

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 9, 2023 **10:30 a.m. Worship**



**For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who
are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.**
Acts 2:39

First Presbyterian Church

Mailing address: P.O. Box 2729; San Bernardino, California 92406

909.882.3308

www.fpcsb.net

COMMISSIONED LOCAL PASTOR: DR. WENDY L. LAMB
MINISTRY OF PASTORAL SUPPORT: REV. DR. STEPHEN SMITH
PASTOR EMERITUS: REV. JAMES C. HUFFSTUTLER
MINISTRY OF MUSIC: CURTISS ALLEN, JR., DIRECTOR OF MUSIC;
WILLIAM ZEITLER, ORGANIST;
AMY GANO, BELLS

Welcome to Worship at First Presbyterian Church

This service is being livestreamed and can be viewed on our YouTube channel in real time or as a recording. **Large-print copies of this order of service**, as well as **audio enhancement devices** are available from **the ushers**.

We gather on Sunday for 3 reasons:

- **To seek God**- whom we find in sacred text and sacrament, in music and in song, in prayer, in the beauty of this space, in the stillness where we can hear our hearts. We offer God our thanks and praise, our lament and longing, and our resources. We let go of burdens and receive grace and forgiveness. We see the One our hearts love.
- **To practice Community** – rejoice w/those who rejoice, weep w/those who weep. To break bread with those whom we love and those whom we need to love more fully. We practice things our culture does not emphasize: resting, forgiving, sharing. Jesus asked us to love one another as he loved us, and we cannot do so without practice.
- **To listen for our Call**- often an invitation to go out and be or do or remember. God is speaking all the time: through conscience, nature, friends, and certainly scripture. We gather to listen for that Call and to recommit ourselves to discipleship.

Information on our common life can be found on our website www.fpcsb.net, along with sermons and newsletters. You can participate in our work by supporting us financially with a one-time or sustaining donation.

Children are welcome in worship. Younger children may go to the Nursery at any time.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, August 6th.
Our deacons will set the table so all may be made welcome.

Morning Worship†

Lector: Dotti Garcia

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

The book of Acts is like the book of Genesis. It announces a beginning but without the language of beginning. Like Genesis it renders without pomp and flag-waving a God working, moving, creating the dawn that will break each day, putting into place a holy repetition that speaks of the willingness of God to invade our every day and our every moment.

-- Willie James Jennings

Acts (Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible)

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

*Variations on
"My Country 'Tis of Thee"*

*L. Beethoven
(1685-1727)*

Allow the music to usher you into sacred space and time.

*CALL to WORSHIP¹

✘ **Be with us in this time.**

Savior of the world, healer of the nations:

✘ **Be with us in this place.**

Breath of all that lives, of people far and near, God of here and now:

✘ **Stir within our lives,**

Be present in our worship,

That we may find new ways to be present in your world. Amen.

† The symbols you will see in this order of worship mean:

*** Stand if you are able** **✘ The congregation will read.**

¹ Adapted from Iona Abbey Worship Book, ©2001 Iona Community/Wild Goose Publications. All rights reserved. Used by Permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

Bring many names, beautiful and good,
celebrate, in parable and story,
holiness in glory, living, loving God.
Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names!

Strong mother God, working night and day,
planning all the wonders of creation,
setting each equation genius at play:
Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God!

Warm father God, hugging every child,
feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving till we're reconciled:
Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!

Old, aching God, gray with endless care,
calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises, wiser than despair:
Hail and Hosanna, old, aching God!

Young, growing God, eager, on the move,
saying no to falsehood and unkindness,
crying out for justice, giving all you have:
Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!

Great, living God, never fully known,
joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home:
Hail and Hosanna, great, living God!

PRAYER of CONFESSION

- ✘ Holy God, we know that your Spirit dwells among us, yet sometimes we feel bereft, as if we had been left alone. We go back to what is familiar or leap into something new instead of waiting and listening to you. We get lost on our own and forget the times you have shown us your way.

(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

May we listen together for where your Spirit is leading. Amen.

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

✘ In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and are being made whole. Amen.

(We stand and sing Alleluia)

*ALLELUIA

William Zeitler

Musical notation for Alleluia, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes: Em, B, Em, D, G, D, Em, B, Em, Bm, Em. The lyrics are: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

TIME with the CHILDREN

[Children are always welcome in worship. There are activity bags available. Infants through pre-Kindergarten may go to the Nursery at any time.]

