



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Established 1817

A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Building Community ▪ Transforming Lives ▪ Engaging the World

19 September 2021

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Trusting that God's grace embraces and makes covenant with all believers, First Presbyterian Church intends to be an inclusive place of spiritual growth for all people. All persons are welcomed into this fellowship and membership regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic or racial identity, economic or educational status, or political affiliation.

Order of Worship

Prayer of Preparation

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961)

*Give me a pure heart—that I may see Thee,
A humble heart—that I may hear Thee,
A heart of love—that I may serve Thee,
A heart of faith—that I may abide in Thee. Amen.*

Welcome

Chiming of the Trinity

Prelude

Be Still, My Soul

arr. J. Tonioli

Introit

There Is a Balm in Gilead

African American
spiritual/Costen

*Call to Worship

When the world around us seems to be shaking,

God's love is our foothold, which shall not be moved.

When the life within us is dry and parched,

God's word is our wellspring, our fount of living water.

Let us worship the One who offers us wisdom
and teaches us how to serve.

Let us worship God!

Anthem

Praise, I Will Praise You, Lord

Frayssé

Confession

**You told us, O Lord, that whoever wants to be first
must be last and servant of all.**

**Oh, how we long to be first, O God: to climb every ladder,
frame every achievement,
get every promotion, and obtain every glory.**

**Oh, how we long to be first, O God,
and oh, how we dread being last.**

Forgive us, humble Christ. By your forgiveness teach us.

Teach us to reframe our priorities.

Teach us to be servants first,

and to let our lives flow from a heart of faith. Amen.

Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Summary of the Law

Matthew 22:37-39

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

(11am) Children’s Moment

Marianna Dunn

Hymn 175, verse 1

**Seek ye- first the kingdom of God and its righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Allelu, alleluia!**

*2nd grade children or younger may depart for Children’s Worship
and Wonder in the Ministry Center*

Hymn 175, verse 2

**Ask, and- it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find;
Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you.
Allelu, alleluia!**

Prayer for Illumination

Lesson

Proverbs 31:10-31

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight

***Affirmation of Faith** from A Brief Statement of Faith (1991)

**We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God
and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the church.**

The same Spirit

**who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,**

**engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.
With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

***Hymn 839** *Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!* Crosby/Knapp

(11am) New Member Welcome

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

The flowers in the Sanctuary this morning are given by Barbara and Tim Lubsen to the glory of God and with thanks for Tim's treatment and excellent recovery, and also in honor of our parents, Jay Thomas and Leona Stewart, and John Andrew and Georgiana Lubsen.

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Benediction

Postlude

Agnus Dei

Michael W. Smith

If you have not already done so, please place your offering in the marked offering box nearest the exit you use. We look forward to seeing you again next week.

The Session has approved a special offering for Hurricane Ida Relief. If you would like to give to this simply note "Hurricane Ida Relief" on your check or in the notes for electronic giving.

Liturgist: The Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray

Pianist: Cindy Sutton

Ensemble: Members of the Resurrection Singers

WELCOME VISITORS! Please write your name on a visitor's badge for your blouse or lapel. Along with our members, please sign the Friendship Pad when passed to you during the service.

CHILDREN are welcome at First Presbyterian Church. Beginning at 9:30am the nursery is available for infants and preschool children in room 1.23 in the Ministry Center. Following the Children's Moment, those in the 2nd grade or younger may depart for Children's Worship and Wonder in the Ministry Center. For all children in worship there are worship bags available at the front and back of the Sanctuary.

RESTROOMS are available in the Ministry Center, (including a family restroom), the Session House, and the Fellowship Center.

HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES with ear coverings are available. Please ask an usher if you have need.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY is provided by ramps between the Ministry Center and the Sanctuary, in back of the Ministry Center, along the side of the Session house, and at the front and side entrances of the J. Murphy Smith Fellowship Center.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Called Congregational Meeting

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, September 26, at 10:40am in the Sanctuary for the purpose of hearing the report of the Nominating Committee regarding nominations for the 2024 Class of Elders, a replacement for a seat in the 2023 Class of Elders, and the 2022 Nominating Committee.

Fellowship Café Open for Fall

Join us from 9:30 until 10:45am in the Fellowship Café (on the first floor of the Ministry Center) for a cup of coffee, a bite or two, and to renew your church friendships, or stop by and grab a coffee on your way to Sunday School!

