

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
February 23, 2025 10:30 a.m. Worship



“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.” *Luke 6:37-38a*

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

MINISTRY OF VISITATION: LAURIE STAFFORD

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: CURTISS ALLEN, JR., DIRECTOR OF MUSIC;

WILLIAM ZEITLER, ORGANIST;

AMY GANO, BELLS

PASTOR EMERITUS: REV. JAMES C. HUFFSTUTLER

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 with those who rejoice, weep with 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, March 2nd.

Morning Worship†

Lector: Susan Skoglund

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

The God Jesus speaks of is not always the God we proclaim. Our human inclination is to fit God into our own small definitions, cultures, and places. But God is always breaking down the barriers we construct to keep God in or out. David L. Ostendorf, *Daily Feast*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE *God of Heaven and Earth* S. Karg-Elert (1877-1933)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTROIT *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* Johann Georg Nägeli
Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

*CALL to WORSHIP

Among the poor, among the proud,
✘ Christ walks with us.
In the temple, on the road,
✘ Christ finds us where we are.
in this place, in every place, for this time, for all time,
✘ Christ is coming to make all things new.

*HYMN 346 *For the Healing of the Nations* ST. THOMAS (WADE)

PRAYER of CONFESSION

Let us confess together as an offering
of our trust in God's love and forgiveness for us.

✘ Gracious God,
whenever we come home to you,
we realize how far we have strayed
and how much we have forgotten
of your law and your love.

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

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

**We have not loved you with our whole hearts
or loved our neighbors as ourselves.**

(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

Forgive us, heal us, and restore us to our relationship with you;
through Jesus Christ, in whom we trust.

*(We remain seated for the kyrie, an ancient song of the church. We will sing
it through in Greek first and then in English.)*

KYRIE¹

Note: Lower voices may hum,

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

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

***ALLELUIA**

William Zeitler

¹ Traditional Liturgical text. Music: Dinah Reindorf, 1987. ©1987 Dinah Reindorf. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-706254. All rights reserved.

TIME with the CHILDREN

[After Time with the Children, our children pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade are encouraged to go to Room 10 for KidSpace. Parents, please pick up your children from Room 10 immediately following worship. Infants through pre-Kindergarten may go to the Nursery at any time.]

ANTHEM

*Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether*²

H. W. Friedell

Draw us in the Spirit's tether; For when humbly, in thy name, Two or three are met together, Thou art in the midst of them: Alleluya! Alleluya! Touch we now thy garment's hem. As the brethren used to gather In the name of Christ to sup, Then with thanks to God the Father Break the bread and bless the cup, Alleluya! Alleluya! So knit thou our friendship up. All our meals and all our living Make as sacraments of thee, That by caring, helping, giving, We may true disciples be. Alleluya! Alleluya! We will serve thee faithfully.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (*The Psalter*)

No need to fret over sinners or to envy wrongdoers.

They wither like grass, they wilt like young plants.

✘ **Trust God and do good, settle down and be at peace.**

Delight in the Lord who satisfies your heart.

Give your life to the Lord.

✘ **Trust God to act on your behalf,**

To make your integrity shine forth and your justice bright as noon.

Be still, wait for the Lord.

Waste no energy fretting about the success of evil schemers.

Stop your ranting and raving, for anger begets nothing but harm.

✘ **Wrongdoers will be exiled,**

but those who wait for God will possess the land.

Soon the wicked shall vanish, you will search and not find them;

✘ **But the poor shall own the land and enjoy wealth and peace.**

The just are saved by God, their refuge in troubled times.

✘ **They seek help from God who saves and rescues them,**

Who saves and frees them from the wicked.

Luke 6: 17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were

² Text: B.R. Music: Harold W. Friedell. ©1957 The H. W. Gray Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission of OneLicense #A706254. All rights reserved.

cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. "Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Luke 6:27-38

New Testament, pg. 64

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✘ Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Blest Are WE!

Rev. Rob Stewart

HYMN 753

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

THE OFFERING of OUR TITHES and GIFTS

(We offer our tithes and gifts to be part of God's purposes in the world, and we invite you to take part. You may place your offering in the basket in front or give it to the usher. You may always send gifts 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, 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.**

*MOMENT for REFLECTION

*CHARGE and BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* *Johann Georg Nägeli*
From sorrow, toil, and pain, and sin we shall be free; and perfect love and
friendship reign through all eternity.

