August 31, 2025 + 10:30 A.M. Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

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.

Liturgist: Karen Lounsbury

PRELUDE

When Morning Gilds the Skies

Dale Wood

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*THE PEACE OF CHRIST

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from *Psalm* 112)

Leader: Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in the LORD's

commandments. Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the

upright will be blessed.

ALL: Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. They

rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and

righteous.

Leader: It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.

For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever.

ALL: They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD. Their

hearts are steady; they will not be afraid.

Leader: They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures

forever; their horn is exalted in honor.

ALL: Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

*OPENING HYMN: "In Christ Ther Is No East or West" (439)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader:

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes about how we are sinners and transgressors even when

seeking justification in Christ. Together let us confess our sins and transgressions.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

God who binds us together, we confess our sins and transgressions as we seek justification in your Son. We confess that we allow our disagreements to get in the way of our community. We become convinced of our own rightness and our own righteousness, forgetting where true righteousness comes from. Convinced of rightness and righteousness within ourselves, we divide and isolate rather than unite and conversate. We thus ignore the truths that should bind us together and drive us—the truths of your love, inclusiveness, and grace. Forgive us for being distracted from these truths. Help us to come back to them and thus to strengthen the community of your faithful. In the beautiful name of Jesus Christ our liberator we pray. Amen.

KYRIE: No. 572 (unison)

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

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader:

Friends, hear the good news! Christ loves us and gave himself for us! Christ now lives in us!

Through him, we are justified!

ALL:

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 (Adapted from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*)

The Holy Spirit, whom the Father is ever willing to give to all who ask him, is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. The Holy Spirit regenerates people by God's grace, convicts them of sin, moves them to repentance, and persuades and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. The Holy Spirit unites all believers to Christ, dwells in them as their Comforter and Sanctifier, gives to them the spirit of Adoption and Prayer, and performs all those gracious offices by which they are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of power and grace, fill us with the wisdom of your word and the understanding of your Spirit so that we may be your church: a people with dreams and visions at work in all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:

Amos 9:11-13

EPISTLE LESSON:

Galatians 2:11-21

LESSON FROM ACTS:

Acts 15:1-14

SERMON:

Beautiful Dreamwork

MUSICAL MEDITATION:

Medley:

1. God Will Take Care of You arr. John Innes

2. God Is So Good

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

We are part of the same body that came together at the Council of Jerusalem. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may follow in their footsteps of seeking truth and building the Kingdom together. If you have not already done so, 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 reflect on stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY

Lord of All Hopefulness

Dale Wood

* DOXOLOGY:

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)

God who binds us together, we dedicate these tithes and offerings to you and your service. Guide us to use them in ways that seek truth and support community. In the beautiful name of Jesus Christ our liberator we pray. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (Glory to God, 306)

We Go Into the World

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Christ for the World We Sing!

Lani Smith

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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.

Life of the Church

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 8/31: Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM

Fellowship Hosts: Bob & Charlotte Abernethy

MONDAY 9/1: LABOR DAY

GA - 6:30 PM

Al-Anon - 7:00 PM

TUESDAY 9/2: Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)

Deacons - 6:30 PM

AA - 7:30 PM

WEDNESDAY 9/3: Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)

GA - 7:00 PM

THURSDAY 9/4: Choir – 7:00 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

• <u>CHOIR PRACTICE THURSDAYS AT 7:00 PM!</u> Our choir is a great group, and we would love to keep growing! All voice levels and skill levels are welcome!

