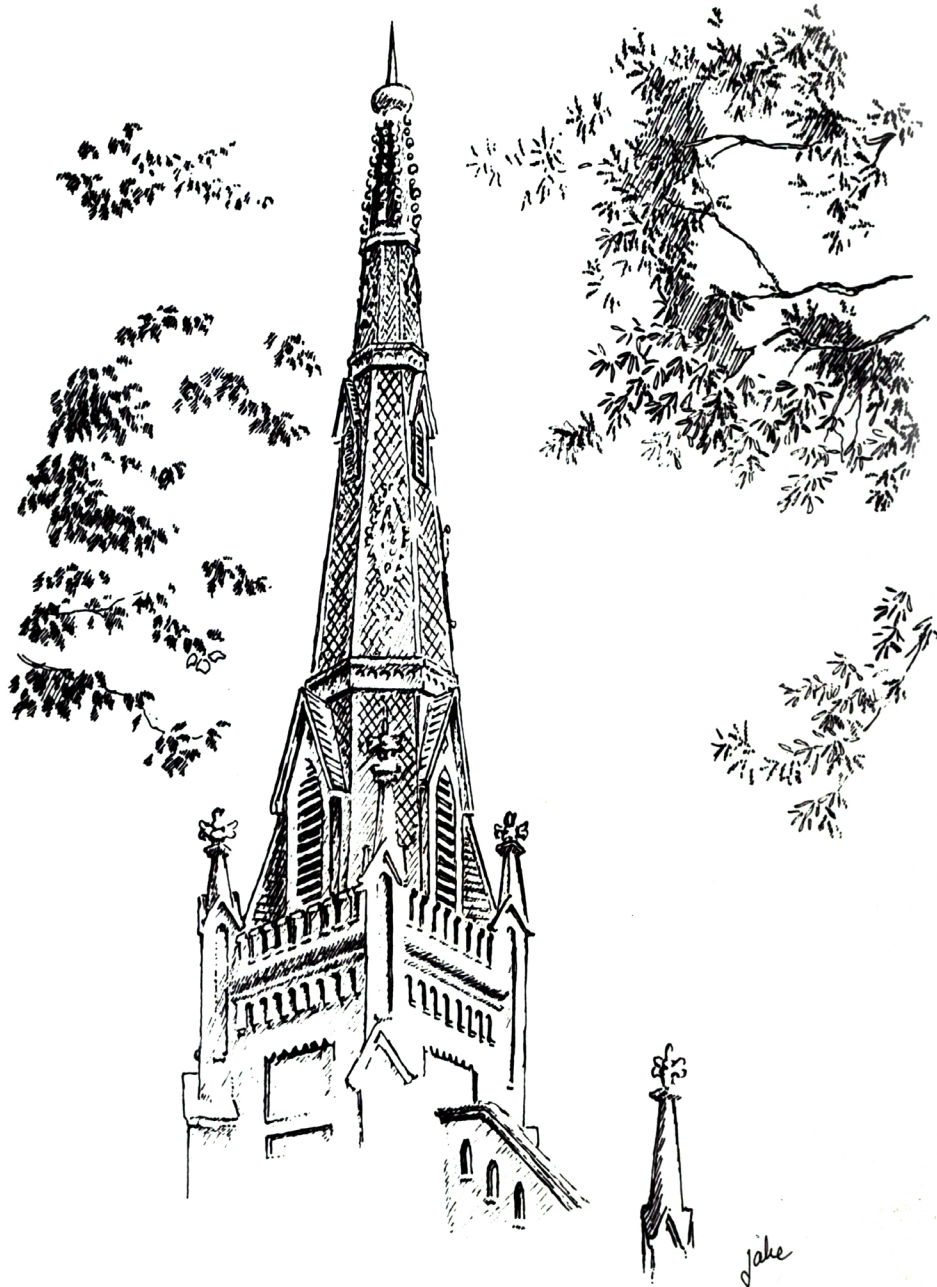


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | MARCH 23, 2025
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT



We invite you, whoever you are and whoever God is helping you to become, to join First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte in our journey of faith. God is love, and that love is for you. You belong as a child of God, and we welcome you. Come experience how that belonging might change you and our world as we seek to be for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.