MUSIC for WORSHIP

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-5

(In this sequel to his Gospel, Luke writes the story of the beginnings of the church in the Acts of the Apostles.)

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 2:1-4

(After Jesus has gone from them, the disciples are waiting together.)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2:37-42

(After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter speaks to the crowd about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This is the people's response.)

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Dr. Wendy Lamb

HYMN

*Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness*³

SPIRIT

Refrain:

**Spirit, spirit of gentleness,
blow through the wilderness, calling and free.**

**Spirit, spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
wind, wind on the sea.**

**You moved on the waters;
you called to the deep;
then you coaxed up the mountains
from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons
you called to each thing,
"Awake from your slumbers
and rise on your wings." (Refrain)**

**You sang in a stable;
you cried from a hill;**

³ Text & Music: James K. Manley. ©1978 James K. Manley Publishing. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

then you whispered in silence
when the whole world was still.
And down in the city,
you called once again
when you blew through your people
on the rush of the wind. *(Refrain)*

You call from tomorrow;
you break ancient schemes;
from the bondage of sorrow
the captives dream dreams.

Our women see visions;
our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions
your people arise. *(Refrain)*

THE OFFERING of OUR TITHES and GIFTS

(We offer our gifts as a response to God's Word, to be part of God's purposes in the world. You may place gifts in the plate during the offertory, or on your way out – or by mail or online.)

OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY**

OLD HUNDREDTH

✘ Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost, Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and OUR LORD'S PRAYER

✘ 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**

*Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?*⁴

Will you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey;
we're together on the road.
We are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the nighttime of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

Will you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

Improvisation

(For health reasons we are not greeting at the door)

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Jim Huffstutler, Ramon Ramirez, Robert Saenz

Elders: Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough, John-Paul Fletcher

Deacons: Sharon Landeros, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord

⁴ Text & Music: Richard Gillard; arr. Betty Pulkingham. Text & Music ©1977 Universal Music Publishing Group– Brentwood Benson Publishing. All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

GREETERS: Lynda Savage, Claudia Oakes

USHERS: Al Rueda, *Lead Usher*

Chris Thomas, Brad Smith, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

This Weeks' Celebrations

Jul 10 Jim Carter
Doris Nord
Donna Feit
Kevin & Wendy Lamb
Gill Snyder

Jul 12 Trevor Cummings
Sherman & Joanne Ballard

Jul 14 Margaret Doane

Help Needed. Jim Huffstutler, our much-loved Pastor Emeritus, is in need of some long term care. His daughter, Hannah, has been providing this care full time to this point. We are seeking a paid provider for in-home care. (References required.) That could be a single person, a "tag team" or ? Several support personnel (nurses, PT, etc.) come in several days per week. The situation is flexible. If this is not your "thing" maybe you know someone who knows someone, who... suggestions welcome! If you know of someone, call the church office (909) 882-3308 to get Hannah's contact info.

Garcia Center for the Arts cordially invites you to our first-ever Annual Benefit Gala! Join us **Friday, July 28th, 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm** at The Sterling Natural Resource Center, 25318 West 5th Street, San Bernardino. Enjoy an evening of live music, delicious food, and an exciting auction! **Please RSVP by: July 24th, 2023.** For more info email garciacentersb@gmail.com Tickets are \$125.00 Single, \$225.00 Couple, and \$909.00 for a table. Tickets are available at the center. Call 909-888-6400 between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

More news and announcements are available in your Friday *Keeping in Touch* emails. If you are not receiving these, and you would like to, contact Mimi in the church office.

Music Box

An especially important landmark event in the history of the Church has to be the Council of Nicaea in 325. Up to this point Christianity was regarded as a troublesome sect that threatened the well-being of the Roman Empire. But, by 325 CE, Christianity was stubbornly flourishing, in spite of periodic persecutions. Meanwhile, Emperor Constantine was struggling to hold together the foundering Roman Empire, and decided that this flourishing Christian sect might make a better ally than enemy.

So, in 325 Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity. And because a 'United Christianity' was essential to accomplish his civil and political objectives, he convened the "Council of Nicea" in which the major leaders of Christianity from throughout the Empire would convene to settle, once and for all, what "Official Christianity" believed. They settled on what is now known as the "Nicene Creed" (in our hymnals on page 34). Although there is some disagreement about minor details, the Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches still trace their core theological heritage back to this Creed.