- <u>SAVE THE DATE!</u> Sunday, Sept. 7th is going to be our church's "Fall Kick-Off," including a potluck lunch and games for all ages. We'll also have information about the exciting opportunities to participate in this fall across the various ministries of our congregation. Sign-up sheets are available in the narthex.
- <u>"BYOB"</u> (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom, <u>beginning Wednesday</u>, <u>Sept. 10</u>. 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.
- <u>ON-LINE STREAMERS NEEDED!</u> Are you interested in helping us make our service accessible to others? Do you like technology? Are you willing to learn? Do you know of someone who might be able to come once a month for a couple hours on a Sunday morning to set up our online service and run the audio and video? If your answer is yes to any of these questions, please consider helping us out. Contact Jean Smith 219-730-7749 for more information.
- <u>CALLING ALL CRAFTERS</u> The FPCH crafters will be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month from 1pm to 3pm in the meeting room upstairs. All are welcome to come! Please join us!
- <u>ENDOWMENT FUND DONATIONS</u> Please consider making donations to our church Endowment Fund. Contributions can be made in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone. Donations to this fund can also be made to commemorate special events, such as weddings, birthdays, births and anniversaries. The Endowment Fund is a great way to support grants to ministries in our congregation and our general fund. The money is invested in Vanguard, and each year the fund has been growing. Envelopes are located in the pews and narthex or you can send a check to the office.
- <u>BUILDING USE FORMS</u> Just a quick reminder that for the safety and security of everyone using our building, we need to have building use request forms filled out by both members and non-members whenever they use any area of the building outside of regular church activity functions.
- 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.
- <u>INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?</u> 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:

- <u>BLESSING BOX</u> 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?** We are still participating in the Got Sneakers Fundraiser where there is nothing to buy or sell; all we need is your support and your gently worn, used, or new sneakers! Blue bins are located in the narthex, and inside and outside DOOR D by the office. Every pair counts!

Prayer List

Anthony Brady Vanes George Griner

Guy Hendricks

Bill and Anettia Holmes

David Markley

Pat and David Kingen Diana and Ray Mendoza

Janet Orem

Cindy Waltz and Sister

Yvonne Suroviak Georgette Sknerski

Jakob Holden Denise Matthys

Jan Oprea Florance Cody

Kathy & Chuck Pumnea Laura Buono Domsic

The Windstrups

Rick Parker Gary Everhart Caroline Studer 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

Victor

Marian Clayton

Ella P

Edie Delgano Melissa J. Rita Stronczek

Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon

OGB Edna Cruz Katie Charlie

Jerry & Rena Martinez

George
Dustin
Noreen
Kim
Jessica
Nicole
Greg
Pastor Jane

Mary Ellen Edeus

Jane and David

Suzanne
Jalen
Flora R.
Tyler Gall
Dustin
Phil

Luana Sulkowski

Mike Kelly

Amos 9:11-13

11 On that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen
and repair its breaches
and raise up its ruins
and rebuild it as in the days of old,
12 in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,
says the Lord who does this.
13 The time is surely coming, says the Lord,
when the one who plows shall catch up with the one who reaps
and the treader of grapes with the one who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.

Galatians 2:11-21

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood self-condemned, ¹² for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. ¹³ And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?"

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not gentile sinners, ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. ¹⁷ But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Acts 15:1-14

15 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. ³ So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the gentiles and brought great joy to all the brothers and sisters. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. ⁸ And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us, ⁹ and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

¹² The whole assembly kept silence and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the gentiles. ¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, "My brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name.

Beautiful Dreamwork

Amos 9:11-13; Galatians 2:11-21; Acts 15:1-14

As we have followed the lives of the disciples, deacons, and apostles after the great inbreathing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we have seen the remarkable individual gifts that each carried. You may remember from last week that I mentioned the leaders of the movement of the Way of Jesus Christ going off on their own journeys, like seeds blown upon the Holy Wind, planting roots and enacting parallel ministries in the villages surrounding Jerusalem, North Africa, Western Europe, and Turkey. Saul who would become Paul was doing his thing. Peter the rock was doing his thing. And though we have not yet heard much about him, James the brother of Jesus was doing his thing. Well, in the midst of all of them doing their own thing, some major differences began to emerge. Of course they did! They were all out doing their best to make a beautiful dream work—a dream of a Kingdom built upon the radical Love of God as proclaimed and embodied by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They were all following their hearts and passions using their particular gifts to the best of their abilities. They had their own way of believing things, their own way of teaching things, their own way of doing things, and their own sense of authority. The rise of their differences was inevitable.

