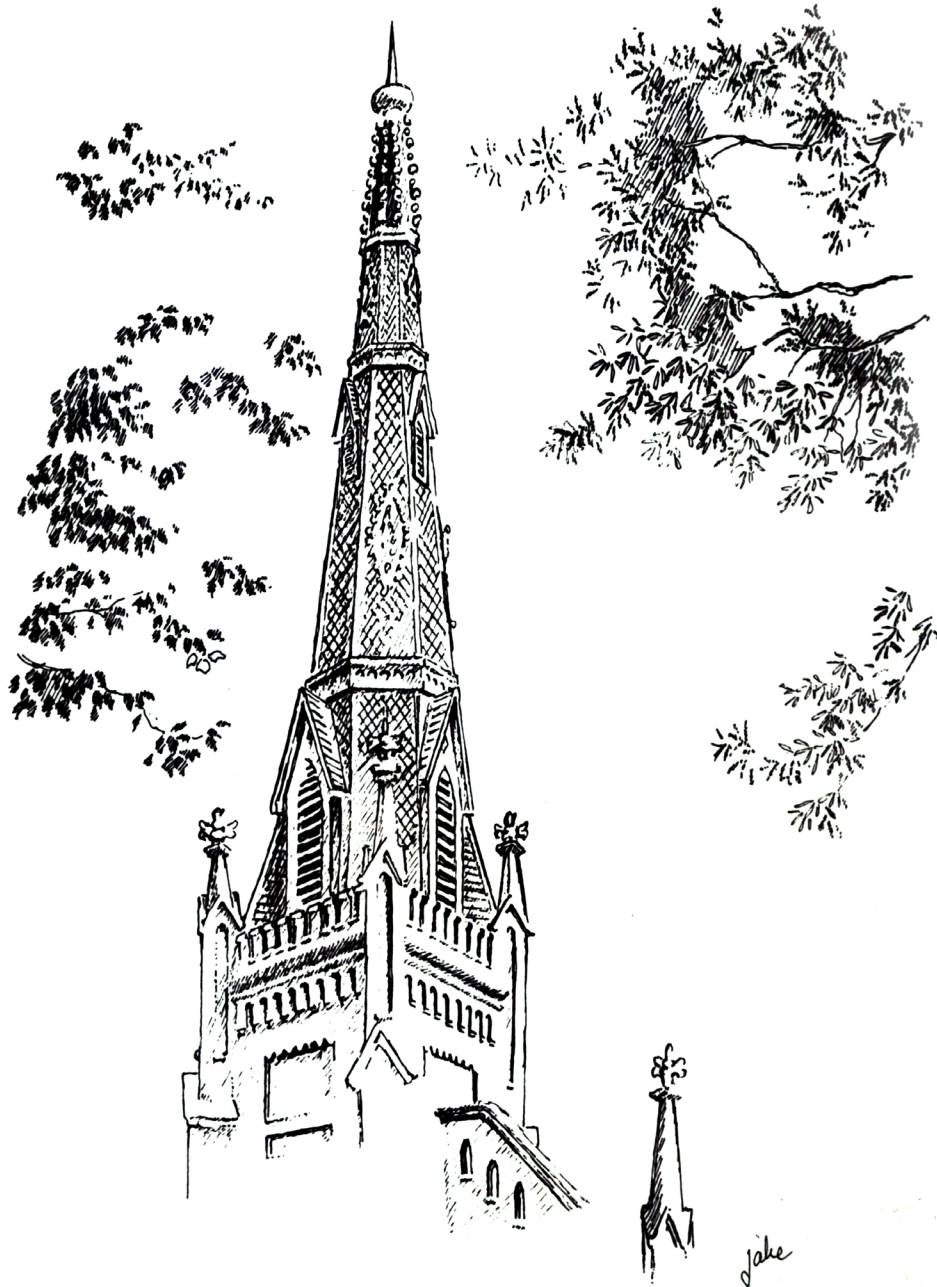


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | SEPTEMBER 7, 2025
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



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

*“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”
- Augustine of Hippo*

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 Howard Thurman

Dear Lord, as we come into this place for worship, open unto us . . .

Open unto us—light for our darkness.

Open unto us—courage for our fear.

Open unto us—hope for our despair.

Open unto us—peace for our turmoil.

Open unto us—joy for our sorrow.

Open unto us—strength for our weakness.

Open unto us—wisdom for our confusion.

Open unto us—forgiveness for our sins.

Open unto us—love for our hates.

Open unto us—thy Self for ourselves.

Lord, as we pause to name those things that have pulled our gaze from you, we ask that you would open us anew to your love, your forgiveness, and your active presence in our lives.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Lord, grant us your peace, resurrect our hope, and mend us with your forgiveness. Amen.

Meditative Music | “Be Thou My Vision” | The Cambridge Singers | City of London Sinfonia | John Rutter

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;

Be Thou my best thought in the day and the night

Both waking and sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word

Be Thou ever with me, and I with Thee, Lord;

Be Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son (child);

Be Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;

Be Thou my whole armour, be Thou my true might;

Be Thou my soul's shelter, be Thou my strong tower:

O raise Thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;

Be Thou mine inheritance now and always;

Be Thou and Thou only the first in my heart:

O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, Thou heaven's bright Sun

O grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;

Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall

Still be Thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayer for Illumination | Claire Tate

Old Testament Reading | Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 | Adapted from New Living Translation

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down and hurries to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; round and

round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. All things are wearisome, more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing or the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in the ages before us. The people of long ago are not remembered, nor will there be any remembrance of people yet to come by those who come after them.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

New Testament Reading | Matthew 5:1-12 | *The Message* | Susan Krebs

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

"You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | "What in Life is Trustworthy?" | Reverend Mary Bowman

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 | "Shalom" | Beckenhorst Singers | Dan Forrest

Peace. Peace. Shalom. Peace I leave with you; peace I give to you.

Peace. Peace. Shalom. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. (*Repeated*)

Not as the world gives, I give to you. Do not be afraid. Shalom. Peace. Peace. Shalom. (*Repeated*)

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

O Gracious God, we give you thanks for all of the ways that you give our lives meaning. We thank you for the purposes small and large that knit together our lives. We thank you for being trustworthy - knowing that your faithfulness is from everlasting to ever lasting. We thank you for the gift of your word and sacrament that helps to heal our hurts, kindle forgiveness, and re-center us in you. In Christ's holy name. 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.

This service is now available via livestream. 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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