

WORSHIP OF THE LIVING GOD

† Those who are able are invited to stand

Bold indicates words spoken in unison

Thank you for silencing your electronic devices.

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

An order of worship offers a meaningful and reliable structure for the church’s encounter with the living God. Over time, an order of worship helps to shape our faith and faithfulness as the people of God, becoming a pattern for how we live as Christians in the world.

PRELUDE

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Roberta Rowland-Raybold

Teresa de Freitas

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Lara Musser Gritter

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Josh Musser Gritter

Adapted from Psalm 31

In you, Lord, we take refuge;
let us never be put to shame;
deliver us in your righteousness.
Be merciful to us, Lord, when we are in distress;
when our eyes grow weak with sorrow,
and our souls and bodies with grief.
Our times are in your hands;
deliver us from the hands of our enemies,
from those who pursue us.
Praise be to the Lord,
who shows us the wonders of God's love
when we are a city under siege.

† HYMN #307

God of Grace and God of Mercy

CONFESSION OF SIN

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive what we have been, 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. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

† RESPONSE #581

Glory Be to the Father

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, amen.

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Maggie Behrooz

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:17-21, p. 152

John Cave

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:38-48, p. 5

SERMON

Rev. Lara Musser Gritter

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

Blessed Assurance

arr. Carol Tornquist

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

† AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic* church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.
*This means universal church, not the Roman Catholic church.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD’S PRAYER

MINUTE FOR MINISTRIES

Del Denny, Serve

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Canticle of the Turning

arr. Rory Cooney

Savannah Lucas, flute, Carrie Webster, fiddle

† DOXOLOGY #606

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below; praise God above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

† PRAYER OF DEDICATION

SENDING TO SHARE THE WORD

† HYMN #475

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

† BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

All People That on Earth Do Dwell

Paul Fey



Welcome to First Pres

WE ARE SO GLAD YOU ARE HERE!

FRIENDSHIP PADS in your pews are for recording attendance and for visitors to share their information so that we can share about God’s work here. **CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES** are in the narthex. **CHILDCARE** (ages 4 and under) is available in the Nursery in our Family Life Center (see an usher for directions). **ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES** are available from an usher.

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

Harold Mesimer, John Smith, Elizabeth Calvert

Anne Marie Martin on the death of her father, William Martin.

CONTINUING CONCERNS:

Preston and Glenda Askew, Bill Baker, Mary Cameron, Betty Carli, Alice Edwards (Tracy Smith’s mother), Richard Franklin, Scott Hay, Rosalie Laughlin, Wib Manuel, Martha Michael, Frank Saunders, Jesse Tart, Jeanette Whitley, Acey Worthy

BIRTHDAYS:

Doug Lassiter, Jim Norman, Mylo Brown, Eleanor Fernandez, Charlotte Hall, Brooks Busby, Jeff Shoaf, Keith Garner, Laura Bullock, Tim Steinman, Allison Dunkin, Nadine Potts, Luke Fisher, Owen Morris, Kaius Muñoz, Meredith Honeycutt

ANNIVERSARIES:

Scott and Carol Hay, Vijay and Martha Michael, Joe and Susan Sember, Bob and Caren Steele, Ryan and Bekah Summitt

WE ARE DEEPLY ROOTED

Prayer serves as the channel to God; faith is the sustaining trust that carries us forward; hope is the confident expectation rooted in God’s promises; love is the driving force behind all we do; and service is the visible expression of that love in action. Together, these elements form a continuous cycle: prayer strengthens faith, faith nurtures hope, hope deepens love, love inspires service, and service ultimately leads us back into prayer. Prayer is our spiritual foundation. With this in mind, we invite you to join a Prayer Walk as we intentionally pray circles around First Pres while walking together around the church. Beginning Monday, September 28, and continuing through October 19, at 10:00 AM, you are welcome to join Kyna Grubb for these Monday morning Prayer Walks on and around the church grounds.

