

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 30, 2023

10:30 a.m. Worship



But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. *Acts 9:27*

First Presbyterian Church

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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: Oliver Lamb

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

And so it begins. We have already spoken of beginnings (in Acts 2), and here is another beginning at the very heart of diaspora life and at the very heart of following Jesus. Unlike the savior he follows, Saul embodies a great inexplicable reversal. His life is now a question. A life turned into a question will repeatedly be the result of life with Jesus.

-- Willie James Jennings

Acts (Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible)

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Sonata in Eb

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Susan Addington, flute

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

*CALL to WORSHIP¹

We gather together to worship God,

✘ **who comes to us when we least expect it,
and comes to those whom we least expect,**
who calls us out of the safety of our ordered lives
and invites us to join in the adventure of faith.

✘ **Let us worship God together!**

*HYMN

*I Danced in the Morning*²

LORD OF THE DANCE

**I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.
At Bethlehem I had my birth.**

† 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.

² Text: Sydney Carter, Music adapted from Shaker melody by Sydney Carter. ©1963 Stainer & Bell, Ltd., London, England. (admin. Hope Publishing Company). All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

Refrain: Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
but they would not dance and they would not follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John.
They came with me and the dance went on. (*Refrain*)

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame.
The holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,
and left me there on a cross to die. (*Refrain*)

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black.
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
but I am the dance and I still go on. (*Refrain*)

They cut me down and I leapt up high.
I am the life that will never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he. (*Refrain*)

PRAYER of ADORATION and CONFESSION³

✘ You break in, O God, on the road
you break in, O God, exactly the way we do not believe
you break in, O God, and change everything

Why are your stories never mundane
Why can you not just leave us alone
and go and transform somewhere else
that is not as certain and sure of you?
You disrupt us and cause anxiety;
We are not people of change.

✘ You break in, O God with a call
you break in, O God with an invitation
you break in, O God with the truth
(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

- ✘ God, break in again and call us to be your workers
 God, break in again and use the gifts we are to build your realm
 God, break in again and change our world once more.
 So be it. 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

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the Alleluia. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single line. Chords are indicated above the staff: Em, B, Em, and D. The lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -' are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody with chords G, D, and B. It includes a first ending marked '1.' with chords Em and B, and a second ending marked '2.' with chords Em, Bm, and Em. The lyrics 'lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le al - le - lu - ia!' are written below the notes.

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.]

BLESSING of the BACKPACKS⁴

- ✘ Gracious God, we lift to you today, these students.
 They stand here ready to receive your blessings and they commit themselves to study and learning in the school year ahead. We ask your blessing on each of them.
 Further, we ask your blessing on these backpacks and bookbags. They will hold the schoolwork of each student and will be carried from home to school and back again. As these students carry these backpacks, may they be reminded of the love and care of this congregation that surrounds them each school day.
 We pray as well for the teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff. May they also be sustained by your blessing. May they be reminded that this congregation embraces their call to teaching and learning and surrounds them with love and care.
 In the name of the great Teacher at whose knee we are all students, Amen.

SCRIPTURE**Acts 9:1-12**

(As Acts continues, we come to the story of Saul who becomes Paul.)

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

Acts 9:23-27

(Paul has something of a rough start to his ministry.)

After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim.

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Dr. Wendy Lamb

HYMN

*Goodness Is Stronger than Evil*⁵

Tutu/Bell

Goodness is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours; victory is ours,
through God who loves us.
Victory is ours, victory is ours,
through God who loves us. (*Repeat*)

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 HUNDRETH

✘ 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 Come and Follow Me*⁶

KELVINGROVE

“Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown; will you let my name be known;
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?”

⁵ Tune: © 1996, Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent Text: Original text by Tutu; adapt. by Bell; © Desmond Tutu. All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

⁶ Tune: Arr. by John L. Bell; © 1987, WGRG c/o Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent Text: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, © 1987, WGRG c/o Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

“Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?”

“Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?”

“Will you love the ‘you’ you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you’ve found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?”

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I’ll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I’ll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

Improvisation

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

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Sandy Garza, Sally Inglis, Josie Short

Elders: **Pat Morris, Martha Pinckney, Lily Bolaños**

Deacons: **Brad Smith, Dave Thomas, Steve Smith**

GREETERS: Donna Feit, Doris Nord

USHERS: Chris Thomas, *Lead Usher*

Rick Rodriguez, Brad Smith, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

This Weeks' Celebrations

Jul 30 Linda Kaufman

Aug 1 Amy Gano

On Saturday, August 12, 2023, the First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino will welcome a gathering of volunteers from RESULTS, an organization which advocates for a world free of poverty and oppression. RESULTS is a movement of everyday people who use their voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. Volunteers in RESULTS study policies and receive training, support, and inspiration to become skilled advocates to influence Congress and unlock government funding for the most effective solutions to poverty. RESULTS volunteers have been active in San Bernardino County since 1985.