Youth Fellowship

JOY (Just Older Youth) for 6-12th graders and SALT (Serving And Learning Together) for 3-5th graders meets today, 5:30-7:30pm in the Session House. Contact Marianna (marianna@firstpresnb.org) for more information.

Crop Walk

The First Presbyterian CROP Hunger Walk Team is now forming! Donations will be received in the courtyard after worship each Sunday, starting September 12. Walkers may also register for the walk at that time. The walk is scheduled for Sunday, September 26th. Team turn in/registration begins at 2:00 PM at the gazebo at Union Point Park. The walk steps off at 3:00 PM.

You also may register or donate by visiting the team's website at the address below:

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/first-pres-new-bern>

The CROP Hunger Walk is an outreach of Church World Service. 25% of funds raised remain in the community with our hunger partner – Religious Community Services. CWS is active combatting hunger and its causes across the globe. Come walk with us!

Serve at Religious Community Services Soup Kitchen

Members and visitors at First Presbyterian Church New Bern consider whether you might be able to fit in several morning hours, one time, or more than once if it feels right to you, to volunteer at the RCS Soup Kitchen.

For those who are not yet familiar with it, RCS is at 919 George Street, and includes an emergency shelter, a food pantry, a Clothes Closet, and the Soup Kitchen. Our church has actively supported the organization, financially, and through volunteerism, since its inception in 1982.

Our commitment at this time is for a team of five to be in their kitchen from 8:00am-noon, once or twice a month. Our days are the second Monday of each month, and in any month that has a fifth Thursday. During those times, we assist the cook in the preparation

of a nourishing meal. This commitment was fulfilled in the past year, by a small group of people of faith, who helped prepare, then pack, the meals "to go". At this point, the meals are still packed to take out. However, as soon as it is deemed safe, the diners will be welcomed back into the relatively new dining room. When that time comes, our teams may need to be larger. We often served 70 to 200 hot meals. If your faith, and your benevolent spirit, lead you to want to try this even once, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Prudence Wing, Volunteer Coordinator from First Pres New Bern to RCS, 1-207-457-5535

House Churches

Every year in September/October the House Churches of First Presbyterian begin to meet again. This is a long-standing ministry of the church, and it is a wonderful way to connect with old and new friends in the church. If you have not been attending a house church, we hope that you will consider it!

Here is how House Churches work: Groups of around 10-25 people meet monthly for good food and faith-full conversation. Some House Churches are hosted in different homes each month and some meet in the same place -- at the church (in the Session House or in the Fellowship Café), or at a restaurant or local gathering place. House Churches meet for around an hour and a half to two hours. There are currently 13 House Churches (and there is always the possibility of new house churches forming). They meet on different weeks of the month, different days of the week, and at different times during the day.

If you would be interested in joining an existing House Church (or maybe trying a different House Church to meet new people), please contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org). Don't miss out on this opportunity for a delightful time, where new friends are made, and existing friendships are deepened!

Education

**Sunday School classes meet Sundays 9:40-10:40am
The Nursery will be open at 9:30am.**

Sunday School for Children

Children and Teachers are asked to wear masks in the classroom.

Preschool – Ministry Center room 1.24 (God Loves Me – 52 story books)

Kindergarten-5th Grade – Ministry Center room 1.27 (Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living)

Middle & High School – Ministry Center room 2.23-24 (Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living)

Sunday School for Adults

TheoEd Talks/Jim Copland and Beth Paul – Ministry Center room 2.21 (large center classroom on the second floor of the Ministry Center)

This new Sunday School offering is a place to land for parents of youngsters, young couples, and young adults. It will be a place to develop friendships, share about this unique stage of life we are in, and delve into some thought-provoking discussions about topics of faith. Each week we will view a TheoEd talk (think a TED talk on a topic of faith) with a discussion to follow. To learn more about TheoEd talks visit <https://theoed.com/watch>. For questions contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org).

Getting Involved with God: Wrestling with the strange and sacred Scripture of the Old Testament/Maren Sonstegard-Spray – Session House Main Room

If you have ever struggled with the reading and understanding the Old Testament, or if you have ever wondered how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament, come join us. We will be guided by Ellen Davis's book "Getting Involved with God" and John Goldingay's book "Do We Need the New Testament," among others. No need to buy a book (unless you want to!). Bring your favorite translation of the Bible with you.