We can think of James, Peter, and Paul as the de facto leaders at that point in time, each with their own *justified* claim to authority. James would have been with his brother from the beginning, even back in childhood. He had the longest claim. He had the claim of shared blood. Peter, of course, also had a long history with the Messiah as his closest disciple. He had the claim of friendship, of chosen family. And then Paul was the newest convert but had also had the most recent direct interaction with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. So, he had the claim of recency, of knowing what it was like to encounter Jesus not only after the Resurrection but after the Ascension.

As these three apostles scattered the seeds of that beautiful dream and spread the good news of the love of God in Jesus Christ throughout the lands, they began to have to deal with some tough questions. Chief among these was the question of how to live faithfully according to the message of their Lord—how to actually embody the body of Christ.

Perhaps because of his youth amongst the scrolls of the Torah alongside of his brother, James was a strict adherent to the belief that the Christians were still Jews. He took to heart the teaching that Jesus was a fulfillment of the Law of Moses, not a disruptor of the law. And so, he taught that gentiles, or non-Jews, who wished to convert to Christianity had to be circumcised and had to put themselves under the law.

Paul, on the other hand, believed the opposite. After his conversion, this former Pharisee found himself doing ministry largely among those who had never been Jews and maybe had never even interacted with Jews. In his travels, he had to develop new and creative ways to teach about YHWH and the Son of God to people who had no historical connection to that God. Needless to say, circumcision and then strict adherence to an unknown temple law would have been non-starters. And so, Paul became a staunch advocate for welcoming people as Christians based on their beliefs, not on their following of the Law of Moses.

And then there was Peter. As the identified leader of it all, Peter found himself playing the role of the bridge seeking to hold the people together. As any good peacemaker or peacekeeper can tell you, such is not always the most delightful or the most popular role. People on each side will call you a waffler or flip-flopper or traitor or worse. And believe you me, Paul and James did not hold back in their passions.

After all, this was a huge matter. At stake were the questions of who would be welcome and how they should live with each other. And both sides had valid points and major constituencies to consider. As a Jew among fellow Jews, James recognized the historical significance of his people's relationship to YHWH as well as the undeniable importance of Jesus's teachings on the significance of the Law. Furthermore, James knew that those under the law could very easily become bitter and disillusioned if they saw others joining the movement without making the same commitments or sacrifices.

And then as a recent convert among converts far and wide, Paul would have known just how difficult and perhaps unfair it would be to ask gentiles to take on the Law of Moses as a package deal with becoming followers of the Way of Jesus Christ. He understood that the ritual laws of the temple would have made no sense to people for whom the temple carried no meaning. Such a burden would have surely kept away people who nonetheless had come to know the deep love and abiding grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Things first came to a head at a tumultuous gathering in Antioch, in modern day Turkey. At that meeting, Peter apparently leaned a bit more to the side of James in his attempts to keep the movement together. As a result, Paul was furious. We see his feelings in our epistle reading, Paul's letter to the faithful in Galatia, another Turkish city. He writes, "When Cephas (which is another one of Peter's names) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" WOOOH! Talk about the written word as a sword!

After this fateful meeting in Antioch, the early movement of the Way of Jesus Christ seemed to be on the brink of collapse. The leaders were at loggerheads, and they each had their own factions of followers that were willing to go the distance for them. The beautiful dream was facing the prospect of disappearing like dust in the wind. And so, with everything on the line, Peter and the elders decided to call everyone back to Jerusalem, where it all had started with the rush of the wind of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Paul and James and their factions were summoned to this most important of cities at this most perilous of times.

