

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026

10:30 a.m. Worship



**“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took
and planted in his field.”**

Matthew 13:31

First Presbyterian Church

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MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT: REV. DR. 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, August 2nd.

Morning Worship†

Lector: Mimi Lange

REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE

The kingdom of heaven, like the mustard seed, invades the cultivated soil of our certainties and our boundaries and creates out of it all something new – “the better of the deal.” Hidden within what we think we see so clearly, it is subversive and grows up in unexpected ways until what we thought we knew is transformed and redeemed by our surprising, invasive God.

--Theodore J. Wardlaw, *Daily Feast*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Fugue in C

D. Buxtehude

*CALL TO WORSHIP

We are the church.

Wherever we live, work, and play – we are the church.

✠ We are its arms, legs, and feet, but God is the head.

We are the life of the church – in fellowship, prayer, and personal growth.

✠ We are the love God creates in the church – for all people.

We are the mission of the church.

✠ Let us worship God who calls us together as people of faith.

*HYMN 310

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

ST. THOMAS

PRAYER of CONFESSION

✠ Almighty God, you have created us free thinking people. We confess we often fall into slipshod or dishonest thinking. We turn away from questions because we do not know, or because we fear to find the answer. We regard as enemies those who reach conclusions which differ from our own. Forgive our disobedience, O God, and strengthen us in love, so that we may

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

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

freely serve you as a faithful people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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 the Response)

***SUNG RESPONSE 587**

Alleluia

CELTIC ALLELUIA

TIME with the YOUNG DISCIPLES

[After Time with the Young Disciples, children are encouraged to worship with us. There are activity bags and books available.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL MUSIC

Amazing Grace

Curtiss Allen, Jr., Tuba

William Zeitler, Organ Pedals

PRAYER for ILLUMINATION *(Psalm 19:14)*

✠ May the words of our mouths, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable, even pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 29:15-28 (CEB)

Laban said to Jacob, “You shouldn’t have to work for free just because you are my relative. Tell me what you would like to be paid.”

Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah and the younger Rachel. Leah had delicate eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and was good-looking. Jacob loved Rachel and said, “I will work for you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter.”

Laban said, “I’d rather give her to you than to another man. Stay with me.”

Jacob worked for Rachel for seven years, but it seemed like a few days because he loved her. Jacob said to Laban, “The time has come. Give me my wife so that I may sleep with her.” So Laban invited all the people of that place and prepared a banquet. However, in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he slept with her. Laban had given Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her servant. In the morning, there she was—Leah! Jacob said to Laban,

“What have you done to me? Didn’t I work for you to have Rachel? Why did you betray me?”

Laban said, “Where we live, we don’t give the younger woman before the oldest. Complete the celebratory week with this woman. Then I will give you this other woman too for your work, if you work for me seven more years.” So that is what Jacob did. He completed the celebratory week with this woman, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-50

He told another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. It’s the smallest of all seeds. But when it’s grown, it’s the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough,”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that people threw into the lake and gathered all kinds of fish. When it was full, they pulled it to the shore where they sat down and put the good fish together into containers. But the bad fish they threw away. That’s the way it will be at the end of the present age. The angels will go out and separate the evil people from the righteous people, and will throw the evil ones into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

They said to him, “Yes.”

Then he said to them, “Therefore, every legal expert who has been trained as a disciple for the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings old and new things out of their treasure chest.”

This is the word of faith that we proclaim,

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

The Kingdom of Heaven Is Different Rev. Dr. Stephen W. Smith

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

From your generous gifts to us, O God, we return this portion. Bless the gifts we bring, multiply them and use them to further your work in this, our troubled world.

- ✠ 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 370

This Is My Father's World

TERRA BEATA

*MOMENT for REFLECTION

Where have you seen or experienced Christ in this service?

*CHARGE and BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

GREETER: Linda McCarl

USHERS: Margaret Doane, *Lead Usher*

John-Paul Fletcher, *Hospitality Usher*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord, Brandon Turner

LIVESTREAM TEAM: James Welte, Kevin Lamb,
Oliver Lamb, Lynn Usher

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Lorraine Bishop, Noé Falconi, Marianna Fowles

Elders: Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis

Deacons: Joyce Lyons, Amy Gano, Rick Rodriguez

This Weeks' Celebrations

Jul 19 Linda Tiger

Jul 20 Ryan Nord

Jul 21 Donna Garza
Ezra Joseph Morales

Jul 22 Helen Babcock
Dennis & Laurie

Stafford

Jul 23 Cheryl Direen
Kevin Lamb

Jul 24 Larry Marona
Elizabeth Franklin-

Morales

Gary Saenz

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Pastor Brian is away July 20-27.

