

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

October 18, 2026

10:30 a.m. Worship

For I was hungry and you
gave me something to
eat, I was thirsty and you
gave me something to
drink, I was a stranger
and you invited me in...

MATTHEW 25:35

Created by World Relief

“...I was a stranger and you welcomed me....”

Matthew 25:35

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, November 8th.

Morning Worship†

Worship Leader: Mary Bolaños

Lector: Helen Babcock

“Understand that spiritual life is inseparable from practical compassion. This passage is often cited in discussions of social justice, humanitarian work, and personal ethics, emphasizing that small acts of kindness have eternal significance. By following these instructions, we as Christians are called to live out our faith through active love and service, reflecting the heart of Jesus’ teaching.” (AI Overview)

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE *Rhosymedre* *R. Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958)*

INTROIT *With a Voice of Singing* *Martin Shaw*

With a voice of singing declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia. Declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia.

***CALL TO WORSHIP** *(based on Psalm 96)*

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Everyone, even the rocks and trees, sing!

✠ **Let us shout out in praise!**

God does great things for us. See God’s amazing works all around us.

✠ **Great is the Lord!**

Tell of God’s wonders! Share stories of God’s glory.

✠ **Let us worship the Lord!**

***HYMN 15** *All Creatures of Our God and King* LASST UNS ERFREUEN

PRAYER of CONFESSION

We come to worship because we believe in the goodness of God. We have seen it. We come knowing that we don’t always bear that goodness in our lives. We have made mistakes. And so, we offer this act of reconciliation, knowing that God is good and merciful and

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

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

kind. Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sins, first in silent prayer and then together.

Moment of silent prayer

✠ Almighty God, we confess that we have not been the faithful disciples you call us to be. We have not remembered who we are. We are distracted by glittering gold. We are mesmerized by fame and fortune. We turn a blind eye to systems that perpetuate injustice. We fail to hear the cries for mercy of those who bear unfair burdens. We close our hearts and imagine empathy to be weakness. Forgive us Lord. Remind us that we are yours, citizens of the kin-dom of God. Give us courage to be kin-dom builders here and now, showing mercy and grace in a world in deep need. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Friends, hear the good news. God loves you. Even in our imperfection, God loves us and won't let us go. Know that you are forgiven and made new, sent forth to love and serve.

✠ Alleluia. Amen.

(We stand and sing the Response)

***SUNG RESPONSE 587**

Alleluia!

CELTIC ALLELUIA

Sing three times.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANTHEM

Down to the River to Pray

arr. Sheldon Curry

PRAYER for ILLUMINATION

✠ Lord, as we come to hear your Word for us, still in us all that distracts us. Open our ears to hear your Word for us, read and proclaimed. And open our hearts to be transformed to be your people, to love and serve with faithful obedience. Amen.

SHARED SERMON MOMENT

Why I Give to Christ's Church: Hospitality

SCRIPTURE Matthew 25:35-36

"...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was

naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Storyteller: FPC Food Ministry – *The Fletcher Family*

SCRIPTURE Psalm 150:3-6

"Praise the Lord with trumpet sound;
praise with lute and harp!
Praise with tambourine and dance;
praise with strings and pipe!
Praise with clanging cymbals;
praise with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!"

Storyteller: *Symphonie Jeunesse – Michéle Tacchia*

SCRIPTURE Luke 14:12-14

"He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the handicapped, the disabled, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Storyteller: Oak Tree

Storyteller: Key Essentials – *Ning Blue*

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 give your offering 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**

Generous God, all that we have comes from you. We give back in gratitude. May our gifts become beacons of hope and doors of justice and open arms of love until your kin-dom comes.

✠ Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and OUR LORD'S PRAYER

Call and Response:

We pray, saying . . .

✕ Your kingdom come, Lord, on earth as it is in heaven

***HYMN 749**

Come! Live in the Light!

WE ARE CALLED

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

Where have you seen or experienced Christ in this service?

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

RESPONSE

The Lord Bless You and Keep You¹ Peter C. Lutkin

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord lift his countenance upon you; and give you peace, and give you peace, the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you, be gracious, the Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen.

POSTLUDE

GREETER: Shelby Obershaw

USHERS: John-Paul Fletcher, *Lead Usher*

Chris Thomas, *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

Bob Saenz, Judy Steppins

Elders: Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman

Deacons: Joyce Lyons, Chris Thomas, Rick Rodriguez

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This Weeks' Celebrations

Oct 20 Robin Edwards

Oct 21 Marilyn Kraft

Oct 22 Adam Nord
Neal Williams

Oct 23 Thomas Patrick Dunn
Adelaide Shenton

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Building, Becoming, Widening - The Beloved Community FPCSB Stewardship 2026

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Pay the Pipers for Reformation Sunday, which we traditionally celebrate with bagpipes and shortbread cookies, **is only one week away!** We will have the Kevin R. Blandford Memorial Pipe Band. If you would like to help pay this cost, perhaps as a memorial to a loved one or friend, please get your offering, and the name of the person(s) you wish to honor, to the church office by **Tuesday, October 20th**.

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Reformation Sunday? Bring us shortbread cookies!

If you are able to bring shortbread for our celebration (you can make it or buy it), **please let the church office know by October 15th**, and then bring it to the kitchen before church on or before Sunday, October 25th. The church will purchase some gluten-free shortbread, so that everyone may celebrate!

