

July 26, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.

Tenth Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Jean Smith

*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 *Amazing Grace* from Virginia Harmony, arr. Martha Mier

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalms* 105)

Leader: O give thanks to the LORD, call on the LORD's name, make known the LORD's deeds
among the peoples.

**ALL: Let us sing to the LORD, let us sing praises to the LORD; let us tell of all the LORD's
wonderful works!**

Leader: Glory in the LORD's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Seek
the LORD's strength; seek the LORD's presence continually.

**ALL: Let us sing to the LORD, let us sing praises to the LORD; let us tell of all the LORD's
wonderful works!**

Leader: Let us remember the wonderful works the LORD has done, the miracles, and the
judgments the LORD has uttered. The LORD is our God whose judgments are in all the
earth.

**ALL: Let us sing to the LORD, let us sing praises to the LORD; let us tell of all the LORD's
wonderful works!**

Leader: The LORD is mindful of the covenant forever, of the word that the LORD commanded, for
a thousand generations.

**ALL: Let us sing to the LORD, let us sing praises to the LORD; let us tell of all the LORD's
wonderful works!**

***OPENING HYMN:** "Here in This Place" (Glory to God, 401)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not
know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for
words." With the assurance that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us, let us confess to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

Almighty God, your Spirit intercedes for mercy. We confess to you, trusting in the grace that you pour
out upon us. We confess that we lose confidence and courage because we are small. When we face
obstacles we lose faith and think that we cannot handle them. We see our struggles as insurmountable,
forgetting the promise that if we have even the smallest amount of faith we can move mountains. We
forget that your Kingdom was once compared to a mustard seed. Remind us that you have planted seeds
of faith and strength within us. Remind us that we are empowered and gifted because of those seeds
within us and that we can do small things with great love. 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! Who is in a position to condemn? It is Christ who died, who was raised, and who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

ALL: **In Jesus Christ 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: (Adapted from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*)

It pleased God, in God's eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, God's only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and humanity, the prophet, priest, and king; the head and Savior of God's Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

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: *Genesis 29:15-28*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 8:26-39*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 13:31-35, 44-48*

SERMON: Small Things with Great Love

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* Thomas O. Chisholm/William M. Runyan
Sung by Nancy and Jerry Veltman

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: The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet, when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs. Even if we give just a little, it can bear great fruit! If you are here in person, please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshipping 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 *It Is Well with My Soul*

Philip P. Bliss, arr. Martha Mier

*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)

God, with these gifts we commit to planting seeds that will grow and grow. Nourish these seeds that we have planted and tend to us as we use them for your Kingdom of new creation. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** "Seek Ye First" (Glory to God, 175)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Ludwig van Beethoven, arr. Martha Mier

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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 7/26:	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM Fellowship Hosts: Deacons Salad Sale
MONDAY 7/27:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 7/28:	Prayer Shawl – 1:00 PM Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 7/29:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 7/30:	Scripture in the Park 6:30-7:30 PM at Redar Park in Schererville
SATURDAY 8/1:	AA – 6:30 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **SALAD SALE TODAY, JULY 26TH** Get a delicious lettuce-free salad and support our general fund in the process!
- **FAITH DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE** We're once again collecting school supplies to support students and teachers in Highland! If you'd like to participate, you're invited to bring a few school supplies to worship on August 9 & 16. If you aren't able to come to worship, supplies can be dropped off Mondays-Thursdays, 8 am to noon, in the collection bin near the church office from August 10-20. If you'd like to help but can't make it to the church building at all, you can mail in a monetary donation marked for school supplies, and we'll do the shopping for you. If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **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.
- **AUGUST CALENDAR FUNDRAISER** For the month of August, we will be doing a Calendar Fundraiser. A person selects a day to sponsor and donates the amount of the date sponsored. For example, if someone sponsors August 20, they would donate \$20. A copy of the calendar will be available in the narthex and digitally online. There is a limit of two sponsors per day, and it is open to members of the congregation and friends of the church.
- **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
Wendy
Jessica S
Shirley McKnight
Renee Williams

Genesis 29:15-28

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was graceful and beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. ²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) ²⁵ When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ Laban said, "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-35, 44-48

³¹ He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

³⁴ Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth to speak in parables;
I will proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation.”

