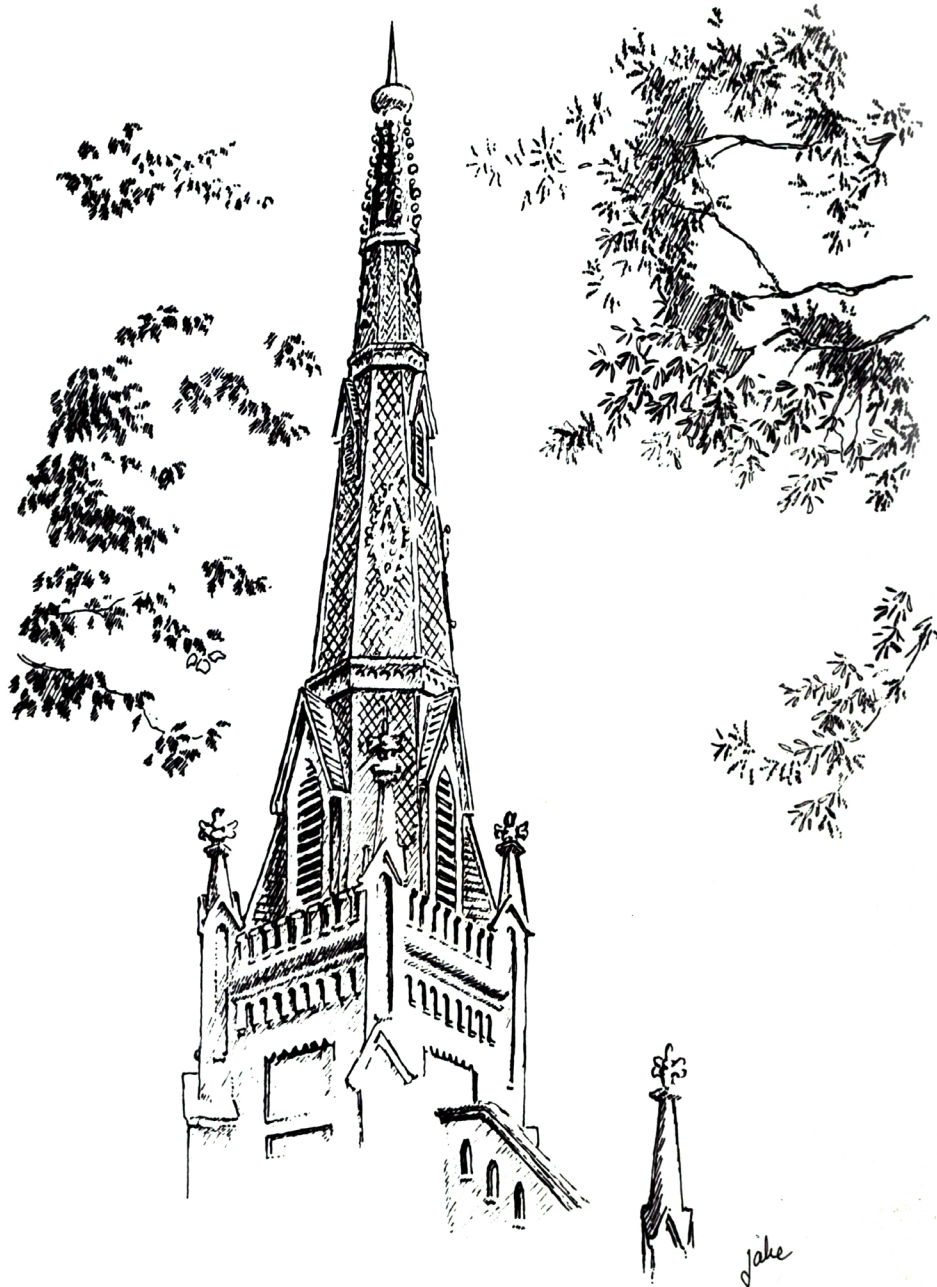


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | JANUARY 26, 2025
THIRD 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

Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. - James 4:8

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

During our series "Seeking the Sacred Unseen," you may like to begin your worship with this breath prayer as you breathe in and out in the silence. Written by Christine Valters Paintner.

Breathe in: *What you seek*

Breathe out: *also seeks you.*

Breathe in: *Rest*

Breathe out: *and let it find you.*

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 and courage for our fear.

Open unto us—hope for our despair and peace for our turmoil.

Open unto us—joy for our sorrow and strength for our weakness.

Open unto us—forgiveness for our sins and wisdom for our confusion.

Open unto us—thy love for our hates and 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

Open our eyes, O Christ.

Open our hearts, O Spirit.

Open all of us to you, O Father God.

Amen.

Meditative Music | "Look At The World" | The Cambridge Singers | John Rutter

Look at the world; Everything all around us
 Look at the world; And marvel every day
 Look at the world; So many joys and wonders
 So many miracles; Along our way.

Refrain:

*Praise to thee O Lord for all creation
 Give us thankful hearts that we may see
 All the gifts we share and every blessing
 All things come of Thee.*

Look at the earth; Bringing forth fruit and flowers
 Look at the sky; The sunshine and the rain
 Look at the hills; Look at the trees and mountains
 Valley and flowing river; Field and plain.

Refrain

Think of the spring; Think of the warmth of summer
 Bringing the harvest; Before the winter's cold
 Everything grows; Everything has a season
 'Til it is gathered to the Father's fold.

Refrain

Every good gift; All that we need and cherish
 Comes from the Lord; In token of His love
 We are His hands; Stewards of all His bounty
 His is the earth and His the heavens above.

Prayer for Illumination | Elise Barksdale**First Scripture Reading** | Acts 9:3-18a

Now as Saul was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Scripture Reading | Acts 17:22-28a | Kelly Graves

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | "Seeking the Sacred Unseen - Through Contemplation" | 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 | “Open Thou Mine Eyes” | Messiah College Concert Choir

Open Thou mine eyes and I shall see;
 Incline my heart and I shall desire;
 Order my steps and I shall walk
 In the ways of Thy commandments.

Repeat

O Lord God, be Thou to me a God
 And beside Thee let there be none else,
 No other, naught else with Thee.
 Vouchsafe to me to worship Thee and serve Thee
 According to Thy commandments
 In truth of spirit, In reverence of body,
 In blessings of lips, In private and in public.

Refrain repeated

Prayers of the People and The Lord’s Prayer (Centering Prayer Version)

Our Father, who is in heaven, Holy is Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our sins, as we forgive the sins of others, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and forever. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

To receive a blessing with water, please come forward to a minister. 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 Book of Common Worship*

God of compassion, we praise you, that you look upon our frail lives with love and understanding, and that you desire for us all new life in Jesus Christ. We are grateful that you send your Spirit to teach us and guide us and transform us into your image. We are overwhelmed by your love, which goes to the cross for us, endures the grave, and leads us to new life. By your Spirit, tune our eyes and our hearts to the whispering of your wisdom as we live each day. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. 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.

Transcripts for the Contemplative Service can be found here: <https://firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons/>



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REQUESTS**



**TEXT
TO GIVE**



**GIVE
ONLINE**