires. – All honor and praise be to God.