The August 12 event will include some background on the work RESULTS volunteers have done, time for sharing individual concerns about poverty, a briefing on a new legislative solution for the crisis of affordable housing, a how-to session on meetings with Members of Congress, and some training of advocacy skills to increase influence on Congress and our communities. This event is open to members of FPCSB. We will gather between 9:30 am and 4:00 pm, with a lunch break, and lunch provided for participants. There is no charge to attend. Please contact Amy Smith or Mimi Lange for information on how to register.

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

As I'm sure you're aware, there are four gospels in the New Testament, a "gospel" being a story of the life and ministry of Jesus. The standard understanding is that each of these gospels has a different "target audience".

Matthew's target audience is the Jews — and consequently is concerned with showing how Jesus is the Messiah by fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Matthew has a genealogy tracing Jesus's lineage back to King David, showing that he has the right to be King of the Jews.

Mark's is the Romans — showing Jesus as a man of action. Notice how often the word 'straightway', or 'immediately' (EUTHUS) appears in this Gospel "And immediately Jesus did this... and then immediately he did that...". Matthew and Luke contain long sermons (the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain respectively) — Mark does not. In Mark, Jesus is someone who "gets things done."

Luke's target audience is educated "Greeks" (non-Jews): Luke endeavors to show Jesus as the 'perfect human'. Luke has a genealogy tracing Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam! Luke's language is very literary and sophisticated (where Mark is terse and Matthew about in the middle).

Which brings us to the Gospel of John. The standard understanding of this gospel is that its target audience is EVERYONE! Which has never made sense to me. The very first sentence: "In the beginning was the Word (LOGOS)..." — what typical person understands what THAT's about? The average person on the street back then couldn't have made any sense of it, and we still don't — significant explanation is necessary! It's also in a class by itself: Matthew, Mark and Luke are all rather 'down to earth', whereas John is rather mystical. It's really cut from very different cloth than the other three.

I've wondered if, instead of such a concrete approach as "Matthew is for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, etc." if a more allegorical approach might be helpful. By allegorically aligning a major city of the ancient world to each Gospel.

Matthew's allegorical city would have to be Jerusalem — the epicenter of Judaism. Mark's would be Rome — the epicenter of the Roman Empire. And Luke's would be Athens — the epicenter of classical Greek thinking (Plato, Aristotle, etc.). I don't mean those cities literally, but what they allegorically stood for.

And John? Why, I suggest that would be Alexandria. Here's my thinking:

Alexandria at the time of Christ was arguably the most cutting edge and advanced city in the Roman Empire. Philosophy, religion, science,

mathematics and engineering were all thriving there like nowhere else in the Mediterranean region. (The first known woman mathematician in the Western world thrived there. There wouldn't be another for over a millennium.) Alexandria was the 'Silicon Valley' of innovation in religion, philosophy, mathematics, science, and engineering.

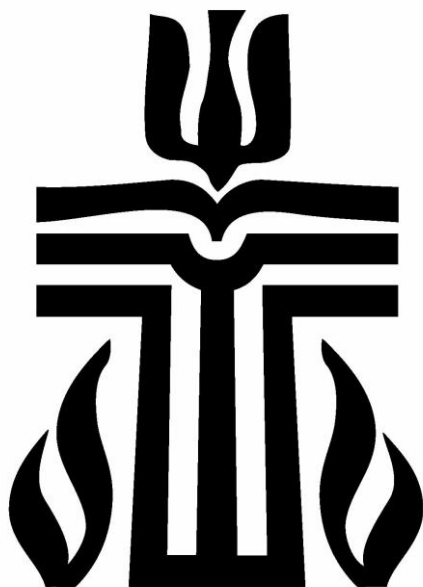
'LOGOS' was a common enough word in the ancient world, meaning 'reason', or that which organizes something, or an argument (as in arguing for some position), or even the financial accounting of a business. In philosophical circles, LOGOS also referred to the principle that organizes the entire Cosmos — an idea that goes back to Heraclites in the 5th century BCE. Over the centuries LOGOS waxed and waned in terms of prominence of concern in philosophical circles, and in first century Alexandria it was at a high tide.

One philosophical school quite popular at that time was the Stoics, and the LOGOS figured prominently in their thinking. And, we have Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE - 50 CE) — a learned Jew who became quite enamored of Greek philosophy (and Stoicism in particular). Philo made it his life's work to try to reconcile Greek philosophy and Judaism — bringing together Athens and Jerusalem, Plato and Moses, so to speak. The LOGOS figured very prominently in Philo's thinking — for Philo the LOGOS plays a critical role in bridging the gap between God and humanity.

What John brings to the table is the idea that the LOGOS is not just a Cosmic Principle, but that the LOGOS became a human being and 'dwelt among us, full of grace and truth'. So John's opening statement would make perfect sense — albeit astonishing — to the Alexandrian line of thinking.

Just some thoughts for your rumination.

-- 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 Dieren, Robin Edwards, Rick Rodriguez,
Katie Smith, Brad Smith, and Dave Thomas