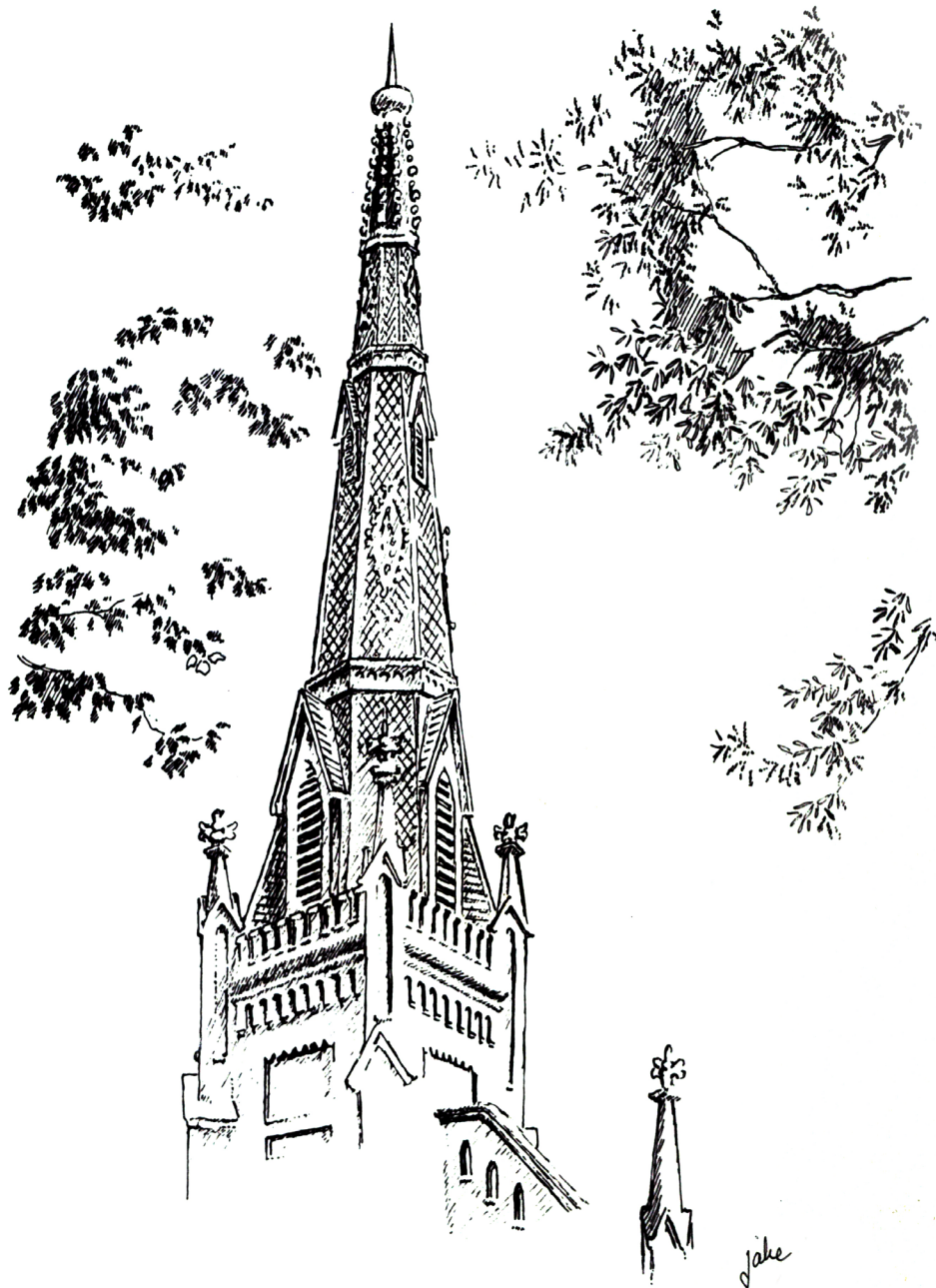


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | MAY 3, 2026
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

“Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy.”

-Thomas Merton

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

Words of Welcome | Mary Bowman

Opening Prayer | Angela Ashwin

Lord, may we bear the fruits of your Spirit:

give us love,

that boundless, healing energy which transforms the world;

give us joy,

because no darkness or evil can overcome you;

give us peace,

to quiet our hearts, and to free us from bitterness;

give us patience,

to go on following you even when it is hard;

give us kindness,

to reach out to our neighbour and to the person who needs to be loved;

give us goodness,

to give with a generous heart and without ulterior motive;

give us faithfulness,

to stay at your side, come what may;

give us gentleness,

to respect the freedom and integrity of others;

give us self-control,

to see our weaknesses and overcome them in your strength.

Lord, may we bear the fruits of your Spirit.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Forgive us and heal us, O God.

Help us to follow you more closely, O Christ.

Breathe in us anew, O Spirit. Amen.

Meditative Music | “Dwell Among Us” | Salt of the Sound

Keep moving and living and breathing in us,
Keep working and singing and speaking through us.

You dwell among us, You dwell among us;

You dwell among us, dwell among us. *Repeated.*

With all this life I long to see,

More of You and less of me.

Lord, send Your Spirit here to work in us. *Repeated.*

And dwell among us, please dwell among us.

And dwell among us, dwell among us.

You dwell among us, You dwell among us.

You dwell among us, dwell among us.

Keep moving and living and breathing in us.

Prayer for Illumination | Addison Ayer

Old Testament Reading | Psalm 121 | The Message

I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.

He won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep. Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep.

God's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you—Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from moonstroke.

God guards you from every evil, he guards your very life. He guards you when you leave and when you return, he guards you now, he guards you always.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

New Testament Reading | Galatians 5:1, 13-25 | The Message | Marcia Dixon

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are contrary to each other, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom. But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.

Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | "Come, Holy Spirit: Fruits of the Spirit" | 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 | “May Today There Be Peace Within” | Saint Therese of Lisieux | Sung by Francesca LaRosa

May today there be peace within.

May you trust (God) that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith in yourself and others.

May you use the gift that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content with yourself, just the way you are (knowing you are a child of God).

Let this knowledge (presence) settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

May today there be peace within. *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.

Closing Prayer | Adapted from *The Book of Common Worship*

O Gracious God, help us to go out into the world in peace; to have courage; to hold on to what is good; to return no one evil for evil; to strengthen the fainthearted; to support the weak, and help the suffering; to honor all people; to love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. 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/>



VIRTUAL
CONNECT
CARD



PRAYER
REQUESTS



TEXT
TO GIVE



GIVE
ONLINE