

September 27, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.

Nineteenth Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Heather Casiano

*If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our
Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.*

PRELUDE

Pavane

Gabriel Fauré, arr. Mark Phillips

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalm 25*)

Leader: To you, O LORD, we lift up our souls. O God, in you we trust.

ALL: Do not let us be put to shame; do not let our enemies exult over us.

Leader: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

ALL: Make us to know your ways, O LORD; teach us your paths. Lead us in your truth, and teach us, for you are the God of our salvation; for you we wait all day long.

Leader: Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of our youth or our transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember us, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

ALL: Good and upright is the LORD; All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness. Let us praise the LORD!

***OPENING HYMN:** "I Danced in the Morning" (302)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." Let us confess with the knowledge that God's Spirit has already searched us and already knows us.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

Good and upright LORD, we confess our sins to you, trusting in your Spirit. We confess that we have not always made courageous decisions like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We have bowed down to kings and idols rather than risk the consequences of following you. We have allowed fear to overwhelm our faith. Forgive us. Remind us that you join us in the fire and save us from the fire. Help us to live into our baptisms boldly! In your holy name we pray. Amen.

KYRIE: (572)

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! We have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, and so we are saved!

ALL: **In Jesus Christ and through God's Spirit we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!**

GLORIA PATRI (577)

Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

As it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: (From *The Theological Declaration of Barmen*)

We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find wisdom, and in your will discover your peace. In the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord we pray. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Daniel 3:19-27*

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Corinthians 2:10-13*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 3:4-12*

SERMON: Baptized with Fire

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace* Sebastian Temple / Jane Holstein

We Respond in Faith

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.

CHORAL RESPONSE

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: There are many fires raging in this world and in our own lives, and God is with us in them all! Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we can keep spreading the good news of God's saving presence even in the hardest of times. If you are here in person, please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Now let us practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY *A Blessing*

James V. Marchionda, arr. Michael K. Runyan

***DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, in Jesus fully known;
Creator, Word, and Spirit one;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)**

Good and upright LORD, we offer these gifts as we offer our praise—in thanksgiving for the ways that you see us through the fires of our lives. Fill us with your Spirit as we use these gifts to spread your love. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

We Go into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** “Halle, Halle, Hallelujah!” (Glory to God, 591)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Moonlight Sonata*

Ludwig Van Beethoven

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* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 9/27:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
MONDAY 9/28:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 9/29:	Prayer Shawl – 1:00 PM Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 9/30:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) “Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 10/1:	Choir – 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 10/3:	AA – 6:30 PM
SUNDAY 10/4:	COMMUNION Hayride – Oak Ridge Prairie, Griffith 3-5 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY IS NEXT SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4TH** Be sure to join us for this meaningful celebration of the truth that we are one body of Christ across the globe!
- **OUR ANNUAL BONFIRE AND HAYRIDE IS NEXT SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4TH** from 3-5 pm at Oak Ridge Prairie County Park in Griffith. All are invited and friends and family are welcome. The hayride starts promptly at 3 pm, and lasts almost an hour. Then we'll enjoy a bonfire including roasting hotdogs and marshmallows over the campfire, along with some fun activities and songs! Plenty of food, fellowship and fun for all! There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex, or you can RSVP to Heather Casiano at hcasiano@fpchighland.org by October 1.
- **"BYOB"** (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. You can connect to Zoom with a smart phone, tablet or computer. If you're not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our e-mail list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano. All are welcome! You can join even if you have never done so before!
- **"THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD"** study class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am at the church. We are excited to be using the study guide *United through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*. If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano. All are welcome! You can join even if you have never done so before!
- **FELLOWSHIP HOSTING IN THE FALL** We are asking folks to sign up to host fellowship time in the Fall. Our ministries and committees have been doing a fantastic job, and they are getting a well-deserved break! Hosting entails bringing a simple snack to share, setting it out, and cleaning up afterwards. On Sundays with no sign-ups, we will still have coffee and tea to enjoy.
- **CHOIR PRACTICE IS THURSDAYS AT 7PM** We need singers of all sorts and welcome singers of all skill levels! We have a great time, and singing is a great way to give glory to God!
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.
- **GOT SNEAKERS??** The sneakers that we all collect will help raise money to support our church's general fund AND will help our environment by keeping sneakers out of landfills. Bring the sneakers (athletic shoes only) to the church and put them in one of the blue bins...either by Door D (inside) or in the narthex.

