

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany
February 8, 2026 10:30 a.m. Worship



"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."
—1 Corinthians 2:10b

First Presbyterian Church

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MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT: REV. BRIAN S. SYMONDS

MINISTRY OF PASTORAL SUPPORT: REV. DR. STEPHEN W. SMITH

MINISTRY OF VISITATION: LAURIE STAFFORD

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 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.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, March 1st.

Morning Worship[†]

Lector: Phyllis Hough

REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE

"The crucified Christ is a constant reminder that our attempts, however subtle, to achieve notoriety or success are misdirected. It must be the greatest challenge for the people of God, no matter our station in life, occupation, or vocation, to constantly frame and reframe life in terms of God's call upon us and the reverse logic of the gospel. Paul's challenge is excruciatingly clear. Any attempt to rely upon human facility to justify ourselves or seek a measure of success, or gain human advantage is precisely an "old age" practice. Just about the time we think we have achieved a measure of wisdom or maturity, or our experience or life path is authoritative over another's, we find ourselves caught in Paul's trap. The only certitude that counts is absolute confidence in the cross of Christ. The only wisdom that counts is the secret hidden for all ages, God's grace revealed in the cross of Christ. The only glory that matters is the glory of God."

--Nancy Lammers Gross, *The Working Preacher* (February 5, 2023)

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE *Reflections on Jesus Loves Me* W. Zeitler
Allow the music to usher you into sacred space and time.

INTROIT *This Is the Day*¹ James Christensen
This is the day the Lord has made; Rejoice and sing to God's name.

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (*adapted from Psalm 112*)

People of God, praise the Lord!

✠ Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord, those who greatly delight in his commandments.

Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

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

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

¹ Text & Music: James Christensen. © 1983 National Music Publishers, admin. Fred Bock Music Company, Inc. Reprinted with permission under ONELICENSE #A706254. All rights reserved.

✘ **Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.**

We who gather are broken yet holy; sinners at heart, yet fully redeemed. We are God's very own, called together here this day.

✘ **Let us sing. Let us pray. Let us join together in worship. Praise the Lord!**

***HYMN 610**

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing

AZMON

PRAYER of CONFESSION

The more we know God's holiness, the more we can sense our distance from our creator. The more we seek justice and faithful living, the more we understand our complicity in systems that oppress. With humble hearts, let us confess our brokenness, our selfishness and our sin.

(Take a moment to silently name your longing.)

✘ **Gracious God, we confess that it is harder to do than we expected, this life of faith. You call us to be salt of the earth and to live lives of justice and righteousness and love. But our lives become busy. Following what others do is just easier. And sometimes the cost for doing what is right seems too high. One day, perhaps, we will commit more fully, but the status quo works better for us right now. Forgive us, we pray. Startle our senses and disrupt our routines. Renew in us the passion for doing what is right in your eyes, and inspire us to be sources of your light in the world. May we, like the prophets and the saints, act by faith no matter how high the cost.**

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

✘ **Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin?**

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

✘ **Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, 'Here I am.'"**

We are blessed to know that very light which breaks forth. We know God's love and grace through Jesus Christ.

✠ Through Christ, our sins are forgiven, and we know new life.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

(Isaiah 58:6-9)

***SUNG RESPONSE 726 *The Summons*²**

John L. Bell

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?

TIME with the CHILDREN

*[Children are always welcome in worship. There is KidSpace today in Room
10 following the Time with the Children.]*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANTHEM

*Spirit of Life*³

Jane M. Marshall.

Spirit of Life, in this new dawn, Give us the faith that follows on, Letting Thine
all pervading pow'r Fulfill the dream of this high hour. Spirit Creative, give us
light, lifting raveled mists of night; Touch Thou our dust with spirit hand and
make us souls that understand. Spirit Consoling, let us find Thy hand when
sorrows leave us blind; In the gray valley let us hear Thy silent voice: "Lo, I
am near." Spirit Redeeming, give us grace When crucified to seek Thy face;
To read forgiveness in Thine eyes Today with Thee in Paradise. Spirit of Love,
at evening time When weary feet refuse to climb, Give us Thy Vision, eyes
that see Beyond the dark; beyond the dark, that see the dawn and Thee.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:13-20

"You are the salt of the Earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can
its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is
thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.
People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather,
they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In
the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see
your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I
have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until

² Tune: Arr. by John L. Bell; © 1987, WGRG c/o Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent
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³ Text: Earl Marlatt. Music: Jane M. Marshall. ©1959 The H. W. Gray Co., Inc. Reprinted with
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heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

1 Corinthians 2:1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. But we speak God’s wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written,

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”

God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. But we have the mind of Christ.

“For who has known the mind of the Lord

so as to instruct him?"
But we have the mind of Christ.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✘ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON *On Being the Church:* *Rev. Brian S. Symonds*
 What We Know Not to Do as a Church

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.**

***PRAYER OF THANKS**

Accept these, our gifts, almighty God, as a statement of our faith. May our offering bring goodness and light wherever it is needed. May our communities of faith be bearers of your light. And may we be sources of that same light to the world in all we say and do.

✘ **Amen.**

SHARING OUT: Where have you seen the love of God shine through this community of faith this last year?

A microphone will be passed around so all can hear the responses.

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.**

***HYMN 351** *All Who Love and Serve Your City* CHARLESTOWN

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

***RESPONSE** *May the Blessing of God Almighty* *Unknown*
May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost
be upon you, and remain with you forever. Amen.

