

July 12, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.
Seventh Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Renee Williams

*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 *10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)* Matt Redman/Jonas Myrin, arr. Jan Sanborn

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalms* 119)

Leader: How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

ALL: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

Leader: I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances. I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word.

ALL: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

Leader: Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your ordinances. I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

ALL: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

Leader: The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

ALL: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

Leader: I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end. I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.

ALL: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!

***OPENING HYMN:** "Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet" (Glory to God, 458) Sing 2x

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." Assured of this, let us freely confess to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer. We confess that we have not been fertile soil for the seed of your word. Sometimes we are hard-packed and let the birds snatch the seed away. Sometimes we are rocky and shallow and let the sun scorch the seedling before the roots can go deep. Sometimes we are thorny and strangle the plant before it can flourish and flower. Forgive us and nurture us. Help us to be good soil. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

KYRIE: Glory to God, No. 579 (unison)

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! If Christ is in us, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

ALL: In Jesus Christ we have righteousness. 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: (Adapted from *The Heidelberg Catechism*)

Leader: What do we understand by the providence of God?

ALL: The almighty and ever present power of God by which God upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by God's hand.

Leader: How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?

ALL: We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God that nothing in creation will separate us from God's love. For all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without God's will they can neither move nor be moved.

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Gracious God, as we turn to your Word for us, may the Spirit of God rest upon us. Help us to be steadfast in our hearing, in our speaking, in our believing, and in our living. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Isaiah 55:10-13*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 8:1-11*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 13:1-9*

SERMON: Seeds and Soil

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *We Are One in the Spirit*

Tristan Casiano

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.

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: God has planted us in rich soil. The great gardener has tended us with loving care. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may continue to plant the seed of the good news of God's love. 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 *Wonderful Words of Life*

Philip P. Bliss, arr. Carol Tornquist

***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)

Creator God, we dedicate these gifts to you, and we dedicate ourselves to doing the work of planting your good news in this world. Guide us with your Wisdom as we use these gifts to plant new seeds. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** "Standing on the Promises" (Glory to God, 838)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joy Overflowing

Cindy Berry

Permission to reprint/podcast/stream music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE with license #A-739456. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint/podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from CCLI with print license #11390760 and streaming plus license #21397339. All rights reserved.

* 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 7/12: Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
Fellowship Hosts: Worship & Music
Kids' Summer Sunday School
(During Worship until noon)
Faith Development – 12:00 PM

MONDAY 7/13: GA – 6:30 PM
Al-Anon – 7:00 PM

TUESDAY 7/14: Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM
Mission – 6:00 PM
Stewardship/Finance – 6:30 PM
AA – 7:30 PM

WEDNESDAY 7/15: Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM
GA – 7:00 PM

THURSDAY 7/16: Scripture in the Park 6:30-7:30 PM at
Redar Park in Schererville

SATURDAY 7/18: Memorial Service for Marie Smith – 11:00 AM
Sharon's Table Meal Prep
AA – 6:30 PM

SUNDAY 7/19: Outdoor Worship

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **WORSHIP IN THE GARDEN NEXT SUNDAY** If weather permits, we will be worshipping in our beautiful garden next week! Bring a comfortable chair and wear comfortable clothes! If weather does not permit, we will worship in our beautiful sanctuary!
- **CROSS NECKLACES FROM ZAMBIA** A number of people have asked about the cross necklace Pastor Tyler wears every Sunday. Samson Kaleya, the brilliant artist in Zambia, is willing to make more for us! If you would like one, please let Tyler know before the end of July. \$20 per necklace will cover Samson's work and shipping.
- **SCRIPTURE IN THE PARK** Beginning this month, we're offering a special Bible study and discussion opportunity called "Scripture in the Park." We're going to join together with folks from Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Schererville for 6 weeks of informal Bible study at Redar Park in Schererville. The first "Scripture in the Park" night will be July 9th and will continue on Thursday evenings through August 13, from 6:30-7:30 pm. We meet at the picnic shelter; feel free to bring a Bible, something to drink, and a lawn chair (or you can sit at the picnic tables, whichever is more comfortable). If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **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
Bill and Anettia Holmes
David Markley
David Kingen
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Yvonne Suroviak
Georgette and Garry Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Jan Oprea
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
Carlito
Wendy
Jessica S
Loved ones of Susan Hankins

Isaiah 55:10-13

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
¹² For you shall go out in joy
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle,
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Romans 8:1-11

⁸ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Matthew 13:1-9

¹³ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ If you have ears, hear!"