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.”

Mustard Seed People

Genesis 29:15-28; Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31-35, 44-48

Two weeks ago, we heard Jesus tell the parable of seeds planted in different soils. Always the brilliant teacher, Jesus understood that seeds and the plants that they bear are universally familiar. They worked as images in his time and context because of the prevalence of agriculture, and they continue to work in the same way for many across the world today. They also work for anyone who has ever tended to a plant at home or walked through a garden or a field or a yard or a forest. From the poorest of the poor to the most formally educated scientists, people know seeds and plants intimately. It is for good reason that our scriptures are full of poetic paintings of mighty cedars and oaks, of fig trees and grape vines, of wheat and lilies of the field. Of all the seeds and plants that Jesus could have chosen to describe the Kingdom of heaven, though, he chose the unlikeliest of candidates: mustard.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Now I am sure that some of you master gardeners out there have seen a mustard plant. Maybe you've even eaten mustard greens. If so, you are probably aware that mustard is not a tree. It is most commonly a leafy green plant that blooms with beautiful yellow flowers, much like other leafy green plants with flowers that you can find in gardens. In certain places with certain varieties, though, the mustard plant can grow into a densely tangled mess of a shrub. It is still not a tree scientifically, but I can understand why it may have been thought of one through ancient eyes. I wonder if the ancient idea of a tree had more to do with a plant's nature as a habitat than as a particular combination of woodiness and singular trunks. For, birds certainly could find shade and shelter and sustenance in the rare sprawling mustard shrub. Its tangled mess of stems would make it a nice sanctuary. Its upper branches are high enough off the ground to protect from some land-bound predators. It is also low enough to the ground to perhaps protect fledglings from perilous falls.

So let us get the image of the giant, hulking tree out of our heads and instead focus on the densely branched, low, sprawling shrub. This image might not be as striking in its visual awesomeness, but it is certainly striking in its significance! For, in using mustard to describe the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus was focused on its function in providing shade, shelter, and sustenance.

And so he was focused on the Kingdom as a home of hospitality for the weary—for those in need of a cool place to rest from the scorching sun, those in need of sheltered protection from hardship, those in need of a hearty and nutritious meal. In other words, the Kingdom of Heaven was home to exactly those who crowded around Jesus to hear his stories and receive his healing and be held in his love. The poor, the demon-possessed, the broken, the sick, the outcast, the "sinners," the migrants, the orphans, and widows—they would have been the ones considered small and insignificant by those with power. They would have been regarded with disdain as mustard seeds, these tiny, nearly imperceptible things.

And so we get to the heart of the matter. For, the heart of Jesus's teaching was the mustard seed. For, at its heart and at its start the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed. Jesus was not referring to the mustard seed in all its smallness as something to be despised. On the contrary, he perceived this tiniest of seeds to be a remarkable thing full of life and exquisite potential. And by exalting the tiny mustard seed, he was lifting up the mustard seed people who surrounded him, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, and so all of you are like the Kingdom of Heaven." Your smallness is not a weakness. Your smallness is a gift. Your smallness is potential. Your smallness is the seed of the Kingdom. What extraordinary encouragement! What astonishing empowerment!

Whenever I read or hear about mustard seeds I am transported back to my time in India, where *Nearer My God, to Thee* became my favorite hymn amongst all my grandmas and grandpas there. For, mustard seeds are staples of cooking in southern Indian cuisine. Check pretty much any southern Indian recipe for curries, pickles, or cassava, and you will find mustard seeds. They add this delicious sharp, tangy flavor, and to cook with them is quite simply a fun sensory experience. They are usually the very first ingredient to be added to the oil in the frying pan, serving as the canaries in the coal mine to sound the alarm that the oil is hot enough for everything else. You see, when mustard seeds heat up, they start popping. So you cover the frying pan with a lid

and wait for the pinging and dinging to start. Watch out when you lift the lid! I've had my fair share of hot pings and dings on my skin from careless lid lifting! So the mustard seed prepares the way for all the delightful deliciousness that follows.