Prayer List

Anthony
Brady Vanes
George Griner
Guy Hendricks
David Markley
David Kingen
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Yvonne Suroviak
Georgette and Garry Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Florance Cody
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea
The Windstrups
Rick Parker
Gary Everhart
Darlene O'Brien
Doug & Sue Matthews
Janet Terpstra
Glen Nahler
Tom
David Hamblin
Jana Tolley
Larry & Bonnie Perryman

Delta Rose
Winnie Owen
Breeanne
Mom Bechtler
Marian Clayton
Ella P
Rita Stronczek
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
Edna Cruz
Charlie
Jerry & Rena Martinez
Tyler Gall
Luana Sulkowski
Sonny Buono
Tammy
Mike Kelly
Sue Heth
Oscar Ochoa
Jean and Clara
Dave Shelborne
Kali Rosalia
Wendy
Jessica S
Shirley McKnight
Kay Johnson
Loved ones of Bill Holmes
Loved ones of Jan Oprea

Daniel 3:19-27

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary ²⁰ and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. ²¹ So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. ²² Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the fourth has the appearance of a god." ²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not scorched, and not even the smell of fire came from them.

1 Corinthians 2:10-13

¹⁰ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Matthew 3:4-12

⁴ Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, ⁹ and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Baptized with Fire

Daniel 3:19-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Matthew 3:4-12

Today we are pressing fast forward to move through the ancient story told in the Hebrew scriptures. We have been spending a lot of time in *Genesis* and *Exodus* throughout this season, but now, for the sake of the fire, we are taking a major leap through history. So buckle up as we zoom past the Israelites' invasion and occupation of Canaan under the leadership of Moses' successor named Joshua, past the rule of judges like Samson and Gideon and Deborah, past the remarkable journey of Ruth and Naomi, and past the rise and fall of many kings! Our destination in time is known as the Babylonian Captivity or Babylonian Exile, when King Nebuchadnezzar II attacked Jerusalem and then took thousands of Hebrews from their homeland to his homeland, Babylon, modern day Iraq.

Nebuchadnezzar had some of the higher-ranking Hebrew officials brought to his palace and conscripted them into service. Among them there were four people of particular note: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I imagine you know the name Daniel, of Lion's Den fame. After all, the book we read from today is named after him. But Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah? I must be honest. I did not recognize those names when I started preparing for this sermon. But then I read on, and the reason became clear. Those were their given Hebrew names, but they were then renamed to fit into Babylon! Such is so often the immigrant experience! Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Now those are names I know!

These Hebrews quickly distinguished themselves as wise and capable. Daniel, in particular, rose to prominence by taking on the mantle of his long-ago ancestor Joseph and becoming an interpreter of dreams. He did for Nebuchadnezzar what Joseph had done for Pharaoh and, like Joseph, was rewarded with an extraordinarily high position—as ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. With this promotion, Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Yes, as has been true at all times and in all places, Babylon depended upon the gifts and skills of immigrants in order to thrive! In the words of *Hamilton*, they get the job done! And although they had these new Babylonian names, these Hebrews refused to assimilate other aspects of their identity. They were truly and authentically themselves, rooted in the culture and traditions of their people and homeland, while also being fully Babylonian. And their insistence on staying true to themselves is key to the drama of this story and thus to the drama of the entire history of the salvation of the world! In the first chapter of the book of *Daniel*, we learn that they kept their own cuisine, declining to eat even the finest of foods offered by the king. Actually, they were vegans—eating only vegetables and drinking only water! If you have ever heard of or participated in a Daniel Fast, this is where it comes from. Then, in the third chapter, from which today's reading comes, we learn that these immigrants insisted on staying true to their faith, even at great cost to themselves.

These were the descendants of the Israelites we recently spent time with in *Exodus*, following YHWH in the great pillar of fire and through the wilderness and then beholding the magnificent power of YHWH in the massive fire upon Mount Sinai. This was a covenant community committed to following the commandments of their God, and the very first two of those commandments that YHWH thundered aloud in the fire on Mount Sinai were:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments."

So when Nebuchadnezzar made a gigantic golden statue and commanded that everyone fall down and worship it, there was bound to be trouble for the Hebrews. And it was not just slap on the wrist type trouble. Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." And still, fully aware of the fate that awaited them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to break their faith. They said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O

king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

Wow! What immeasurable courage! What phenomenal faith! They trusted God so deeply that they were willing to risk being burned alive. We know the rest of the story. Nebuchadnezzar flew into a furious rage. He had the temperature of the fiery furnace raised seven times higher than was ordinary. It was so hot that the guards who got close enough to throw the Hebrews in died from the heat. And yet, lo and behold, not a scrap of clothing nor a strand of hair on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was even singed. And there was a fourth being visible in the flames with them, with the appearance of a god! Hallelujah! They courageously kept their faith in the fiery furnace, and they lived! It is not just that they survived, though. The living God actively intervened in such a palpable way that there was a fourth entity there with them—perhaps it was a messenger angel, perhaps it was very God God’s self. Again I say Hallelujah!

