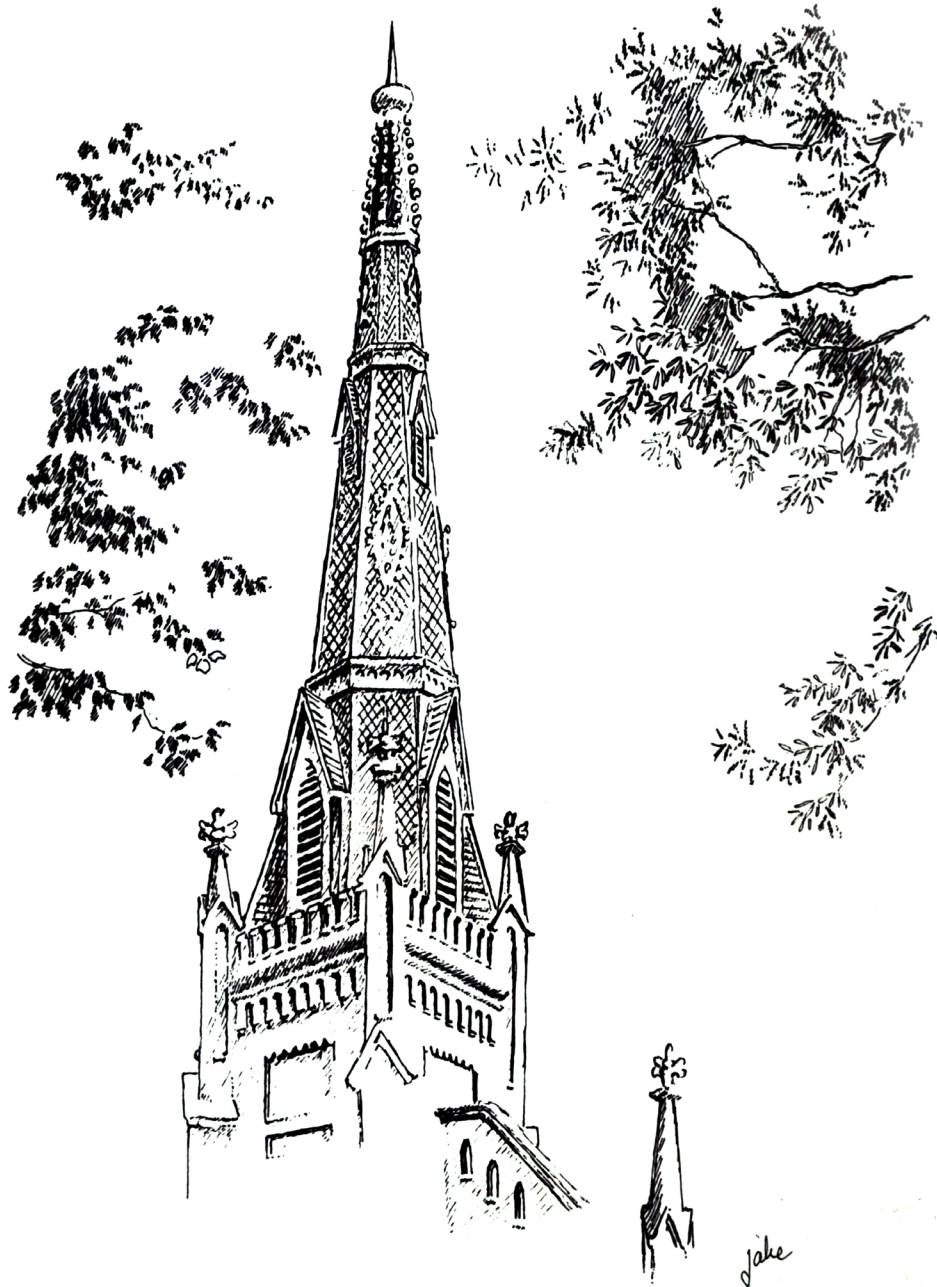


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | MAY 18, 2025
FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



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 Bowman

Opening Prayer | Adapted from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

O Christ, you are risen from the dead, and you have allowed us to rise with you. May our life never deny this resurrection gift, this peace and hope and joy. Praise and glory to the God of life who is stronger than all kinds of death.

We long to be your Easter people and yet we find that we embody both light and darkness, goodness and evil, selfishness and selflessness. Help us to understand that your way of light and life and love is only possible when we are walking closely with you, for it is only your grace, mercy, and love that can dismiss the darkness, forgive the evil, and diminish our selfishness.