I have wonderful memories of hanging out in the hot kitchen as these remarkable chef grandmas cooked for over a hundred people, making these intricately complicated dishes with handfuls of this and pinches of that in the precise measuring system of decades of cooking by hand. Of course those hands were also practiced at swatting me away if I got too close with my curiosity and cooking ineptitude and attempts at being the taste tester. Hey, it was for good reason that my kitchen duties were restricted to serving the food!

The best part was always that moment of calm before the storm, as the oil and mustard seeds heated up, when everyone would take a deep breath before the percussion of popping seeds sounded the alarm to get going. Once all the food was ready, echoes of the mustard seeds would resound across the campus as a tin can like bell rang time for the meal.

Before I would get to start my one duty of serving, we would sit or stand as able and sing a praise song:

Nanniyode njan Sthuthi Paadidum

Ente Yeshu Naatha

Enikkay nee Cheythoro nanmaikkum

Innu nanni chollunnu njan

I will sing praises with thanksgiving

My Lord Jesus

For the good thing you did for me

I am thankful today

And then we would all dig into mountains of food that had all started with the smallest of seeds—the mustard seeds.

These women were the very embodiment of Jesus's mustard seeds. They were either widows or never married, cast away from their families and society in their old age due to poverty or simple cruelty. Cast aside, they found themselves in community with each other along with wizened old men who had suffered the same fate at the hands of society.

Day after day they toiled together and then sat around together, simply being. Each day would end with a handful of people gathered together in a mustard seed of an old chapel, reciting prayers and singing more songs. And in this life that was so seemingly simple was perhaps the most profound faith I have ever encountered. You see, at that point in their lives they did not aspire to greatness in the eyes of society. They did not seek to be big and powerful. Rather, theirs was a shared ministry of presence. They sought to be present with and for each other in the twilight of their lives. And that, my loved ones, is the meaning of the mustard seed. That is the gift of smallness—the ability to be present with and for each other. After all, that is what Jesus did. He joined people in their communities and welcomed people into his community and sat with them and ate food and told stories. His was a ministry of presence.

I know that many of us here at First Presbyterian Church of Highland worry about our smallness. We get discouraged when we see so many empty seats. We get sad when we remember who used to be in those seats. We fear that we might get even smaller next year and then the year after that and then the year after that until there is nobody left. We wonder if we have done something wrong. We look back to the years of yore and long for the days when pews and classrooms were full to overflowing. We strategize about new programs to attract more people. We pray for a miracle of rapid growth—hey let's call it Miracle-Gro! And then when the rapid growth eludes us, we get even more discouraged.

But listen! Can you hear the gentle voice of the one who loved us into being? "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." Seeds often remain seeds for a very long time. They can be germinated after decades. In the meantime, they maintain their miraculous potential. In the meantime they serve profoundly important purpose. In my time here, I have heard some of our newer members and visitors say that they have joined us because with our smallness they know that they can be known and loved well here. They know that they are joining a family. They know that they can find rest and shelter and sustenance here. They know that the mustard seed people are present with and for each other. Can you still hear his voice? Your smallness is not a weakness. Your smallness is a gift. Your smallness is potential. Your smallness is the seed of the Kingdom. What extraordinary encouragement! What astonishing empowerment!

Approximately 1,500 miles away from Kottayam, Kerala, where I lived, is the massive city of Kolkata in the state of West Bengal. For much of her life, this was the home of Mother Teresa. She has a complicated legacy in retrospect, but I doubt that anybody would question her faith or sincerity or the impact she had on the world. I imagine that most of us have in mind the image of her as a little mustard seed of a woman in her white and blue habit.

