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SERMON TITLE: *Reflections on 2020 FPCD Annual Meeting*  
SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:3-8  
DATE: March 14, 2021  
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When we sang the hymn “For All the Saints” in memory of Dean, Helen, Dick, and Tina (the wife of a new friend of this church), we sang this:

“The **saints triumphant** rise in bright array”<sup>1</sup>

We call those who have died “The Church Triumphant.” They have triumphed. They fought the battle while on earth and now have the victory. When they lived here we sang:

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might,  
Thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;  
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light;<sup>2</sup>

Because of Jesus, those who have died now live “**triumphant**,” with him. They are through the battle and now have the victory. We need to grasp the **triumph** of life everlasting. They are part of the Church Triumphant, who suffer no more pain, no more mourning, no more tears, and no more death.

That also means **we who are here are living in a battle**. The battle, Paul says, is against the forces of evil, who rule on this earth; the cosmic powers that cause the darkness in this world; the battle is against the unbelief that is promoted. To stand strong we are to “take up the whole armor of God. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

That is why we are called **The Church Militant**. So what does it mean for us to be the Church Militant?

If someone is in the military, you can almost always recognize them, even if they do not have their uniform on. They are taught several things:

- to be civil
- to be respectful
- to be responsible
- to fight for the guy next to them

They commit their lives, by the very nature of the job, for their brother (or sister) next to them and for their country—you and me.

They have a higher goal than themselves. The Church Militant possesses the same values.

The point is having the purpose, commitment, and discipline; to live by the call to keep the standards of your faith even when no one is watching

What I mean by that was well explained to me by a man in this church. He said, “When I went off to college, one Sunday I was walking to church when another student said to me, “What are you doing that for? Your parents aren’t here.” But he replied, ‘I want to go to church. It’s the right thing to do. That’s the kind of man I want to be.’”

This is a person who **shows** his morals and obligations. This person doesn’t say, I believe. He **does** his beliefs.

What kind of church do we want to **do**? It is not about what we say we believe; it is how we act. What do we say now that our loved ones who died in the last year are gone—what do we say about what they **did**?

What will our children say about our faith? What will the children of those who gave testimonies say about them?

What does our city observe about First Presbyterian Church? Do they say, *these are people who do something*—not just something good, but something that points to their faith in Jesus Christ.

The Church Militant represents a nation—how do we represent our “nation?” The Christian’s nation is the Kingdom of God; if we do not activate our call as the priesthood of believers, then our nation is weak, ineffective, and easily defeated. We cannot figure out what we are to do for the church (ourselves), much less for the people and city around us (others).

One of our daughters made a bookmark of “Deanisms” for Christmas. Those are expressions Dean always used. One of these was “Whose kingdom are you a part of?” If you did not live up to its principles or the Hertenstein household standards he said, “That’s a bunch of bunk!”

You didn’t hear him say that but we did!

This year many here have stepped into roles to see that you, at home during COVID, have church. You (those who have done this) have done a marvelous job. We’ve bonded in a common goal. We have each filled a necessary part, simply by activating our God-given gifts. So what we do comes naturally to us. You see, God has already equipped you. You simply have to find your place.

<sup>1</sup> “For All the Saints,” verse 5, William Walsham How, lyrics, 1864, Ralph Vaughan Williams, tune, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, verse 2.

We are committed here at FPCD to worshipping God no matter what the circumstances. We are committed to ministering to the greater community of Duncanville. The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church says this:

*“The church is never content to enjoy the benefits of the Christian community for itself alone.”<sup>3</sup> “The Church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ.”<sup>4</sup>*

It feels good to make this kind of commitment.

In addition, your commitment, people of FPCD, resulted in real help for me and my family as we suffered the greatest tragedy I have ever experienced. Your strength of character to care for me over these past months has carried me and my family through great sorrow. The most special thing to me each week is this wonderful, vibrant worship service.

We are rich in diversity which makes us rich indeed.  
We are rich in enthusiasm and engagement with worship which makes us rich beyond all other wealth.  
We are rich in care for one another and love for Jesus.

Shall we enter into even greater engagement with the community around us? Do you think they need the new life, love, and light of Jesus Christ? As Dean would say, “You have a friend who is closer than the very air you breathe—his name is Jesus.” Shall we embrace Him together?

We are the Church Militant shining a light into the darkness.

AMEN

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<sup>3</sup> *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Part II, Book of Order, 2017-2019* (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2017), F-1.03.

<sup>4</sup> *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Part II, Book of Order, 2007-2009* (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2017), G-3.0400.