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The Deacons are having a ***Fundraiser at Mimi's Restaurant*** on ***October 26- all day long***. Take a flyer (available in the reception area) with you for breakfast, lunch or dinner (or all three?) and 20% comes back to the church!

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Symphonie Jeunesse Orchestra will perform a ***Halloween concert on Saturday, October 31st at 3:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall***. The price of admission is one donation of canned food per person. Enjoy beautiful music and help the Food Program here at FPC!

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The Pastor's Book Club will meet **Thursday, November 12 at 5:00 p.m. at the Lamplighter**, 255 E. 40th Street. The book club will use scripturally provocative and institutionally controversial writings to generate real conversations with each other. The book for discussion is ***Everything Is Tuberculosis*** by John Green.

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Thank you for your generous support of our food participants.

We are using all of your helpful donations. Right now, we most need **pop-top meals-in-a-can (e.g. spaghetti-os) or pop-top or pouched tuna & chicken for non-cooking bags.**

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Available for Food Work? If yes, please contact Rick so we can add you to a list we can call when we need more workers for sorting, organizing, shelving, bagging or distributing food, photocopying and folding handouts, assembling kits, or maintaining food storage spaces. Thanks!

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Music Box

Choose an electron. Where is it?

The answer is profoundly strange.

Quantum mechanics doesn't ordinarily give us a location before we look. Instead, it gives us probabilities.

Physicists picture those probabilities as a "cloud": denser where it's more likely to be, thinner where it's less likely.

At first, this sounds like ordinary ignorance. Suppose I flip a coin and cover it with my hand. We say there's a fifty-percent chance it's heads. But the coin itself isn't uncertain — under my hand, the coin knows whether it's heads or tails. I'm the one who doesn't know because I haven't peeked yet.

Common sense would suggest an electron is the same way. It really is somewhere inside its cloud, and we just don't know where, hidden by a "cosmic hand."

That would be reassuring.

Unfortunately, quantum mechanics has spent the last century refusing to be quite so reassuring.

Experiments following the work of physicist John Bell have ruled out this common-sense understanding.

Where is it before we peek?

Perhaps the most common answer among quantum physicists is: nowhere in particular—it “collapses” into a particular location the moment we peek.

The other answers are, if anything, even stranger.

What exactly happens in the moment of peeking remains a matter of contentious interpretation. What isn't disputed is that the equations work spectacularly well. Countless experiments have made quantum mechanics some of the most thoroughly tested and verified science humanity has ever accomplished.

Regardless of the interpretation, prepare the same quantum state many times and measure the electron's position. One peek finds it here. Another finds it there. Another somewhere else.

Each peek gives us something definite.

But no single peek is the electron cloud.

{{SELAH}}

Seven centuries before quantum mechanics, an anonymous English monk wrote about another cloud.

He called it The Cloud of Unknowing.

His subject was not electrons, but God.

His startling proposal was that at some point in seeking God, thinking harder doesn't get us any closer. Our concepts, definitions, images, even our theology must finally give way before something they cannot contain.

Not because thinking is bad.

Because God is beyond thought.

Meanwhile, something rather interesting happens when we encounter that Cloud.

It collapses.

Not God, but our CONCEPTION of God.

One encounter collapses into “Father.”

Another into “Mother.”

Another into “Judge.”

Another into “Shepherd.”

God is terrifying.

God is tenderness itself.

God is the presence that filled a hospital room.

God is the absence that lets Job suffer.

God speaks.

God is silent.

These aren't mistakes. That's important.

There's a kind of theology called apophatic (ah-poh-FA-tic): the truest statements about God may be not what God IS, but what God ISN'T.

Some say that apophatic theology is trying to make “unknowing” into a sophisticated way of saying we can't know anything.

But the author of The Cloud of Unknowing isn't describing an absence of encounter. He's describing how to enter one.

The mistake comes when we take what emerged from one encounter and assume we know what will happen in the next.

We encounter God as X, and that dominates our understanding.

Then we “peek” at the Cloud again.

And it collapses somewhere we did not expect.

Perhaps this is why genuine encounters with God can sometimes unsettle theology rather than confirm it. We expected consolation and encountered absence. We expected judgment and encountered mercy. We expected an answer and encountered silence.

Or the reverse.

Each encounter gives us something real.

And each encounter makes it harder to pretend that the reality we encountered can be constrained by what we learned from it.

The Cloud doesn't mean that nothing can be known.

It means that every encounter leaves the Cloud even larger than we thought.

That's the paradox: encounters can simultaneously increase our knowledge and enlarge the mystery. Somehow, knowing more can leave us with more to wonder about, not less.

Perhaps this is one difference between a puzzle and a mystery.

Solve a puzzle, and the unknown gets smaller.

Encounter a mystery, and the opposite happens.

The more deeply we know another person, the more we discover they're larger than we thought. The more deeply we explore a piece of great art, the more we find there. The more closely we examine the universe, the stranger it becomes.

Perhaps God should be allowed at least as much room.

Every encounter collapses the Cloud into something we can genuinely know.

Here.

Now.

This.

And then, if we are willing to look again—
the Cloud is still there.

Even more mysterious.

-- 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.