Hers was always a ministry of presence to the least and the lost in society. She famously said, "In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love." We can do small things with great love, and that is more than enough! For though our numbers may be small, and though we may feel like our impact is small, there is no such thing as love that is small! Love is always great. Every act of love is boundless in its potential. And love is in no small supply here!

Boundless love is alive in the ways that we are present with and for each other and with and for this community. Boundless love is alive in the meals we prepare and share. Boundless love is alive in our tiny little blessing box and our constant attention to it no matter how exasperating it can be. Boundless love is alive in shawls we knit together and pray over. Boundless love is alive in our labors to make our spaces functional and beautiful. Boundless love is alive in goodies and coffee served and shared. Boundless love is alive in our exploration of the Word together throughout the week. Boundless love is alive in meticulous planning and preparation, yes even when only two or three show up. Boundless love is alive in the resources we share with mission partners. Boundless love is alive in the welcome and shade and shelter and sustenance we provide to everyone who comes here seeking a home. Boundless love is alive in every kind word and smile and hug and phone call and greeting card and visit. Boundless love is alive in the songs we sing and the prayers we pray and the worship we lift up to God. Oh yes, we are a mustard seed people, and boundless love is alive in us! Hallelujah!

And boundless love is alive in us outside of the walls of this church as well! We must remember that we are mustard seed people as we go about our daily lives. The brokenness of this world can feel overwhelming in its vastness and our smallness. I know that I have felt overwhelmed by it lately, and I know that I am not alone. The mammoth scale of warfare, the vast gulf of income inequality, the earth-shattering behemoths of natural disasters, the massive upheaval of displaced peoples, the sheer magnitude of hatred towards those in need of shade, shelter, and sustenance—all of it can make us feel utterly powerless in our smallness. But we are mustard seeds, and even when the things we do seem small, the love therein is boundless. It can grow into a sprawling shrub where the least and the lost can find home, can find belonging.

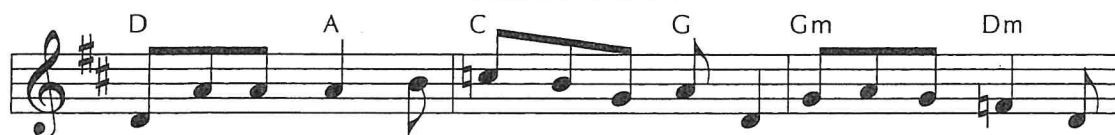
So let us do small things with the sure knowledge of the boundless power of love. Let us speak up when something is wrong. Let us write letters when laws are causing harm. Let us demand justice for someone who has been harmed. Let us march in solidarity with communities that are targeted. Let us listen when someone needs to be heard. Let us offer healing when someone is hurt. Let us pray for someone who looks or sounds different from us. Let us honor the image of God in those who have been demonized as enemies. Let us smile kindly at someone who is discouraged. Let us talk to someone who is lonely. Let us comfort someone who is grieving. Let us give to someone who is experiencing resource poverty. In other words, let us be like those grandmas and grandpas showing up for each other when no one else would. Let us do small things with great love. Let us be present as Jesus was present, a mustard seed among mustard seeds. *That is the Kingdom of heaven.*

Towards the end of his life and ministry, after meeting Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus gathered his disciples together and spoke once more of mustard seeds. Listen once more for his voice: "Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." Amen.