Seeds and Soil

Isaiah 55:10-13; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9

I cannot get that tree from *Revelation* out of my head, and I am so grateful for *that!* What a beautiful, powerful image to sustain us! Remember the cross of death transforming into the tree of life? After last week's scripture reading, one of you faithful family members lifted up the curious phenomenon of twelve fruit. "On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month." Wow! What a remarkable tree! One tree with twelve different types of fruit! It defies what we know to be biologically possible. It defies our very concepts of reality. And that's not the only way this tree transcends reality. During our ecumenical worship service at General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. Kevin Vandiver focused on the fact that somehow this tree is on both sides of the river. Somehow this single tree is on both banks. He used that physics-defying phenomenon to talk about how we humans so often divide and take different sides on things, and yet we all need the same tree and the healing it brings. Ah yes, physics-defying phenomena that give us divine truth—that certainly sounds heavenly to me! And one of those divine truths must be that the tree of life in John's heavenly vision has roots that stretch down into our earthly realm. For, as Jesus made clear throughout his ministry, the Kingdom of Heaven is not just above and beyond. It is also here and now.

And Jesus' favorite way to teach about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven was through parables. Just as John used the power of vision to tell us about a river-spanning, realm-transcending, twelve-fruit bearing tree, Jesus used the power of vision—of imagery in action—to tell us truths that might otherwise be too difficult to grasp. Now back to those twelve fruits on the one tree! Fruits are pretty and delicious for good reason! They need to be attractive enough for animals, including us humans who love our fruits, to consume them and spread the seeds that are so exquisitely nested inside. The seeds, then, ensure that the trees will persist for generations. So, if there are twelve different fruits from the one tree of life, I wonder if a diversity of different types of trees can spring forth from the seeds of the one—diversity and unity again!—but I digress. Let us get back to the seeds. Jesus loved to use seeds in his teachings—to illustrate for us the truths of the Kingdom, faith, and God's word. Jesus loved to tap into the unlimited possibility of growth that dwells in the tiniest of things. Jesus loved to uplift and empower the tiniest of things. And after all, we ourselves are but tiny things in the scope of the universe!

Let us meet Jesus in a boat upon the sea, where he has gone to teach from a distance because the crowds of people who want to encounter him have become so overwhelming. For, he had not just been *speaking* words of Life and Love. He had been putting those words into action. Immediately before today's passage, *Matthew* tells us that Jesus had broken the law to heal a man on the sabbath, and then that he had healed the entire crowd of people who were following him, and then that he had healed a man who was demon-possessed, mute, and blind. He had done all of this with the full knowledge that he was risking his life, for his persecutors were following him around and threatening him through it all. And then he made the radical declaration that whoever does the will of God is part of his family, making it clear that all are welcome and that bonds of the Spirit are more powerful than the bonds of blood, the bonds of race, the bonds nation. Wow, he had planted his seeds on good soil indeed, and the people were hungry for more of that life and love he had to offer!

And so he got comfortable on that boat and settled in for a story that would give them the Word in a way that they would understand. After all, in the ancient world pretty much everyone would have understood agriculture. And he was in good company, for, long before, the Adventen prophet Isaiah had declared: "*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*"

And so Jesus was bringing to fruition the words of the prophet by being the sower of the Word for the family of followers who surrounded him.

After he spoke the famous words of the parable, he was kind enough to give a clear interpretation. This is a true blessing, for we are often left to wrestle through our own interpretations when it comes to the parables! He said: *“Consider then the parable of the sower. Whenever people hear the word about the kingdom and don’t understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what was planted in their hearts. This is the seed that was sown on the path. As for the seed that was spread on rocky ground, this refers to people who hear the word and immediately receive it joyfully. Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one.”*

Aha! So we are the soil, and the seeds are the word. Now remember, Jesus himself was called *the Word*. And here he was, Word made flesh giving the word to the people, or should I say *planting* the word in the people. And let us not forget our experiences of Ash Wednesday! We humans are made of the soil, and to the soil we shall return! My goodness, there are so many layers to the rich fruit of Wisdom that is our scripture! A tree of life at the end that was first seen back at the beginning in Eden. A tree that spans the realms of heaven and earth, like a Kingdom of heaven that is here and now. Twelve different fruits from one tree with their different seeds for diversity—or shall I say *diversi-tree*?! And a sower, the Word made flesh, planting the seeds in the soil, we humans made of the dirt. Hallelujah! God’s word is magnificent!

Oh, but let’s get back to the lesson at hand. For of course God’s word is magnificent! The problem is that we are not always the best soil. Sometimes we are too dense, too shallow, and too thorny to let the seed of God’s word germinate, develop, take root, grow, flower, and bear fruit. We let stubbornness block our blessings. We let evil snatch away the good. We let fear hack away at our roots. We let the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke out the possibility of true flourishing. It is very, very easy to create a hostile environment for the seed of God’s word! Often we don’t even know we are doing it, because we have become convinced that the ideologies and idols we cultivate in our hearts are the actual word of God. Toxic soil can be tricky business indeed!

But there is also good news! There is such a thing as good soil—those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce. So how do we get there? How do we change from dense, shallow, and thorny to fertile, nourishing, and fruitful? I am convinced that it comes down to the basics. We need to start with the Bible rather than with our biases. We need to close our ears to the dominant voices that shout through our TVs and radios and social media, telling us what it means to be Christian without ever really getting to the Christ part of it all. Oh yes, it comes down to basics indeed. We need to make time and space to actually ground ourselves in the Word so that we can become fertile ground for the Word. We need to open our Bibles as children with fresh eyes and fresh ears, without the weight of arrogance and jadedness and fear. We need to listen to the words of Jesus with the joy that those first followers must have felt there on the beach beside the sea—the joy of hearing something that could actually transform oppression to liberation and death to life. We need to let the Holy Spirit transform our weapons into plowshares and till the soil within us, to open us up to receive the seeds of the fruits of the tree of life.

And oh what lovely seeds they are! They have been sown throughout the pages of our scriptures, from Eden to the tree that spans two sides of the river and bears twelve kinds of fruit and has leaves for the healing of the nations. “Love the LORD your God.” “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “Care for the orphans and the widows.” “Care for the poor.” “Provide hospitality to the strangers in your midst, to the migrants who need a home.” “Worship God alone.” “Do not create idols.” “Do good works.” “Peace be with you.” “Do not be afraid.” “Believe.” And did I mention, “Love?” Over and over and over again, these seeds flourish and flower and bear fruit in our scriptures. And so, these are the seeds that we should allow to flourish and flower and bear fruit in us.

Let us cut away the rest of the noise and truly become soil for the seeds that matter! Amen!

Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet 458

Refrain



Thy word is a lamp un-to my feet and a light un-to my



path. Thy word is a lamp un-to my feet and a



light un-to my path. When I feel a-fraid, and I



think I've lost my way, still you're there right be - side me.



Noth-ing will I fear as long as you are near.



Please be near me to the end.

D7 to Refrain

838

Standing on the Promises



1 Stand - ing on the prom - is - es of Christ my king,
 2 Stand - ing on the prom - is - es that can - not fail,
 3 Stand - ing on the prom - is - es of Christ the Lord,
 4 Stand - ing on the prom - is - es I can - not fall,



through e - ter - nal a - ges let his prais - es ring;
 when the howl - ing storms of doubt and fear as - sail,
 bound to him e - ter - nal - ly by love's strong cord,
 lis - tening ev - ery mo - ment to the Spir - it's call,



glo - ry in the high - est, I will shout and sing,
 by the liv - ing Word of God I shall pre - vail,
 o - ver - com - ing dai - ly with the Spir - it's sword,
 rest - ing in my Sav - ior as my all in all,



stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.



Refrain

Stand - ing, stand - ing, stand - ing,
stand - ing on the prom - is - es, stand - ing on the prom - is - es,

stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God my Sav - ior;

stand - ing, stand - ing, stand - ing,
stand - ing on the prom - is - es, stand - ing on the prom - is - es,

I'm stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.