GROW:

This morning our Confirmation Class of 2027 received their Bibles. This year’s participants are: Will Almeida, Brady Fowler, Brantley Gurley, Olivia Hammill, Stuart Menees, Owen Morris, Dempsey Rowland, Teague Rowland, and Emma Snyder.

GROW:

Mom’s Village – A time of dinner, fellowship, sharing, and caring. Mom's Village will meet during First Kids on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month, 5:30-7:00, in the Youth Classroom 223. Childcare is available.

GROW: Devotional Drop-In for Young Parents! Are you a parent looking for community? Have you ever dropped your child off at Sunday School and been unsure of where to go yourself? Come to the “Devotional Drop-In,” 9:45-10:45, in the Kirby Library! We will have refreshments, time to connect with other parents, and a chance to reflect on our faith together.

GROW: Children’s Ministry Needs: Our children need you! Are you able to lend your time on a Sunday morning or for a few hours on Wednesday evening? Have you taken Child Protection Training, or are you willing to do so? We need your help in shepherding the next generation!

Children’s Sunday School



First Kids



GROW: Unified Adult October Sunday School: Each Sunday, we remember all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. We are entrusted to steward these gifts through the church, in the community, and through our very being. This giving season, we are inviting the congregation to join us for three unified Sunday School opportunities on the topic of stewardship and its role in your life and in the work of First Pres. Join us!

- Sunday, October 4 - with Pastors Lara and Hannah in Fellowship Hall
- Sunday, October 11 - Congregational State of the Church in Lewis Hall (come for food and fellowship)
- Sunday, October 18 - with Pastor Josh and the Give Team in Fellowship Hall

GROW: First Kids has begun, but it’s not too late to join us! Ages: potty-trained 3-4-year-olds through 5th-grade kids. Bible lessons, crafts, science, music, and more. Join us!



GROW: JOY (Just Older Youth) is going to dinner and a play on Friday, October 16. Dinner at 5:00 at Santos, then to the Piedmont Players’ *Fiddler on the Roof*. Get your own play tickets and let them know you want to sit with JOY. Call the church office to sign up for dinner.

GROW: First Parents: On the 1st Wednesday of each month, beginning in September, parents can join Pastor Lara at Crafty Buffalo for fellowship and food. Drop off your First Kids, then enjoy some time spent with other parents, 5:45-6:45. Next date: October 7!

GROW: Young Adults: Join Pastor Hannah on Saturday, October 10 at 10:00 AM. Koco Java on W Innes St. Coffee, goodies, and fellowship. Bring your friends!

GROW: Young Adults: The next Theology on Tap is set for Wednesday, October 21, at 6:30 PM, at New Sarum Brewery. Join Pastor Hannah for a little study and a lot of fellowship. Bring your friends!

GROW: Men’s Bible Study: Tuesdays at 6:30 AM in Room 201 with Pastor Josh.

WE HAVE A HEALTHY CORE

GIVING UPDATE:

2026 Budgeted Pledges through 08-31-26: \$768,311
2026 Year-to-Date Received: \$717,967

WE ARE BRANCHING OUT

SERVE: Yoga! Certified Yoga Instructor Felicia Stewart Hoyle leads yoga each Wednesday morning, 9:00-10:15, in Lewis Hall for beginners through advanced levels and for all ages. Suggested donation: \$10.

YOUTH:

Sunday School: 9:45 AM
Youth Group: Sundays at 5:00 PM
Youth @ the Porch Bible Study: Wednesdays at 7:30 PM (117 Maupin Ave)