As we come back again to your word of resurrection, will you help us to forgive the hurts done against us and help us to forgive the hurts we have inflicted on ourselves, on others, and on you? As we rest in your presence, we open ourselves to you again, we pause and name the things that are preoccupying us, isolating us, or simply hard to carry.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Forgive us and heal us, O God.

Help us to follow you more closely, O Christ.

Hold us close, O Spirit.

Amen.

Meditative Music | "Oh the Deep Deep Love of Jesus" | Audrey Assad

Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me.

Underneath me, all around me
Is the current of His love
Leading onward, leading homeward to
Thy glorious rest above.

Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me
And it lifts me up to glory
For it lifts me up to Thee.

Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Spread His praise from shore to shore
How He loveth, ever loveth
Changeth never, nevermore.

Prayer for Illumination | Ann Burton

First Scripture Reading | Isaiah 40:25-31 | Adapted from New Living Translation

"To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One. "Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? God brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of God's great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. O Jacob, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. God never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Scripture Reading | Matthew 18:21-35 | Adapted from J.B. Phillips New Testament | Elise Barksdale

Then Peter approached Jesus with the question, "Master, how many times can my brother wrong me and I must forgive him? Would seven times be enough?"

"No," replied Jesus, "not seven times, but seventy times seven! For the kingdom of Heaven is like a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When he had started calling in his accounts, a man was brought to him who owed him millions of dollars. And when it was plain that he had no means of repaying the debt, his master gave orders for him to be sold as a slave, and his wife and children and all his possessions as well, and the money to be paid over. At this the servant fell on his knees before his master, 'Oh, be patient with me!' he cried, 'and I will pay you back every penny!' Then his master was moved with pity for him, set him free and cancelled his debt.

"But when this same servant had left his master's presence, he found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a couple of dollars. He grabbed him and seized him by the throat, crying, 'Pay up what you owe me!' At this his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and implored him, 'Oh, be patient with me, and I will pay you back!' But he refused and went out and had him put in prison until he should repay the debt.

When the other fellow-servants saw what had happened, they were horrified and told their master the whole incident.

Then his master called him in. "'You wicked servant!' he said. 'Didn't I cancel all that debt when you begged me to do so? Oughtn't you to have taken pity on your fellow-servant as I, your master, took pity on you? And his master in anger handed him over to the gaolers till he should repay the whole debt. This is how my Heavenly Father will treat you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | "Kingdom Parables: The Story of the Unforgiving Servant" | Reverend Mary Bowman

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 | "There's A Wideness in God's Mercy" | Kate Higgins

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.
 There's a kindness in His justice, which is more than liberty.
 There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good.
 There is mercy with the Savior, there is healing in His blood.
 There is no place where earth's sorrows, are more felt than up in heaven;
 There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given.
 There is plentiful redemption, in the blood that has been shed;
 There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.
 For the love of God is broader, than the measure of the mind;
 And the heart of the Eternal, is most wonderfully kind.
 If our love were but more faithful, we should take Him at His word;
 And our life would be thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord.

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

All are welcome to participate in 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 | Adapted from Steve Garnaes-Holmes and Peter Greig

O Giver of all that is good, we are deeply grateful for this time of worship.

Even amid a broken world, we humbly dare to be grateful, because your presence abides with us; your mercy sustains us; and your grace empowers us. May our gratitude be restless, until all are included.

May this day bring Sabbath rest to our hearts and our homes. May your image in us (and others) be restored and our imaginations in God be re-storied. May we know grace to embrace our own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness. May we have eyes to see those around us as sisters and brothers in our human family and may we offer them the care of family.

As we take a sabbatical from this service, may your words feed us and your Spirit lead us into the week and into the life to come. Amen.

Charge and Blessing

"A Gaelic Blessing (Deep Peace)" | John Rutter | The Cambridge Singers

Deep peace of the running wave to you;
Deep peace of the flowing air to you;
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you;
Deep peace of the shining stars to you;
Deep peace of the gentle night to you;
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you;
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ – of the light of the world to you;
Deep peace of Christ.

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.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Joyce T. Blue, July 5, 1925 - May 13, 2025

This service is now available via livestream on a trial basis this spring. You can access the recording of the service or an audio or written version of the sermon at: <https://firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons/>



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TO GIVE



GIVE
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