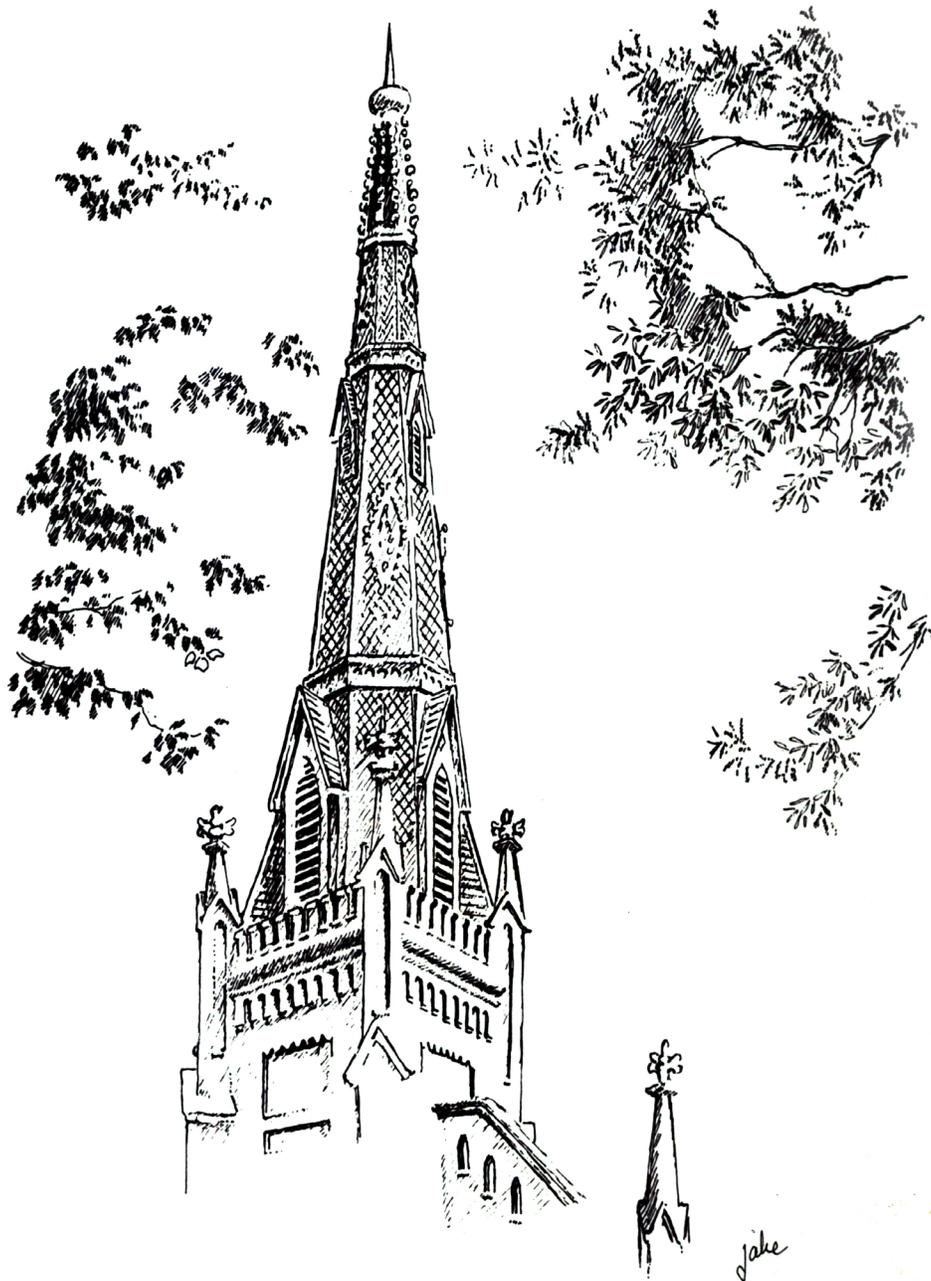


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | MARCH 8, 2026
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 | Mary Bowman

Opening Prayer | Adapted from Andrew Peterson

O Gracious Lord, we echo the words of the psalmist who said, "I was glad when they said let us go to the house of the Lord" for it is here in the seeking of you that we are found.

We enter this worship space carrying a variety of things. We are grateful that we can lay before you the things that are heavy, that are overwhelming, that are confusing, that are unsettling and trust that you will meet us in our need.

As we take time to silently name what we are carrying, help us to release them or give them to you so we can be open to what you have for us during this time of worship.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Free us from the discouragements of today – bring us your hope.

Free us from the weariness of today – give us your rest.

Free us from the doubts of today – resurrect your faith.

Free us from the wounds of today – bring your healing.

Free us from the sins of today – grant us your forgiveness.

Aware of our need, we turn to you, grateful for your presence, your love, and your grace. Amen.

Meditative Music | "How Deep The Father's Love For Us" | Selah

How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure;
That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.

How great the pain of searing loss; The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.

Behold the Man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.

It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished.
His dying breath has brought me life; I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything: no gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ; His death and resurrection.

Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer.
But this I know with all my heart: His wounds have paid my ransom.

Prayer for Illumination | Susan Krebs

First Reading | Romans 5:1-11 | NET

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory. Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Reading | Luke 7:36-50 | NET

Now one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. Then when a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil. As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." So Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." He replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed him 500 silver coins, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then, turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting, but from the time I entered she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Meditative Music | "Drop, Drop, Slow Tears" | Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650) | The Cambridge Singers & John Rutter

Drop, drop, slow tears, And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from Heaven the news and Prince of Peace:
Cease not, wet eyes, His mercy to entreat;
To cry for vengeance sin doth never cease.
In your deep floods drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let His eye see sin, but through my tears.

Meditation | The Good News: "The Power of Acknowledging Our Need for God" | 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** | "More Love to Thee" | Fernando Ortega

More love to Thee, oh Christ, more love to Thee!
Hear, Thou, the prayer I make, on bended knee.
This is my earnest plea; More love, oh Christ, to Thee.
More love to Thee, more love to Thee! More love to Thee, more love to Thee!
Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest.
Now, Thee alone I seek, give what is best.
This all my prayer shall be; More love, oh Christ to Thee.
More love to Thee, more love to Thee! More love to Thee, more love to Thee!
Then shall my latest breath, whisper Thy praise.
This be the parting cry, my heart shall raise.
Still all my prayer shall be; More love, oh Christ to Thee.
More love to Thee, more love to Thee! More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

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 *The Blue Book: A Devotional Guide to Every Season of your Life* | Jim Branch

Father, thank you for the gift of communion with you through worship and through the table. Forgive us when we think that life is more about what we are doing, then about who we are becoming. Help us to remember that more than anything else you want our hearts. Allow us to give them to you fully, that we might receive yours in return, changing us more into the likeness of your Son Jesus. In his name we pray. 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.

IN LOVING MEMORY

The sympathy of the congregation is expressed to Page Rogers upon the death of her mother, Syble Balentine Carson, on February 27, 2026.

It is meaningful when members help lead worship. If you would like to be a reader or help with the music for the Contemplative Service, please sign up using this link: fpc.tiny.us/contemplative-readers

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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PRAYER
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TO GIVE



GIVE
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