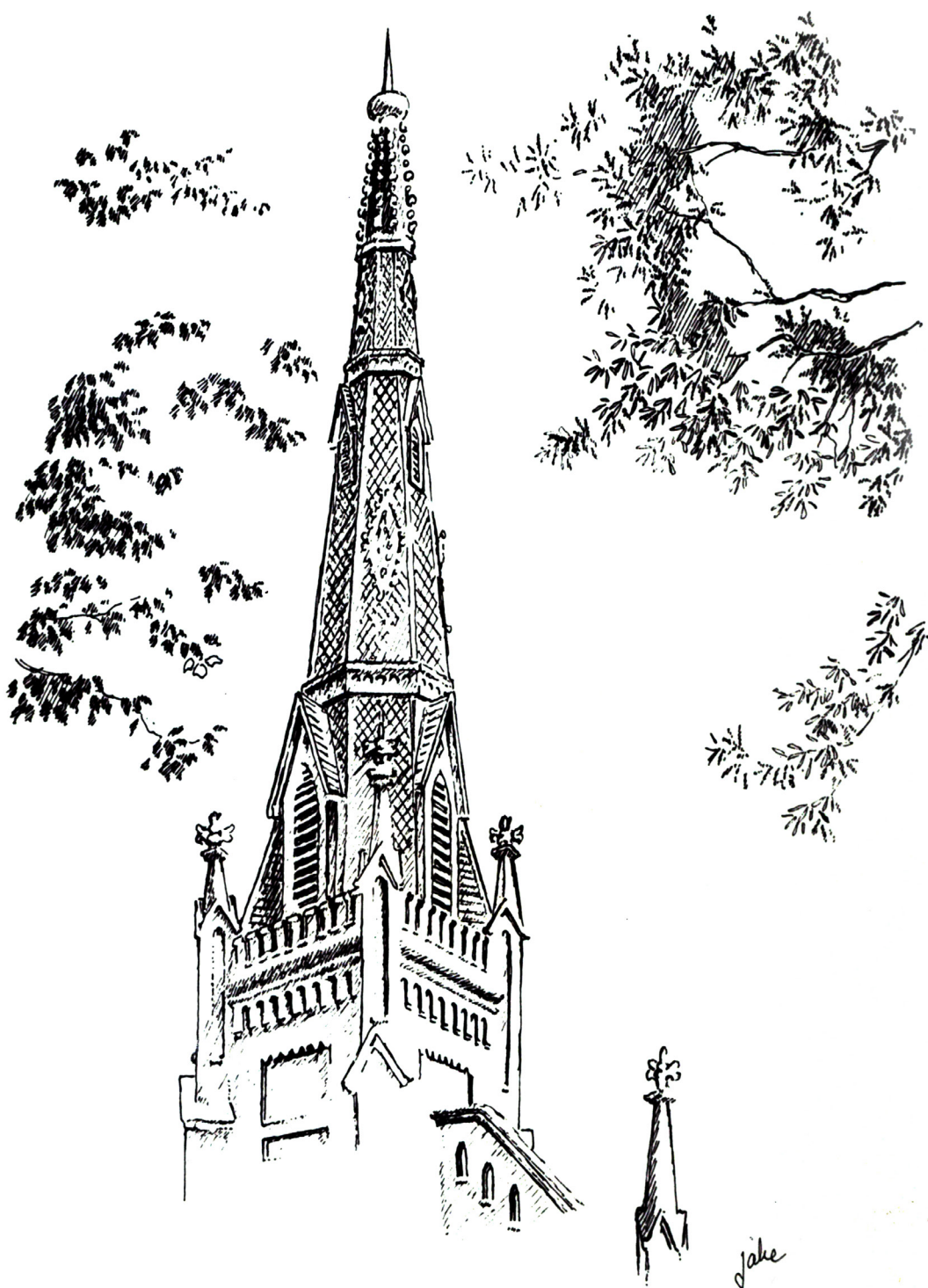


CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP SERVICE

First Presbyterian Church

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



SEPTEMBER 20, 2026
9 AM WORSHIP



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



"If knowing answers to life's questions is absolutely necessary to you, then forget the journey. You will never make it, for this is a journey of unknowables-of unanswered questions, enigmas, incomprehensibles, and most of all, things unfair"
- François Fénelon

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 Andrew Peterson

O Eternal God, we give you thanks for the gift of worship in this place and the opportunity to be in your presence and in your love. We acknowledge as we enter this place, that some of us are encumbered by burdens, some caught up by distractions, some weighed down by our shortcomings, some filled up with worry and anxiety, and some carrying deep wounds. We long to be truly open to you in our time of worship and ask that you help us to set down what is heavy, to give to you what is hard, and to accept the forgiveness that you offer. As we take time to silently name what we are carrying, help us to release them to you so we can be open to what you have for us in this space.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

Meet us, O Christ, in the stillness of morning worship. Move in us, O Spirit, to quiet our hearts. Mend and forgive us, O Father, from past harms. Amen.

Meditative Music | "O God, You Search Me" (Psalm 139) | Bernadette Farrell

*O God, you search me, and you know me; All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I walk or lie down, you are before me; 'Ever the Maker and Keeper of my days.*

*You know my resting and my rising; You discern my purpose from afar
And with love everlasting, you besiege me; In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.*

*Before a word is on my tongue, Lord; You have known its meaning through and through
You are with me beyond my understanding; God of my present, my past and future, too.*

*Although your Spirit is upon me; Still I search for shelter from your light
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you; Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.*

*For you created me and shaped me; Gave me life within my mother's womb
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you; Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.*

Prayer for Illumination and First Reading | Jonah 1 | Scott Wallace

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. Then the sailors were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up; call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish."

The sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, "Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" "I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Then the men were even more afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet



down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you." Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Reading | Jonah 2 | Elise Barksdale

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called to the Lord out of my distress, and God answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?' The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God. As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the Lord!" Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | Wisdom from the Minor Prophets (Jonah): Life's Storms — From Order to Disorder" | 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 | "Oceans (Spirit Lead Me)" | Liv Harland

*You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep, my faith will stand.*

REFRAIN:

*And so I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
Where oceans rise, my soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours, and You are mine.*

*Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fears surround me
You've never failed and You won't start now. REFRAIN*



*And, Spirit, lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters, wherever You would call me
And take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior. [Repeated] REFRAIN*

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 | Basil the Great

O Lord, our God... steer the ship of our life to yourself, the quiet Harbor of all storm-stressed souls. Show us the course which we are to take. Renew in us the spirit of docility. Let your Spirit curb our fickleness; guide and strengthen us to perform what is for our own good, to keep your commandments and ever to rejoice in your glorious and vivifying presence. Yours is the glory and praise for all eternity. 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.

About Today's Service



Welcome

Scan the QR code to fill out our Virtual Connect Card to help us get to know you.

Prayer Requests

Submit a confidential prayer request at
fpc.tiny.us/virtualprayer

Digital Offerings

This service is available via livestream on our website. A recording and a written transcript of today's sermon will be available on Monday afternoon at **firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons**

Ways to Give

In Person

The offering plates are located at the back of the chapel if you are interested in giving regularly as a spiritual practice.

Give Online

fpc.tiny.us/give

Text to Give

Text "givetofpc" to 73256



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In Loving Memory

We join our prayers with the family of Colleen Cook and her family upon the death of her mother, Donna Lynn Hillier, on September 13, 2026.