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SUMMER SOCIAL—CHANGE OF DATE. The Deacons Summer Social Event will be held on ***Sunday, August 9 right after the worship service.*** Hot Dogs, Games, Puzzles, Waterslide! Bring a swimsuit or just stay in your church clothes, and come have some fun!

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Thank you for your generous support of our food participants.

Your financial contributions have permitted us to get some staple cans in volume from Feeding America, as you can see in Fellowship Hall. (Whew! We ran out of veggies for a wee bit!) If you enjoy the gift of bargain shopping, **we still need pop-top meals-in-a-can (e.g. spaghetti-os) or pop-top tuna & chicken for non-cooking bags.**

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Your gifts make a difference. From a thank you note from Mary Beene, a Stewardship Officer for PC(USA)'s Stewardship and Development team: *I think of people here in California and around the world who need to know God's love and grace in these times. As word of the earthquake in Venezuela is making headlines, it helps me to know that when disasters strike, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is ready to help, because churches like yours have already funded their work.* (You can read the entire note on the bulletin board outside Fellowship Hall.)

Music Box

Lord, have mercy on me.

That's how David says it — again and again, in the depths of the Psalms, in sickness, in guilt, in the long nights when the walls close in. Not "have mercy" in the abstract. *On me.* A specific man, a specific ruin, asking a specific God to turn toward him and not away. Psalm 6: have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak. There is no ambiguity in the plea. The pronoun does the work a pointing finger does. *Me. Here. This one.*

Somewhere between David's plea and the dawn of the Church liturgy, the pronoun disappeared.

Walk into any liturgy east or west and you will hear it — *Kyrie eleison, Lord Have Mercy* — sung, chanted, murmured, three times, nine times, forty times in the old Byzantine rite, the deacon naming intention after intention and the people answering, always, with the same words. Lord, have mercy. And nothing else. No object. No *me*, no *us*, not even an *it*. Just the bare petition, hanging in the air of the nave like incense that hasn't decided yet where it's going to settle.

Ask a room full of worshipers what, exactly, they are asking mercy *for* — mercy *on whom* — and you will get as many answers as there are people in the pews. That's not a bug — that's a feature. It's the whole reason it survived.

Mercy on me. Fair enough — that's David's cry, and most Sundays it's probably yours too. You walked in carrying something. A diagnosis, a grudge, a fear you haven't named even to yourself.

But listen again, and the word won't stay put. Mercy on us — this congregation, muddling through another week of being human together. Mercy on our country, however it may be failing to live up to itself. And why stop at the human? Mercy on the animals going extinct without ceremony, who never asked to share a planet with a species clever enough to ruin it. Mercy on the planet itself, groaning, as Paul says, in labor it didn't choose — mercy on the universe, thirteen billion years of fire and dust, culminating in this moment, this room, and these words from a dead language, still being said and sung.

Why limit the list? Why not — all of it, at once, unedited?

Because that is precisely what the missing pronoun makes possible. David chose his object. He was one man, in one kind of trouble. But the Church, singing and saying those same words millennia later, did something almost audacious: it took the most personal cry in the Psalms and quietly removed the one word that limited it. What's left is not a vaguer prayer. It's a *larger* one — a formula built to hold every possible object of compassion the human heart, or the cosmos, could ever require, without asking us to pick just one.

It's worth noticing that not every branch of this tradition made the same choice. The Jesus Prayer of the Eastern Orthodox Church — *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner* — goes the opposite direction entirely. It re-narrows. It puts the pronoun back, deliberately, and adds a confession besides. That's not a contradiction of what the bare *Kyrie eleison* is doing; it's a different tool for a different moment. Some prayer wants to be as wide as the universe. Some prayer wants to be as small and specific as one sinner, alone, breathing in and out. The tradition kept both, because we need both — the night we can't sleep for our own failures, and the morning we look up from ourselves long enough to ask mercy for something larger than we.

So the next time we sing or say *Kyrie eleison*, Lord, Have Mercy — don't rush to fill in the blank. Let it stay open for a moment. Let it

be, all at once: you, and the stranger beside you, and the people and country outside these doors, and the creatures who have no voice to ask for themselves, and the whole spinning, wounded, magnificent world. Mercy with room enough for everyone and everything that needs it.

That's not imprecision. That's the point.

-- *William Zeidler*