*POSTLUDE *Hymn*

The Rev. Rob Stewart is a retired pastor of the Presbytery of Riverside. He is Coordinator of Stonewall Ministries, an outreach of All Peoples Presbyterian Church to the Queer Community in the greater Palm Springs area. He also serves as "Covenant Shepherd" for Spirit of the Desert Presbyterian Fellowship in the Coachella Valley. Further, he is the Presbytery of Riverside's Associate for Congregations in Transition. Rob been on staff for over 25 Companions on the Inner Way retreats. He is serving on the Advisory Board.

Rob's hobbies include reading, traveling (so far: all 50 U.S. states, plus 21 countries), enjoying live theatre, singing, photography, walking/hiking, biking, swimming, and gardening.

GREETERS: Bobbie Terrell, Claudia Oakes

USHERS: Brad Smith, *Lead Usher*

Mark Adelson, Chris Thomas, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Sandy Garza, Debora Holk, Jim Huffstutler

Elders: **Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough**

Deacons: **Mindy Rueda, Kristine French, Joyce Lyons**

Pastor Nominating Committee:

Susan Addington, Mary Bolaños, John-Paul Fletcher

This Weeks' Celebrations

Feb 23 Martha Pinckney

Feb 26 Christa Wallis

Riverside Presbytery Insight Studio. Thursday, February 27, 5:00 p.m.

These virtual gatherings, held on the last Thursday of each month, are designed to be interactive, offering participants plenty of opportunities to ask questions and engage directly with guest authors. It's an honor to announce that the very first guest will be the Rev. Dr. Bruce Humphrey, the author of several notable works, including *Ministry on Fire*, *What Would Jesus Do, I am <3*, and *Once Upon a Time in Hoonah* (a memoir). Dr. Humphrey will deliver a talk on the topic of the Holy Spirit. If you would like to attend, contact the church office and we will send you the Zoom link, or you can find it in your Friday *Keeping in Touch* email.

Leonard Scholarship Applications. Leonard Scholarship applications for Fall 2025 are available in the church office and on the church website. <https://www.fpcsb.net/leonard>. All applications must be in the church office no later than NEXT THURSDAY, Feb. 27, 2025. Any questions can be emailed to Lynda Savage. Lksavage3@gmail.com

LENTEN QUIET NIGHTS ARE COMING SOON!

Ash Wednesday will soon usher us unto the Lenten Road. We want to intentionally walk toward Jerusalem with Jesus. By giving that journey our prayerful attention, our hope is that we can experience the glory of Easter more fully.

All are invited on the following Thursday evenings to gather in the Fireside Room at 6:00 PM for a half hour of quiet time interspersed with readings. The dates are **March 13, 20, 27 and April 3 and 10.**

A simple soup and bread supper, fellowship and conversation will follow. Please mark your calendar and join us!

Companions on the Inner Way, Spring Retreat. Sunday, March 23 to Friday, March 28, 2025, Companions will once again offer a safe, communal place to explore deep longings for the Holy. The retreat leader will be **Diana Butler Bass**, an award-winning author, popular speaker, inspiring preacher, and trusted commentator on religion and contemporary spirituality. The retreat is held at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu. **Registration information can be found at** www.cotiway.org. **For information about scholarships to help defray the cost of attending, please contact Christa Wallis at** chriwallis@aol.com.

We have been given a small pipe organ, built by Ron Kraft. He and Ruby have kindly donated it to our church and it will be installed in Fellowship Hall, enhancing our summer worship, and perhaps leading to some other joyful activities. The cost of installing it has been greatly discounted, but will still require about \$3,500. **If you would like to donate to this, please contact the church office.**

Per Capita Apportionment. The Per Capita Apportionment for 2025 is \$44 per member. The church will be paying this amount to support the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. It would greatly help our budget if you are able to pay this amount in addition to your regular offering.

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

In the desert city of Lenar, there was a rope-maker named Jaya who crafted the strongest ropes in the region. Her ropes secured merchant caravans, anchored desert sails, and even hoisted the palace's golden chandelier. But for all her skill, Jaya had one relentless enemy: the sand magpies.

These clever black-and-white birds stole strands from her ropes. They unraveled the fibers, cackling as they carried them away to line their nests. Jaya tried everything—nets, spikes, even painting her ropes with bitter cactus juice. The magpies always found a way.

"Thieving pests," Jaya grumbled. "If I could weave a rope to catch the wind, I'd tie you all to the tallest dune."

One evening, after hours of futile repairs, she stormed into the desert. The moon bathed the sands in silver. Jaya threw a frayed rope to the ground and shouted, "Curse you, magpies! May you choke on my threads!"

The wind shifted. From the shadows emerged a figure cloaked in sand-colored robes. "A harsh wish," the stranger said. "Are frayed ropes worth such venom?"

"They ruin my work," Jaya snapped. "They take without asking."

The figure knelt, tracing the broken fibers in the sand. "What you give in anger returns in kind," the stranger said. "What you give in kindness... well, who can say?"

Before Jaya could respond, the figure placed a smooth, amber bead in her palm. "Tie this into your next rope," the stranger said. "But choose the rope's purpose with care."

The figure vanished like a desert mirage.

The next morning, Jaya examined the bead. It shimmered faintly, as if a breeze swirled inside. Curiosity overrode caution. She wove the bead into a rope she was making for a merchant's camel harness.

That night, a furious knocking shook her door. The merchant stood outside, breathless. "What magic have you put in that rope?"

"What do you mean?" Jaya asked.

"My caravan was ambushed," the merchant said. "The bandits cut every tether—except the one with your rope. The knot held firm as steel. My camel stayed, my goods were safe." He pressed a pouch of gold into her hands. "Your ropes are beyond price!"

Word spread. Orders flooded in. Jaya grew wealthy but so did her bitterness toward the magpies. "If magic can hold a caravan," she thought, "perhaps it can do away with those thieving birds."

"I have a mind to create a magpie noose to get rid of these blasted birds!" she exclaimed.

Suddenly the robed stranger stood in her doorway. Magpies were of course cavorting around her shop, causing still more mischief.

"Why hurt the magpies when you can redirect them harmlessly instead?" With that, the stranger disappeared.

So, after some thought, Jaya wove another rope with the amber bead, this time fashioning it into a twisted, dangling labyrinth and hanging it from the rafters of her workshop. "Let's give this a try," she muttered.

The rope shimmered in the desert sun. The next morning, the magpies clustered around it, hopping from strand to strand, heads tilting as they tried to navigate its twisting patterns. For hours they played, chattering and cawing, too enthralled to steal fibers.

Jaya was astonished. "They're... playing," she murmured.

The next day, customers arrived to find the magpies still enchanted. Word of the strange rope-puzzle spread, and soon people came not just for Jaya's ropes but to see The Magpie Maze. Children giggled as they watched the birds try new paths; merchants asked if Jaya could make smaller versions as gifts. Jaya began crafting custom labyrinth ropes for courtyards and gardens.

Her business flourished as never before. More surprisingly, Jaya found herself laughing along with the visitors. The magpies were no longer thieves—they were partners in a kind of dance, their cleverness now a source of wonder rather than frustration.

One evening, as she locked her workshop, a warm breeze stirred the sands. The robed stranger stood in her doorway once more.

"I see you chose compassion over anger," the figure said.

Jaya smiled. "Turns out magpies are more fun — and profitable — as allies and not adversaries."

The figure inclined his head. "What you give freely returns tenfold, even if it wears black-and-white feathers."

And with that, the wind shifted, and the figure was gone.

--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:

Lily Bolaños, Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough, Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis, Pat Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Brad Smith, Dave Thomas, Chris Wright-Thomas, Rebecca Allen, Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda, Rick Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith, Christian Usher

In this time of change for our congregation, a Pastor Nominating Committee has been elected by the congregation:

Susan Addington, Mary Bolaños, John-Paul Fletcher, Brian Gano, Kendra Lamb, Jim Morris, Shelby Obershaw, Christa Wallis, Neal Williams