First Presbyterian
Church of Charlotte

Time of Quiet Meditation and Reflection | Silence begins in the Chapel at 8:50 a.m.

Words of Welcome | Reverend Mary Margaret Porter

Opening Prayer | Adapted from *The Worship Sourcebook*

Holy and loving God, as we worship you today, we long for your Spirit to both comfort and challenge us, to help us become more holy and more loving.

In a world that does not understand repentance, we pray for new understanding, humility, patience, and discipline that will help us die to sin, and live as Christ's disciples.

We ask that you journey with us, O holy God, as we continue our way to the cross.

Sharpen our focus, that our attention may center more on you than ourselves.

Lead us through the shadows of darkness and prepare our hearts, that we might be a people of prayer, ready to perceive and respond in grace and love.

Lord God as we pause for reflective prayer, we ask for the grace to recognize where we need to change, the courage to seek your forgiveness, and the strength to live as bearers of your love. May this time of silent reflection open our hearts to your invitation—to turn back, to trust in your mercy, and to walk in the way of righteousness. Amen.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Meditative Music | “Kyrie Eleison” | Monks of the Abbey of Notre Dame

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Prayer for Illumination | *The Worship Sourcebook* | Selina Malherbe

First Scripture Reading | Joel 2:12-18

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Scripture Reading | Luke 13:1-9 | Sally Billington

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.”

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.'"

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | "The Cost of Following Jesus: Repentance" | Reverend Mary Margaret Porter

Moment of Reflection

Offering

The Christian life is marked by the offering of one's self to God to be shaped, empowered, directed, and changed by God. In worship, God presents us with the costly self-offering of Jesus Christ. We are claimed by Christ and set free. In response to God's love in Jesus Christ we offer God our lives, our gifts, our abilities, and our material goods for God's service. The offering plates are located at the back of the chapel if you are interested in giving regularly as a spiritual practice.

Invitation to the Table

Meditative Music | "This Fragile Vessel" | Praise and Harmony Singers

This fragile vessel You have made
No hand on earth can fill
For the waters of this world have failed
And I am thirsty still

Chorus:

We can be worthy of His love, wisdom and mercy
Take this bread and wine
As we share His cross and crown
Receive the grace sent down

I seek the treasures of Your love
It's not that far to see
I heard a melody above
A gift from You to me

Chorus

To save what's lost from heaven He came
His presence still remain
Open our eyes to His precious blood
Because it's not in vain

Chorus

Prayers of the People and The 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.

Sacrament of Communion

To receive the gluten-free bread and the cup, come forward, take a piece of bread, and then dip the bread into the cup. It is still communion if you prefer to take only the bread. Please do not drink out of the cup directly. If for any reason you prefer not to come forward, please raise your hand and the officers will be glad to serve you in your pew.

Prayer of Thanksgiving | *The Book of Common Worship*

God of compassion, we praise you that you look upon our frail lives with love and understanding, and that you desire for us all new life in Jesus Christ. We are overwhelmed by your love, which goes to the cross for us, endures the grave, and leads us to new life. By your Spirit, strengthen our souls to be brave and bold in Christ's service. Take our offerings, and use them and us for your purposes, in the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. Amen.

Charge and Blessing

We have been fed by the presence of God in the silence, by the Word, and through communion. Please feel free to greet one another in a warm and quiet way that allows an easing out of the silence. The minister is available for prayer or conversation after the service. Sunday School begins at 9:45 a.m. If you would like to visit longer with other members, you are invited to gather in the Welcome Center.

Transcripts for the Contemplative Service can be found here: <https://firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons/>



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