A long, long time later, a wild-haired, wild-clothed prophet in the wilderness would declare, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” He was of course speaking of his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth, child of Mary. Next week we will see how that baptism of fire was embodied on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and tongues of fire rested upon them. Before that literal embodiment, though, this baptism of fire applied to the life of Jesus and the life to which he called his followers—the life to which he still calls us as his followers today. For, it was a claim that truly following the Way of Jesus Christ meant risking certain persecution and danger. Indeed, that it still how we use the phrase “baptism of fire” today—to describe being thrown into some sort of chaos or struggle or danger or trouble without feeling prepared to handle it.

Now you better believe that John and Jesus knew the stories of their ancestors, the history of their faith! They certainly would have known the Hebrew names Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah as well as well as their adopted Babylonian names. Perhaps their mamas even enforced bedtime with, “Shadrach, Meshach, and To Bed We Go!” And the whole story of the fiery furnace would have been top of mind when they talked about being baptized with fire. Let’s take that in! The whole story! They were not simply saying that following Jesus means certain pain and suffering. They were saying that following Jesus means having the courage to risk the fire and having the phenomenal faith that we will encounter God in the fire and that God will save us in the fire. Hallelujah! Let me say that again! Following Jesus means having the courage to risk the fire and having the phenomenal faith that we will encounter God in the fire and that God will save us in the fire.

Loved ones, I am sure that we can all think of times when it has felt like fire was engulfing our lives. Perhaps for some that fire is raging right now—that overwhelming grief for a loved one lost, that fear that there might not be enough food to feed the whole family tomorrow, that sickness plaguing you or the ones you love, that devastation in the aftermath of the storm, that traumatic experience of violence by the State or by a stranger or by an intimate partner, that addiction that keeps pulling you down, that despair from loneliness, that persecution for simply being you as God made you, and the list could go on and on. Oh yes, there are fires that rage in our lives! And I dare not stand here and claim that in following Jesus we go singe-free like those in the fiery furnace long ago. We do indeed get burned. The pain we feel is certainly real.

And yet, God never abandons us to feel that pain alone. God never leaves us in the fire alone! God joins us there. In the worst moments of our lives, God is there! Reaching out to us in care, covering us for protection, filling us with whatever it is that we need to survive, calling out to loved ones to support us—God is there in the fire! We may not be aware of it in the moment because of the overwhelming nature of the blaze, but when we look back I am sure that we will notice that there was an extra somebody there in the furnace, just as there was when Nebuchadnezzar looked in long ago.

Loved ones, we know our water baptisms well, but let us never forget that we are also baptized with fire! Following Jesus means having the courage to risk the fire and having the phenomenal faith that we will encounter God in the fire and that God will save us in the fire. So let us choose to live life with boldness and courage. Let us risk being burned because of our phenomenal faith! Let us risk being burned because of our stubborn insistence that all belong! Let us risk being burned because of our belief that transformation is possible! Let us risk being burned because of our actions to catalyze transformation! Let us risk being burned because of our deep, deep love—yes, even when it ultimately means deep, deep grief, let us risk it! Yes, there is pain, but there is also healing. There is also glory. There is also salvation. For God is there in the fire! Amen.

I Danced in the Morning

SIMPLE GIFTS Irregular with refrain

American Shaker melody
Harm. Sydney Carter, 1963

Sydney Carter, 1963

1. I danced in the morn - ing when the
 2. I danced for the scribe and the
 3. I danced on the Sab - bath and I
 4. I danced on a Fri - day when the
 5. They cut Me down and I

world was be - gun, And I danced in the moon and the
 Phar - i - see, But they would not dance and they
 cured the lame; The ho - ly peo - ple
 sky turned black; It's hard to dance with the
 leap up high; I am the life that will

stars and the sun, And I came down from heav - en and I
 would not fol - low Me; I danced for the fish - er - men, for
 said it was a shame. They whipped and they stripped and they
 dev - il on your back. They bur - ied My bod - y and they
 nev - er, nev - er die; I'll live in you if you'll

danced on the earth; At Beth - le - hem I had My birth.
James and John; They came with Me and the dance went on.
hung Me high, And left Me there on a cross to die.
thought I'd gone: But I am the dance and I still go on.
live in Me: I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.

Refrain

Dance, then, wher - ev - er you may be; I am the Lord of the

Dance, said He, And I'll lead you all, wher - ev - er you may be,

And I'll lead you all in the dance, said He.

Refrain

Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah!

hal - le -

Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah!

Hal - le - lu - jah!

Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le -

hal - le -

lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah!

Fine

Leader/All (sung over or in alternation with refrain)

1 O God, to whom shall we go? You a - lone have the
 2 My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord. When I call them they

words of life. Let your words be our prayer and the song we
 fol - low me. I will lead them to rest by the peace - ful

to Refrain

sing: hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!
 streams: hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!