RACE AND JUSTICE: 2 Opportunities this fall! *Just Pursuit: A Black Prosecutor's Fight for Fairness* is written by Laura Coates, who is a CNN legal analyst and former federal prosecutor. She shares stories from her legal career, during which she learned that even with the best intentions, “the pursuit of justice creates injustice.” Leaders: Monica Green and Steve Coggin. Dates: Wednesdays, Sept. 16-Oct. 14. Sign up with Monica Green at monica.green1948@gmail.com or Steve Coggin at scoggin@catawba.edu. *Worse Than a Lie* is civil rights attorney Ben Crump's first novel. It revolves around the shooting of a Black ex-police officer by four white men on the very night that Barack Obama wins the presidency. The man survives only to find himself being prosecuted, with the public swayed by the police narrative. Enter attorney Beau Lee Cooper, who some say bears a great resemblance to Crump himself. Leaders: Esther Atkins-Smith and Beffie Cook. Dates: Sunday, Sept. 13-Oct. 11. Sign-up contact: estheratkins@gmail.com or egravescook@yahoo.com. Our discussions will take place at 7 pm each night on Zoom. Sign up, and we'll send you the reading schedule and Zoom link. Hope you can join us!

SERVE: Monthly on the 1st Sunday, we collect pantry items to help restock the shelves at Rowan Helping Ministries. Your donations of peanut butter, canned goods, and cereals are always in need and greatly appreciated. Next donation Sunday: October 4.

SERVE: Our next quarterly Red Cross Blood Drive is set for Tuesday, October 13, 2:00-6:30, in Fellowship Hall. Sign up now for your appointment.



SERVE: We are heading out again on a Helene Relief Trip, October 4-9. There is still so much to do to help families in need. All skill levels are welcome, from painting to framing. Contact Bob Harris at 704-202-5877 to volunteer. Lodging and meals are free!

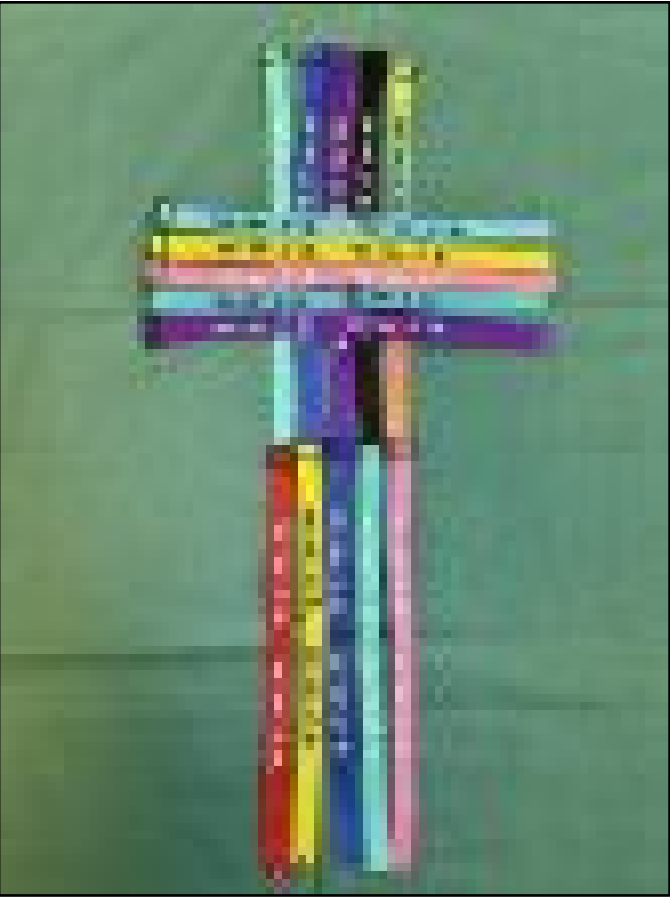
5-WEEK BOOK STUDY: Are we more than machines? Is free will an illusion? Join Trevor Eppheimer on Wednesdays at 11:00, October 7 through November 4, for a book study on *Am I just my brain?* by Sharon Dirckx. Sign up by emailing teppheimer@hoodseminary.edu. Sponsored by the Messinger-Williams Community Education Initiative. Space is limited. Books are available on Amazon.

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Service of the Lord’s Day

WWJD
Sermon on the Mount Series



17TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
September 20, 2026
11:00 am | Sanctuary

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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Where God’s Love is Alive for Mission