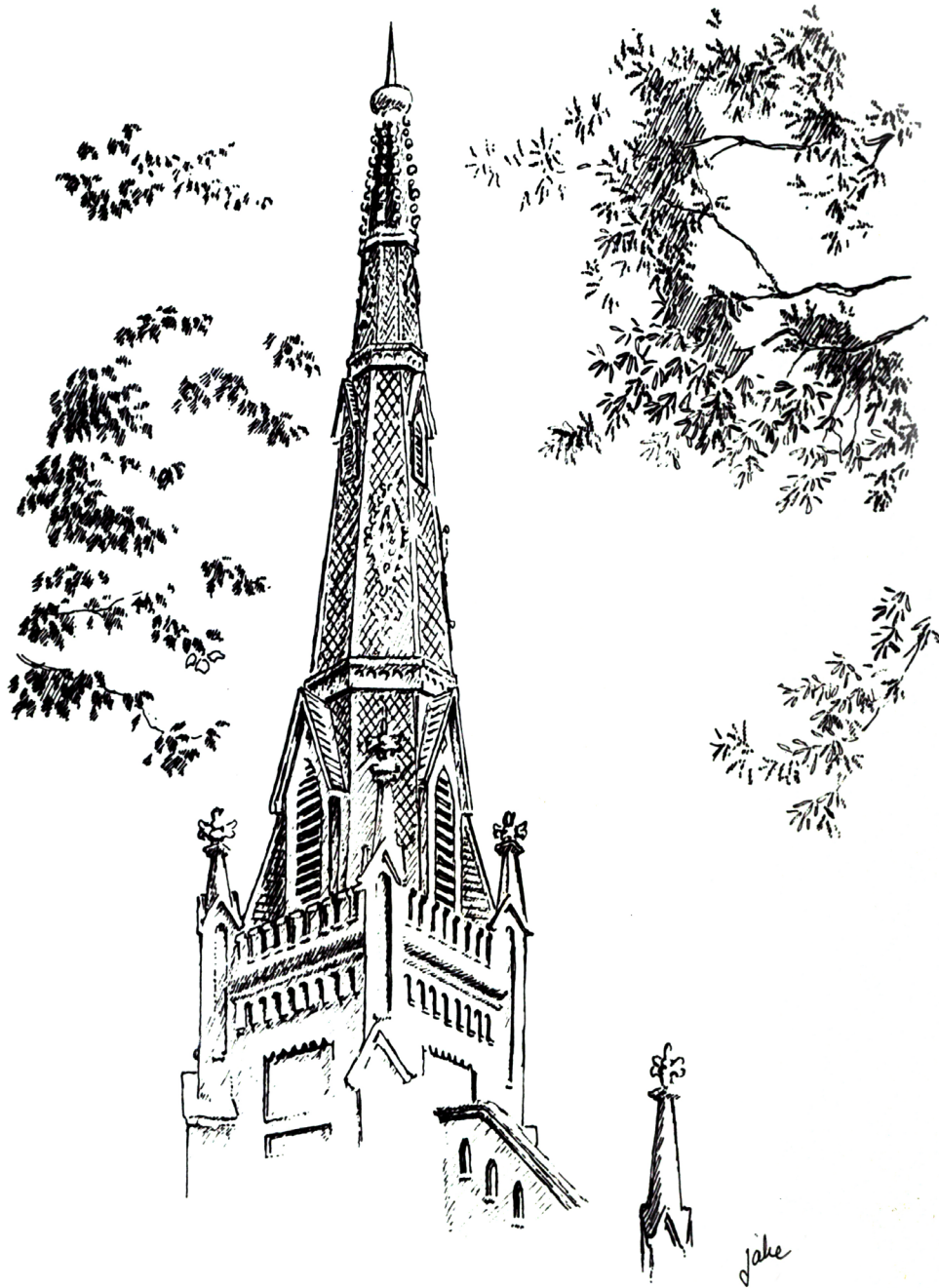


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | JANUARY 14, 2024
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY



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

Invocation

Gracious God, in this Epiphany season that celebrates Your manifestation and Your light, help us to be recognizers of and hearers of You — Your presence, Your actions, Your healings, Your redemptions, and Your still small voice. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

Meditative Music | Come Thou Long Expected Jesus | Fernando Ortega

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone;
by Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.
By Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne

Prayer for Illumination | Selina Malherbe

First Scripture Reading | Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love. He destined us for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight He has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of Him who accomplishes all things according to His counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in Him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of His glory.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

New Testament Reading | Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what was customary under the law, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now You are dismissing Your servant in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel. And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about Him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Jesus' mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too." There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a

great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When Mary and Joseph had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon Him.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | “Early Recognizers of Jesus: Simeon and Anna”

Moment of Reflection

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

God of Grace, we are grateful for the opportunity to continue to listen for Your voice and to watch for Your movements in our lives. It is all too easy for us to be the center of our lives, instead of following You. Please open us to acknowledging the ways that we need Your forgiveness, Your redemption, and Your healing. Walk with us in Your light.

Moment of Reflection

O Lord, we ask that You forgive what we have been and done, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. We receive Your forgiveness with grateful hearts, and we commit to the work of extending it to others. Amen.

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 | Nearer, My God, to Thee | Libera

Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to Thee;
nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee.
Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God, to Thee;
nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee.
Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,
still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to Thee;
nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee.
nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer 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

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

Holy and Eternal God, thank You for Your nourishing presence in our worship and at Your table. Help us to live our lives as listeners and as responders to Your generous and active presence in our lives and in the world. May we always carry Your light. In Christ's 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.

Announcements

Sunday Readers

The leadership provided by lay members is an important part of the 9 a.m. service. If you are willing to be a reader, please scan the QR code below to sign up. We appreciate your considering leading worship in this way!

Town Hall Meeting

January 14, 12:15 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Learn more and ask questions about recent Session decisions regarding the church's staffing structure and endowment funds.

Adult Sunday School: Gospel Passages

January 7 – February 4, 9:45-10:45 a.m., S203 + Zoom
Pattie Cole and Zoom - Revs. Becky and John Hart lead an exploration of passages in the Gospel of John from "the Word made flesh" through life-changing encounters with Jesus that reveal who he is.

Plowshares Book Club: "Elusive Grace: Loving Your Enemies While Striving for God's Justice"

January 21, 12:15 p.m., P212 Frances Browne Dining
Join FPC's book club for lunch and a discussion of "Elusive Grace." The author will join us for part of the discussion. Books will be available for purchase (\$10) today after worship. Register for the discussion using the QR code below.



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