Our text from *Acts* today says, "When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.' The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter." And so the Big 3 had it out. They met each other full of their passions. They met each other full of the concerns of their constituents and their convictions. They met each other full of their respective power and gifts, and yes....their egos. And they met each other full of the desperate need to figure it out—for the sake of their Lord, for the sake of their Church, for the sake of their world, for the sake of Love.

At some point in their deliberations, it became clear that they had ALL strayed in some way from the path that had been set before them by Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy Spirit. It became clear that in fighting over who should be welcomed and how exactly they should live their lives if indeed they were welcomed, they had forgotten how their messiah had broken bread with everybody regardless of where they came from or what they had believed. In fixating on the details of the pixels, they had lost sight of the big picture. And so, with the guiding of the Holy Spirit, they saw the light. They realized that the Jewish converts should not be hardened by bitterness because although they were following the law, they were also following the embodiment of grace. They realized that the gentile converts were not just fragile and flighty without the gravity of the law, because they were following the God who sacrificed everything and went to the very grave to give life to them. They realized that the Law of Moses had been simplified and summed up perfectly in the perfecter of faith, saying,

"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 first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Yes, this, they could all get behind. This was the law that all could and should follow. This was the law of Love.

And so these three leaders, with their big egos and their big differences and the big, beautiful dream that they all shared, assembled. They chose teamwork to make the dream work, and each spoke full of grace and power. Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers and sisters you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

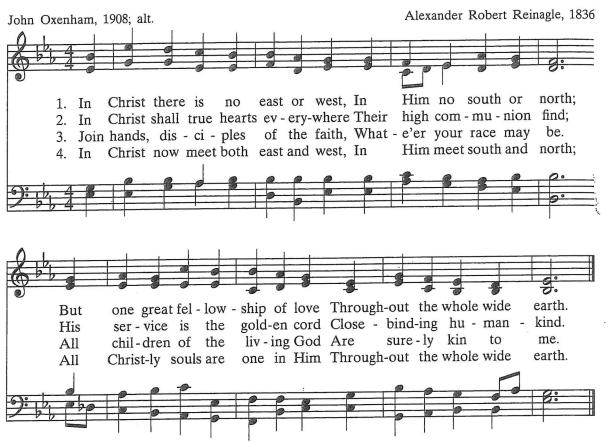
Then the whole assembly kept silence and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles, as the ones who had been come to know them and love them and learn from them. After they finished speaking, James replied, "My brothers and sisters, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, so 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord— even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.' Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God.

In Church history, the Council of Jerusalem is considered to be the first ecumenical council—the first authoritative meeting of different parts of the Body of Christ coming together with their different ways of understanding and their different ways of doing things in order to seek unity for the sake of the Gospel. "Ecumenical" is a very churchy word that we most often use to describe our different churches and traditions coming together to work together for the beautiful dream. It is also a good way to think of us coming together as individuals to do the same thing. After all, that is what happened with Peter, Paul, and James. They came together and decided upon a roadmap that could make the beautiful dream work. And we can still make that beautiful dream work if only we do the hard work of teamwork! It is not an easy map that we follow. The law of Love seems so simple, and yet it is oh so difficult to implement because we all have our own ways of understanding it, our own ways of teaching it, our own ways of enacting it. And, of course, we all have our own egos—and our own insecurities for that matter! It certainly was not easy for those apostles gathered in Jerusalem. And, of course, part of what made things work after that was the fact that they got space from each other—going their separate ways again, but this time of one accord with their beautiful differences.

Dream with me for a moment! Dream with me of a life in which we choose our shared identity and shared strength as the body of Christ and set aside our egos and insecurities. Dream with me of a world in which our different ways of understanding and teaching and enacting love were embodied as a beautiful diversity, all part of one body reaching out to people who are indeed different and need those different ways of experiencing love. Dream with me of a Kingdom built upon the radical Love of God as proclaimed and embodied by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Oh yes, we can make that beautiful dream work—here at FPCH, across the body of Christ, across the world! Amen!

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ST. PETER CM



Blest Be the Tie That Binds 306