The Present Word/George Evans – Session House Parlor

The class is studying the series "The Present Word class: Call in the New Testament." Please contact George Evans (gkevans4@gmail.com) with questions. The book is available in the church office.

Church Membership Class/Anna Straight – Ministry Center Conference Room (in the Staff Office Suite)

Whether you have been worshipping with First Presbyterian for one Sunday or one hundred, we'd welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what it means to be a part of a church community-what it might mean for you to take the joyful, faithful step of becoming a member of First Presbyterian Church.

To help facilitate these conversations we have scheduled classes to be held on **September 19** during the Sunday School hour with the opportunity to join and be welcomed in worship on the 19th (at 11:00) or the 26th (at 8:30).

If these dates don't work for you, please get in touch with Anna so we can add you to the list for the next time we have these gatherings or so we can meet and find a pathway and timeline that works for you (anna@firstpresnb.org or 252-637-3270).

Mid-Week Formation Opportunities

Monday Evening Women's Bible Study

The group will meet on Mondays from 7:00-8:30pm, starting with a hybrid arrangement – those comfortable meeting in person at the Ministry Center conference room, and those not yet comfortable attending online via Zoom at the same time. Join us as we accompany Amy-Jill Levine, one of our favorite authors and teachers, and author of "The Difficult Words of Jesus," as she guides us through that struggle to a place of greater understanding of what it is that our Lord is requesting of us. For more information, call Wendy Moeller 252-876-7259 or Marice Debruhl 252-637-5468 or Cathy Wingfield 828-767-0975.

Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study

Our Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study meets 10-11am by Zoom. We meet weekly and we are going to read together "The Difficult Words of Jesus" by Amy-Jill Levine. The book is available for purchase on Amazon (kindle version also available). If you need help acquiring the book or want to be added to the email list for the class, please contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org).

Sunday Afternoon Men's Beer and Theology led by Ken Wilkins at Brewery 99 (1014 Pollock St) at 4pm TODAY. This will be a causal men's gathering for fellowship and conversation around topics of theology and faith.

Life of Prayer: The Practice of Contemplative Living

Led by Lloyd Griffith and meets in Ministry Center room 2.21 and by Zoom in a hybrid format to begin the fall. The group will be studying "Soul Force" by Lloyd Griffith and "Immortal Diamond" by Richard Rohr.

Wednesday Evening Contemplative Worship

Led by Lloyd Griffith and meets in the Chapel in the Ministry Center. This contemplative, or reflective, approach to worship is offered each Wednesday from 5 to 5:30 pm in the Chapel. This quiet service is focused on silence, prayer and reflection on the Biblical text chosen for preaching the coming Sunday. The Lord's Supper is observed on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Come when you can and bring a friend.

Presbyterian Women's Circles

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary - Matthew names these women for a reason. How might Jesus have heard the stories of his grandmothers? What might the stories of these women have added to his sense of identity, as part of a particular family in a particular time and place? Our small group Circles will be studying "What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus" by Meryll Blair. Circles will begin meeting in September so look on the church website under Presbyterian Women for meeting times: firstpresnb.org/pres-women

Welcoming Tip of the Month

Offering more than a smile and hello to those you don't know well sometimes requires moving beyond discomfort. It might be embarrassing to mistake a seasoned member for a newcomer-- or introduce yourself a second time! This act of courage can be worthwhile, though, because it might offer you the chance to get to know a bit of someone's story. It's ok to be assertive and to own the fact that you "aren't sure we've talked before." Look around the Sanctuary, classroom, or courtyard for someone you can get to know better.

First Presbyterian Church identifies itself as a welcoming community of faith and intends to be an inclusive place of spiritual growth for all people. The Welcoming Committee over the months will be offering you tips to strengthen the hospitality of our congregation.

Nametags

As more of the congregation is returning to worship in person after not seeing one another in quite a while AND to help Anna become acquainted with the congregation, we want to encourage everyone to get in the habit of wearing your nametags again! If you have misplaced yours, Marcy, our Office Administrator, is happy to make you another one (marcy@firstpresnb.org). There is a board in the Narthex where you can leave your nametag at the end of the service, and it will be waiting for you the next Sunday.

Notes: