November 8, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.
Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Karen Lounsbury

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 Jesus is Calling Thompson/Johnson

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalm* 70)

Leader: Be pleased, O God, to deliver us. O Lord, make haste to help us!
ALL: Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"
Leader: Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!
ALL: Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"
Leader: We are poor and needy; haste to us, O God! You are our help and our deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!
ALL: Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

***OPENING HYMN:** "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright" (474)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Leader: Joshua spoke to the people and said, "Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness." Together let us confess how we have sought out other gods instead of serving the Lord in sincerity and in faithfulness.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Great God, we lift up our prayer of confession and seek your forgiveness for seeking out other gods. We have sought out the gods of our broken society—the gods of division and dehumanization, the gods of power and pride, the gods of vitriol and violence. We have allowed our loyalties to political parties and economic systems to get in the way of our shared humanity under your lordship. Forgive us for our unfaithfulness. Turn us once again to you and your way of transformation. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and of death!
ALL: Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI
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.

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

As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness is he also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.

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: *Joshua* 24:1-3; 14-25

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-18

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew* 25:1-13

SERMON: Choosing the Lord

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Epilogue of Praise* Joseph Martin
In Memory of Linda Mann

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: As for this congregation, we will serve the Lord! Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may do so with vigor and effectiveness. 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. Let us practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY Since Jesus is My Friend J. Sweetser by C. Van Hulse

***DOXOLOGY (592)**
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:** (Unison)
Great God, we choose you, and so we choose to commit our resources to you and your way. Give us the wisdom to use them well. We pray in the name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

We Go into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing" (538)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE We Give You Thanks, O God C. Lockhart/Healy Willan

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PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 11/8:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM
	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
MONDAY 11/9:	GA – 6:30 PM
	Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 11/10:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)
	Mission – 6:00 PM
	Stewardship/Finance – 6:30 PM
	AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 11/1:	VETERANS DAY
	Trustees – 10:00 AM
	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)
	"Bring Your Own Bible" Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom)
	GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 11/12:	Choir – 7:00 PM
FRIDAY 11/13:	Ginny Dickman-Lopez- Piano Recital 6-9 PM
SATURDAY 11/7:	Cook for Shelter – 1:00 PM
	AA – 6:30 PM
	Ginny Dickman-Lopez- Piano Recital 6-9 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PLEDGE CARDS WERE SENT NOVEMBER 5TH** Keep your eyes out for this year's pledge cards and stewardship campaign letter if you have not already received them! We ask that you bring the pledge cards back for Commitment Sunday, November 22.
- **MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER 22ND!** There will be a luncheon after worship to celebrate our collective generosity on Commitment Sunday! There also will be a bake sale featuring pies, breads and other sweets. Please consider sticking around to hang the greens for Advent as well!
- **INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING WORSHIP SERVICE** This annual event will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Munster on November 24 at 7:30 PM. This is a meaningful opportunity to join our neighbors in giving thanks to God!

- **"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. 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 belong! 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** We are asking folks to sign up to host fellowship time. 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 bring non-perishable foods 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 by Door D 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
Kevin and Annie Windstrup
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
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
Brooke
Arlene
Shelley
John
Pastor Laurel
Rosie

Joshua 24:1-3; 14-25

24 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

14 "Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; 17 for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18 and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God." 19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the Lord!" 22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." 24 The people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey." 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. 15 For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Matthew 25:1-13

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Choosing the Lord

Joshua 24:1-3, 14-25; *Psalm* 70; *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-18; *Matthew* 25:1-13

After Moses died upon Mount Nebo, entering into that Promise beyond the Promised Land—those fields of wildflower glory in the presence of God and the Lamb who is a shepherd, from which he would appear once more years later on a mountaintop with Elijah and the very Son of God—his faithful disciple Joshua took on the mantle of leadership. As our reading from last week tells us, "Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of Wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses." And Joshua took that mantle of Moses' spirit and filled those gigantic sandals in remarkable ways! Just as Moses had parted the Sea of Reeds with God's help, Joshua parted the Jordan River with God's help. He brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down with that musical parade. He even partnered with YHWH to get the sun and moon to stand still at one point.

Joshua had a very special name. In Hebrew it is *Yehoshua*, meaning "YHWH is salvation." It also happens to be the same name that would be Latinized to *Jesus*. And let us take a moment to praise God for the coming of the new Joshua, this Jesus! For, it is right to struggle with the prevalence of violence in the Israelites' march to and through Canaan, and Joshua son of Nun's legacy is certainly one of mass violence, dispossession of land, and settler colonialism. That violence is neither excusable nor beyond rightful criticism, just like very similar settler colonizing violence in the same region today. The major difference is that in the time of Joshua son of Nun, the Prince of Peace was not yet known. But we *do* know the Prince of Peace! How much more inexcusable, then, is our violence today! Anyway, I digress! Let me get back to the story.

This person bearing the eponym of the savior who would come much later had the great challenge of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land upon which Moses would never set foot. And he did so full of Moses' wise spirit. As he neared the end of his life, he gathered the Israelites together in the region of Shechem, a place that would eventually become the first capital of the Kingdom of Israel. In this place that would bear such significance in history, he took it upon himself to take on the age-old struggle of the Israelites—a struggle that probably started with the realities of being enslaved by the Egyptians for hundreds of years—a struggle that was best exemplified in the casting and worship of the golden calf—the struggle of wanting to turn to gods and idols made of precious metals representing earthly wealth and power other than Jehovah who had led them to liberation through forty exceptionally challenging years of wandering in the desert wilderness.

There in Shechem, speaking to all the tribes of Israel, he spoke some of the best-known words in our scriptures. He said, "Now therefore revere the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord! With these words, Joshua put a stark choice on the table before the rest of the Israelites: choose the earthly gods of wealth and power or choose the Lord. Joshua was speaking from a very specific context in history, a context with a worldview that allowed for the existence of different gods who could exist alongside of and in competition with Jehovah, YHWH.

Since we have a long theological tradition of monotheism with an all-powerful God, this might sound a bit strange to us. But if we truly do a deep dive into our own context and psychology, we have to admit that we do the exact same thing. We dedicate our lives and pledge our loyalties to gods and idols that are in direct opposition to our Lord. We often put our faith in and directly follow human-made idols including money, power, technology, celebrity, political systems, and political parties. These idols tempt us to listen to only those who agree with us, to despise those who disagree, and so to divide communities, to divide churches, to divide the Kingdom. These idols tempt us to give into fear, much like the Israelites in the wilderness who so deeply feared that God's way might be too dangerous, too costly.

And we so readily bite into the hook, line, and sinker of temptation. We allow our hearts to be conformed, our minds to be contained, our passions to be controlled in exactly the same ways that the Israelites

did with gods and idols thousands of years ago. We tie our hopes and fears for all the years to these parties and ideologies with their corporate sponsors created to perpetuate a system of oppression and exploitation. Trust me, I am certainly guilty of this! I was anxiously listening to electoral results in the background as I wrote this sermon! The more I reflect on it, though, the more I realize just how idolatrous this is. We look to political parties to form our identities. We look to political candidates to save us. We look to political systems to dictate how we enact community.

Our reading from *Matthew* 25 today tells us a story of certain bridesmaids falling asleep and therefore missing the arrival of the bridegroom, presumably the Messiah. The point of this story is to remind us of the importance of remaining alert to the truth that Joshua son of Nun's namesake Jesus of Nazareth could be in our midst at any time. We must be vigilant so that we can be aware of such a glorious thing! When I read this story in light of Joshua son of Nun's encouragement to choose the Lord, I can't help but wonder what Jesus of Nazareth would think if he indeed appeared in our midst today. I wonder what he would think if he saw us clinging so doggedly to our idols!

You see, one of the main problems with our way of operating today is that we have become convinced that there are only two ways of doing things—those two ways prescribed by our political allegiances. I wonder what Jesus would think about billions of dollars going to advertisements on television and social media instead of going to the poor and hungry. I wonder what Jesus would think about us pledging our hearts and minds and bodies and loyalties to the idols that pull us away from each other and pull us away from our most essential truth of the Good News—the truth that we are all children of God who are made to thrive together with love. I have a feeling that Jesus would arrive and find us fast asleep, entranced in the anxieties and ecstasies that we tie to the rise and fall of our political parties. I imagine that he would invoke the command of the eponymous Joshua son of Nun: Choose other gods or choose the Lord!

You see, my friends, my friends indeed, there is another way! It is not a third way. It is *the first* way, the way of our Lord. Just as Yehoshua son of Nun stood before the many gathered tribes of Israel, Yehoshua son of Mary stood before his many followers and said the following: "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." THAT is a platform I have never seen from our political parties in this country nor from political parties across that world. But THAT is the platform of the Kingdom. THAT is the platform of the Good News!

THAT is a platform that prioritizes the poor, the hungry, the incarcerated, and the immigrant above all other considerations. THAT is a platform that calls upon us to seek the welfare of the people over the power of the principalities. THAT is a platform that urges humility over pride. THAT is a platform that requires mercy instead of punishment. THAT is a platform that prizes peace and condemns violence. THAT is a platform that honors people who take stands for truth and justice. THAT is a platform that inspires us to imagine a Kingdom beyond any kingdoms we have ever seen, a promise beyond any Promised Lands we have ever striven for.

In following our idols, we have convinced ourselves that we can only march to the funereal drumbeats of this society. But, my friends, if we choose the Lord, we can dance to a rhythm that is so much more beautiful! We can transform this divided, divisive society! We can transform this beaten, broken world! Let us stop choosing the life-stealing gods and idols of this earth. Let us start choosing the Lord! As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord! Amen.

474 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright

PUER NOBIS NASCITUR LM

Ambrose of Milan, c. 374
Trans. composite, *Rejoice in the Lord,* 1985

Trier ms., 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1902



538 Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing

SICILIAN MARINERS 8.7.8.7.8.7

Attr. John Fawcett, 1773
Stanza 1, line 6, alt. 1774, Conyer's *Collection of Psalms*
Stanza 3 alt. Godfrey Thring (1823–1903)

Sicilian melody

