



A Choice, Lauren Wright Pittman, used with permission of the artist.

5 September 2021
15th Sunday after Pentecost

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Established 1817

A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
Building Community ▪ Transforming Lives ▪ Engaging the World

The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Anthem *Heaven Shall Not Wait* Bell/Maule/Iona

Confession

God of favor, we have not been true to you. You have chosen the poor in the world, but we have dishonored them. You plead the cause of the afflicted, but we crush them. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have favored the rich and despised the poor. We have dismissed the needy with empty words. Soften our hearts and make straight our ways. Heal our unbelief and turn us back to you. 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.’”

Prayer for Illumination

Lesson

James 2:1-26

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

Sermon

The Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray

***Affirmation of Faith**

from A Declaration of Faith (PCUSA 1991) Chapter 8(4)

God sends us to exercise compassion.

In his concern for justice in the social order, God has never forgotten the needs of individuals. In the end, the Lord will judge all persons by the simple, unremembered acts of kindness they did or failed to do for the least of their sisters and brothers. We acknowledge God is at work here and now

when people show personal concern for each other and work to make helping agencies, including the church itself, more compassionate. We believe God sends us to risk our own peace and comfort in compassion for our neighbors. We are to give to them and receive from them, accepting everyone we meet as a person; to be sensitive to those who suffer in body or mind; to help and accept help in ways that affirm dignity and responsibility. We must not limit our compassion to those we judge deserving, for we ourselves do not deserve the compassion of God.

***Hymn 320** *The Church of Christ in Every Age* Green/Knapp

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

The flowers in the Sanctuary this morning are given to the glory of God and in the loving memory of Betty and Clarence Marshburn by their family.

Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer

O Lord, plead our cause. **Your name is good.**

Benediction

Postlude

Hymn to Joy

Schwartz

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

The Session has approved a special offering for Haiti Relief.

If you would like to give to this simply note “Haiti Relief” on your check or in the notes for electronic giving.

Prayers reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word Worship Companion. Copyright 2014.

Organist: Vance Harper Jones

Ensemble: Members of the Daybreak and Sanctuary Choirs

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nursery Open

The nursery is available for the 11 am service (from 10:30 am-noon) for children, infants through second grade. Starting on September 12th, the nursery will be available during Sunday school, starting at 9:30 am.

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 the Fellowship Café), or 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!

Join the Choir

We always have a place for new singers in each choir, so please consider joining us. The experience will enrich your worship, and you will be giving a gift to God that only you can give.

If you have questions, contact Pat Rowlett Tuesdays or Thursdays at the church office (252-637-3270) or email pat@firstpresnb.org.

Daybreak Choir: open to Sr. high youth and adults. 8:30 service. 5:15 pm starting Sept. 9.

Sanctuary Choir: open to Sr. high youth and adults. 11:00 service. 5:15 pm starting Sept. 9.

Resurrection Singers: youth and adults, 1 Sunday/month Rehearse one Thursday a month at 5:15 pm. Choir Room Beginning Sept. 16

(Contact Susan Mabie if you are interested, 252-638-4773.)

Crop Walk

Mark your calendars for the 41st CROP Hunger Walk in New Bern. The walk will take place Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021, starting at Union Point Park. Donations and sign-ups for the walk will take place after worship services starting September 12. CROP Hunger Walks are community-wide events sponsored by Church World Service (CWS) and organized by local congregations or groups to raise funds to end hunger at home and around the world.

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 8:00 am-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

Education

Sunday School classes meet Sundays 9:40-10:40 am starting on September 12th! Starting September 12, the Nursery will be available starting at 9:30 am.

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 storybooks)

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

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

We began this class in January of 2020 and had to pause because of COVID. We will return to our study of the Old Testament with a lot of review of what we covered already! If you have ever struggled with 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

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 12 and 19** during Sunday School 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 starting back Monday, September 13

Join us Monday evenings from 7-8:30 pm starting September 13th 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. Meeting details will be decided the week before pending the Covid situation in New Bern.

Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study starting back Thursday, September 16

Our Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study meets 10-11 am 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 4 pm on Sunday, September 19. This will be a casual men's gathering for fellowship and conversation around topics of theology and faith.

Life of Prayer: The Practice of Contemplative Living Beginning Wednesday, September 15, noon-1pm 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

Beginning Wednesday, September 15, 5-5:30 pm 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.

Grief Support

Grief Support will resume on Tuesday, September 14 at noon in the Chapel. This group voluntarily provides its members who have lost a loved one with hope and understanding, as well as support and guidance as we navigate together through this murkiest of times. The group members provide lessons learned, helpful hints, or just a listening ear because they have experienced the same kind of hurt and pain that others simply can't understand. This group is a vessel where we grow from receiving support to feel called to provide that support to others who are in this transition. We hope you can join us. Bring your lunch or snack if you choose. Call the church office for more information.

Presbyterian Women's Circles

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary – The book of Matthew names these women for a reason. How might Jesus have heard the stories of his grandmothers? What might the young Jesus have felt as he heard about his family? 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 Merryl Blair. Circles will begin meeting in September so look on the church website under Presbyterian Women for meeting times:
www.firstpresnb.org/pres-women

Rothermel Lecture Series

The Rothermel Foundation lecture series, following an 18-month hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, will resume on Sunday, October 3, 2021. The lecture will be held in the Sanctuary of the church at 2 PM. The speaker is Rabbi Arnold E. Resnicoff of Washington DC. A Viet Nam combat veteran and a career chaplain in the US Navy, Rabbi Resnicoff has titled his lecture “Keeping Faith: Religion in the Military in War and Peace.” Attend the lecture to see faith enduring through the brutality of war, and how

the chaplaincy can be used to help society. For questions concerning the lecture, contact Dave Duane at 252-671-9345.

Youth Ministry

Youth Group Kicks Off on Sunday, September 12 at 5:30 pm

We will be hosting a Youth Group Kick-Off Family Event on Sunday, September 12. Marianna will be sending more information via email to our families regarding the details of this event! We can't wait to kick off another great year of youth! Contact Marianna (marianna@firstpresnb.org) for more information.

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 their 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:

*Trusting that God's grace embraces and makes a 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.*