ANNUAL MEETING of the CONGREGATION

POSTLUDE

GREETER: Jeanne Clark

USHERS: John-Paul Fletcher, *Lead Usher*

Marilyn Kraft, Rick Rodriguez, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord, Brandon Turner

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Judy Steppins, Lorraine Bishop

Elders: Lynda Savage, Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark

Deacons: Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Amy Gano

This Weeks' Celebrations

Feb 8 Hannah Huffstutler Bodner

Feb 11 Carol Cooper

Tim Garcia

Feb 12 Sue Alexander

Feb 13 Nita Zwolinski

Feb 14 Eva Diane Olsen

Souper Bowl of Caring. Following the service, our youth will be holding baskets in the Narthex to collect your financial gifts or cans of food.

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held immediately after worship **TODAY, February 8th**. We will review the Annual Report, elect our new Nominating Committee, and conduct other business as needed.

Super Bowl Bake Sale. TODAY in the Fellowship Hall after worship. The amazing bakers of PW will tempt you with amazing treats to enhance your Super Bowl Experience! (Or whatever experience you do instead—we're not judging.) Helen has made her special treat, so get there early!

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***Ash Wednesday*** is approaching, inviting us to journey with Jesus as he moves with determination to Jerusalem, in spite of all the opposition he faces. Our congregation has found that Easter itself is a deeper, more profound and joyful experience when we accept the Lenten invitation. **LENTEN QUIET NIGHTS** are planned to help us be faithful to the journey. In the contemplative space of the Fireside Room, we will share prayer, readings and silence centered around the theme: ***God, Always Seeking Us.***

**WHERE:** Fireside Room

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**DATES:** THURSDAY EVENINGS: February 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26

*Please enter the Fireside Room in silence.*

***SIMPLE SOUP SUPPER.*** Simple, and simply delicious, soup and bread suppers are offered following Quiet Night services.

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Leonard Scholarship Applications for Fall 2026 are available in the church office and on the church website. All applications must be in the church office by February 28, 2026. Any questions can be emailed to Lynda Savage. LKSavage3@gmail.com

Thank you for your generous support of our food participants. Thank you for your generous donations of shelf-stable foods. A suggestion list is available at reception, and on our website. We encourage bargain shopping since all donations can be put to good use. **Currently we would especially appreciate pouches or pop-top cans of meat, fish, or fruit.**

Winter Camp will take place on the weekend of March 13th-15th. Registration begins now. We're inviting you to an awesome winter camp weekend designed just for 6th thru 12th graders! Our theme this year is ***Warm Hearts, Renewed Spirits***, and it's all about experiencing God's life-giving warmth in the middle of a cold, crazy season. You can look forward to powerful worship & messages, winter fun & chill time, real community and so much more. Call (877)285-0199 or email registration@bblccc.com for more information. Cost is \$165 per camper. Financial help is available.

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2026 Companions on the Inner Way Retreat Opportunity.

This spring, *Companions on the Inner Way* will once again offer a safe communal place to explore deep longings for the Holy. Grounded in the Christian tradition, the guided retreats incorporate body, mind, and soul through presentations, dialogue, spiritual practices, art, music, movement, and worship with Eucharist. The retreats strive to create an environment that is theologically curious, radically welcoming, and liturgically vibrant.

The retreat will take place from Sunday, March 8, 2026 to Friday, March 13, 2026 at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, California.

Registration information can be accessed at **www.cotiway.org**

Please contact Christa Wallis **chriwallis@aol.com** if you'd like to apply for a scholarship to help defray the cost of attending.

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Per Capita Apportionment. As we begin the new year, it's time once again to recall our connection to the Presbyterian Church of the USA. We and other Presbyterian congregations all over the country and beyond join together to provide the sustenance for the organization that provides structure, support, education, emergency responses, social justice outreaches, clergy care, and inspiration to us all. The PCUSA is the Mothership, and we are outposts that rely on her goodness to reach our potential!

The annual Per Capita Offering for 2026 requires that we pay \$44 for each member of our congregation to our national organization. This amount is requested from you above and beyond your regular pledge offering.

Checks should be made payable to First Presbyterian Church (please make a note on your check that the donation is for the Per Capita Offering). Thank you so much for being faithful stewards of our denomination!

Music Box

His daughter left through the east gate at the start of summer.

She had a small pack and a blue scarf. She said she would be back before the rains. They parted at the east gate, and he watched her walk down the road. She did not look back. He watched her until she grew smaller, then smaller, then gone.

After that, he came to the gate every day.

At first he came early, before the traders. He stood where she had stood. He watched. He searched the faces of everyone arriving.

The rains came and went. Weeks went by. Then months.

People learned why he was there. They nodded to him as they passed. Some spoke to him. Most did not. He did not mind.

One morning the guard did not come. The captain said, "You are always here anyway. You're the new warden if you want." He took the keys.

At first, nothing changed. He still looked only at the far road. The coming and going of others meant little. He measured the day by who did not arrive.

In time, he learned the traders. He learned the pilgrims. He learned their names. From their stories, he learned much of the world beyond the gate. When merchants argued over routes, they asked him. When a family wondered where to send their son, they spoke with him.

There were days when the gate opened and no one passed through. On those days he swept the stones, oiled the hinges, and watched from the shade.

Years went by.

A woman asked him if he was expecting someone.

He said, "I was."

She asked, "Do you still?"

He did not answer.

Later, a boy who was leaving the city for the first time asked him what lay beyond the gate.

He said, “An endless road.”

The boy asked if people came back.

He said, “Some do.”

One evening, as the light fell, a traveler asked him why he kept the gate so faithfully.

He thought of the blue scarf. He thought of the gate. He thought of the road. He thought of everyone he knew now.

He said, “Because this gate — for me — is where love ended, and began.”

— William Zeidler



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:

Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis,
Pat Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams,
Robin Edwards, John-Paul Fletcher, Jon Horstmann, Lynda Savage,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda,
Amy Gano, Rick Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith,
Rebecca Allen, Brent Nord, Dave Thomas, and Chris Wright-Thomas.