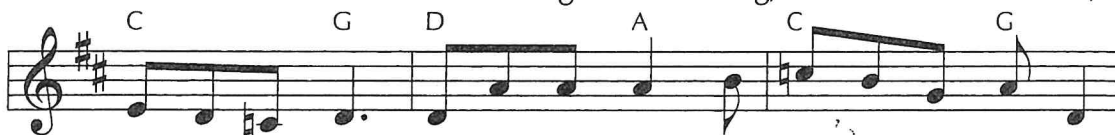
Here in This Place

401

Gather Us In



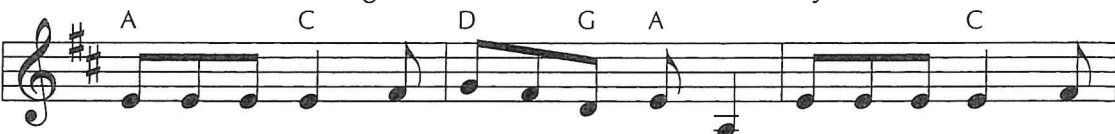
1 Here in this place the new light is stream-ing; now is the dark-ness
2 We are the young, our lives are a mys-tery. We are the old who
3 Here we will take the wine and the wa-ter; here we will take the
4 Not in the dark of build-ings con-fin-ing, not in some heav-en,



van-ished a-way; see in this space our fears and our dream-ings
yearn for your face. We have been sung through-out all of his-tory,
bread of new birth. Here you shall call your sons and your daugh-ters,
light years a-way: here in this place the new light is shin-ing;



brought here to you in the light of this day.
called to be light to the whole hu-man race.
call us a-new to be salt for the earth.
now is the king-dom, and now is the day.



Gath-er us in, the lost and for-sak-en; gath-er us in, the
Gath-er us in, the rich and the haugh-ty; gath-er us in, the
Give us to drink the wine of com-pas-sion; give us to eat the
Gath-er us in and hold us for-ev-er; gath-er us in and



blind and the lame; call to us now, and we shall a-wak-en;
proud and the strong; give us a heart, so meek and so low-ly;
bread that is you; nour-ish us well, and teach us to fash-ion
make us your own; gath-er us in, all peo-ples to-geth-er,



we shall a-rise at the sound of our name.
give us the cour-age to en-ter the song.
lives that are ho-ly and hearts that are true.
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Descant

Al - le - lu - ia,

1 Seek ye first the king - dom of God
2 Ask, and it shall be giv - en un - to you;
3 You shall not live by bread a - lone,

al - le - lu - ia,

and seek, its righ - teous - ness,
seek, and you shall find;
but by ev - ery word

al - le - lu - ia,

and all these things shall be add - ed un - to you.
knock, and the door shall be o - pened un - to you.
that pro - ceeds from the mouth of God.

al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia!

PERSEVERING *toward* WHOLENESS

The 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, addressed constitutional governance, racial justice, gender justice, denominational finances and the direction of the church, laying groundwork for work continuing through the next assembly.

Co-moderators elected, GA228 to be held in Puerto Rico

Commissioners elected the **Rev. Marta Pumroy-Cordero**, border ministry coordinator for the Tres Rios Border Foundation in Tres Rios Presbytery, and the **Rev. Dr. Kristopher D. Schondelmeyer**, pastor and head of staff at First Presbyterian Church in Davenport, Iowa, as co-moderators. They will preside at GA228, June 11-22, 2028, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Commissioners also **approved full, in-person assemblies**, including an exhibit hall, beginning in 2030.

Budget and per capita

Commissioners approved a **balanced \$188.4 million unified budget** for Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL &W) and the A Corporation for the 2027–2028 biennium, about \$5.8 million more than the previous budget: \$90.45 million for 2027 and \$97.92 million for 2028. Per capita rates were set at \$13.04 in 2027 and \$12.72 in 2028.

General Assembly Relationships

The GAR Committee approved the new Organization for Mission, the structure for the General Assembly as the denomination's highest council, and **established PL&W** and its governing board.

Israel/Palestine

Commissioners approved RIW-04, declaring that the **Israeli government has violated international law** prohibiting genocide in its war in Gaza. As amended, RIW-04 directs the denomination's Office of Public

Witness to advocate against U.S. military sales to Israel and purchases from Israel. It also encourages members to avoid products from Israeli companies linked to violations of international law.

Constitutional interpretation, missiology, and mission co-worker dismissals

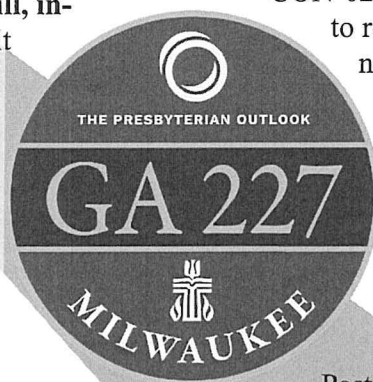
Following testimony on staff dismissals during **World Mission's closure**, the assembly approved CON-02, directing PL&W and the A Corporation to revise employment policies to prohibit nondisclosure covenants for employees, with a report due to the 2028 assembly. RIW-01 calls for review of the processes that terminated mission co-worker positions and World Mission. RIW-02 directs the development of a new missiological statement for global engagement.

Pastors will now be required to complete **boundary and abuse-prevention training** at least every three years. An overture to remove the Board of Pensions' medical coverage requirements was rejected.

Commissioners referred CON-10, which seeks an authoritative interpretation of monogamy, for discussion within the theological framework proposed in GEN-09, "Beyond Changing Families."

Gender and Sexuality Justice

The Constitutional Interpretation Committee **rejected a call for a special study of the Olympia Overture amendments**, citing related proposals GEN-06 and GEN-09. GEN-06 directs the development



of a mechanism that would allow congregations to indicate their openness and readiness to call an LGBTQIA+ candidate on their Ministry Discernment Profiles. Candidates would be allowed to view congregational responses. GEN-09, “Beyond Changing Families: Flourishing Relationships and Belonging,” seeks a theological framework and a study guide on human sexuality and gender that reflect the PC(USA)’s commitment to full inclusion.

The assembly reaffirmed support for **access to medically necessary gender-affirming healthcare** and approved development of a survey collecting non-identifying information about sexual misconduct in church settings.

Climate and Environmental Justice

The Climate Justice Committee approved CLJ-02, “Changing Course for a Green Future,” **directing divestment from more than 50 companies** by 2030 and barring new investments in them. All CLJ items were placed on the consent agenda, including a call for education on regenerative farming and prioritizing responses to the climate crisis.

White Christian nationalism

Commissioners voted overwhelmingly to declare White Christian nationalism and similar ideologies “**a theological error**” incompatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ; language changes in the *Book of Order* require presbytery ratification. Commissioners rejected an amendment that would have removed references to White Christian nationalism from the Special Committee on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Race report.

Racial justice

The Racial Justice Committee advanced several recommendations **strengthening the denomination’s**

anti-racism work, including RAC-04, “The Report from the Special Committee on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Race,” directing “PL&W to create a tracking system that displays the progress/ completion of all GA business... related to race, racism, and White supremacy ...”

RAC-01 calls for PC(USA) entities to report to the 228th GA on implementation of RGJ-13, the 2022 Report from the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force. RAC-03, the “Resolution on Liberia Project 180,” explores establishing theological learning and repair, and developing **acknowledgment and apology for Presbyterian involvement** in and support of the American Colonization Society and its lasting effects on Indigenous Liberians.

Ordered ministry

The Theological Education and Ordination Committee approved changes **modernizing preparation for ministry** while preserving Presbyterian ordination standards. ORD-02 clarifies that ministry preparation in G-2.06 and G-2.07 of the *Book of Order* applies to those training for the ministry of Word and Sacrament; it requires a two-thirds presbytery vote. ORD-03, addressing collaborative ministry teams, was approved; ORD-04, seeking removal of the time-of-service requirement for ruling elders in mid council roles, was not.

A new confession

A newly appointed special committee will continue **considering a new confession**. The draft seeks to articulate Christian faith in response to contemporary challenges including racism, economic inequality, environmental degradation, violence and political polarization.

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