But there was dissent. Not everyone was on board with the Nicene Creed. Indeed, in the centuries between Christ and the Council, there was an enormous variety of understandings of what Christ meant. In those centuries before the Council of Nicaea we have the "proto-orthodox" — that movement within the Wild West of nascent Christianity that would become the 'Nicene' Church that is practically universal today. Another major stream was a theological approach called the "Gnostics".

The history here gets really complicated. When the Orthodox (Nicene/Catholic) church took the reins, they did all they could to suppress the "Gnostic Heresy" — by burning their books and — when necessary — killing its advocates. Until the 20th century, all we knew about the "Gnostics" was books written by early 'orthodox' Christians attacking the Gnostics to prove them wrong. (Big surprise — they didn't always fairly represent the Gnostics, sometimes ascribing to them completely fabricated scurrilous positions. "Fake news" is hardly a modern invention.)

But all that changed in 1945, with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library. A library of books by the 'Gnostics' (and others) saved in urns in the Egyptian desert. Containing many books considered lost, that we knew only by their titles, and Lo, now we have them. (A rough way of looking at this is that the Dead Sea Scrolls were mostly about the Old Testament, the Nag Hammadi mostly about the New.)

One of the things we learned was there really weren't any "Gnostics" in the sense of some official movement. Indeed, the term "Gnostics" itself wasn't coined until the 19th century.

Which is not to say there wasn't a variety of opinions about the Christ in the first few centuries. A fundamental point of disagreement was what it meant to be a 'Christian'. The word 'orthodox' literally means 'right thinking' – if you were 'orthodox' you subscribe to the correct beliefs and creeds. But another competing point of view was that 'belief in some creed' didn't matter, what counted was a personal experience of God.

The word "GNOSIS" is a Greek word for 'knowledge'. But it's a particular kind of knowledge – that which comes from personal experience. You can read all the books about swimming you want, and watch no end of videos, and maybe even pass yourself off as an expert on swimming – without ever getting in the water. But jumping in the pool and getting water up your nose is an altogether different kind of knowledge about swimming. That's GNOSIS.

I'd argue that the attempt by the early Nicene church to suppress "Gnosticism" was probably too little, too late – and maybe that's a good thing! Although formal theology is important, it's the EXPERIENCE of God that has been the life blood of the Church. And it's the EXPERIENCES of God down through the ages – by Saint Paul on the road to Damascus, and Saint Francis, and Saint Theresa, and Wesley, and so many others that has over and over infused new life into the Church. And I wonder if hymns like "He walks with me, and he talks with me, and tells me I am his own" don't reflect a more Gnostic approach. What's wrong with the idea that both mind and heart are equally important parts of the Christian Experience?

In the ancient idiom "Adam 'knew' his wife Eve" – that word "knew" is the verb form of GNOSIS. So "GNOSIS" of God clearly means we're not talking about philosophical debates around the fine points of the Trinity, or whether Christ's body was like ours. To the "Gnostics", theological word salad isn't worth much – a direct, personal encounter with the Divine is all that matters.

Although "GNOSIS" of God was of primary importance to the so-called "Gnostics", the early Gnostics also held other beliefs that we would consider, um, 'curious'. For example, they argued that the God of the Old Testament – inclined as He was to smite those who weren't on His side (and there's lots of 'smiting' in the Old Testament) – was an entirely different God from the 'God of Love' in the New Testament.

More about the "Wild West" of pre-Nicene Christianity in future Music Boxes!

-- William Zeitler



The seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a symbolic statement of the church's heritage, identity, and mission in contemporary form. Its power depends on both its simplicity and complexity, as well as its traditional and enduring qualities.

The basic symbols in the seal are the cross, Scripture, the dove, and flames.

As a church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), our congregational life is governed by the Ruling Elders of our current Session:

Jeanne Clark, Susan Skoglund, Alex Smith, Tim Usher, Mary Bolaños,
Brooke Dvorak, Pat Morris, Martha Pinckney, Lily Bolaños,
Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Rebecca Allen, Sharon Landeros, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord,
Chris Wright-Thomas, Dan Direen, Robin Edwards, Rick Rodriguez,
Katie Smith, Brad Smith, and Dave Thomas