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Welcome to First Presbyterian Church- Lynchburg, VA

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! It is an incredible joy to be with you to worship God this morning. As today presents a slightly different rhythm, space, and experience with worship, I thought I would share the “why” behind the “what”. Though not a specific day on the calendar of the Christian year, the unity of the church is a theme that needs constant attention. In a day of embarrassing fractures, congregations must step back from their own local concerns and highlight the unity of the body for which Jesus himself prayed. Such observances also give the church an opportunity to recommit itself to a life of unity. Unity can be observed and valued on many levels. Local unity sees worshipers of a local community experiencing their oneness in Christ without regard to their diversity in experience, economic stature, or opinions. Generational unity sees worshipers of all age levels sharing their oneness in Christ and encouraging one another. Historical unity sees the worshipers of today affirming their oneness with those who have gone before, perhaps many centuries before. Global unity sees God’s people of a variety of cultures and traditions affirming one another’s value, praying for one another, and joining in service together. Each of these dimensions demonstrates that unity does not imply uniformity. Though this theme may be highlighted throughout the Christian year, two occasions are especially appropriate. Each October we celebrate World Communion Sunday giving local churches the opportunity to come to the Lord’s table with the awareness of brothers and sisters of many churches and cultures doing the same. We are celebrating World Communion today in worship. And the other is Pentecost Sunday, when the apostles proclaimed the gospel in every language, as a time for the church to celebrate the Spirit’s work in calling us together as Christ’s body. Pentecost Sunday is celebrated each year 50 days following Easter.

Run the Race, Fight the Fight, Keep the Faith... Rev. Dr. Peter Thompson

Unity of the Church... World Communion Sunday

October 5, 2025

*Today’s worship is structured within the Service of the Lord’s Day **gathering, proclaiming, responding, and sending**, and is centered around the Lord’s table, which is set for the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is a physical, ritual action, mandated by Jesus, through which God acts to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach and assure us. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper nourishes our faith and stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly.*

**Those who are able, please stand.*

All are invited to join together in saying the liturgy printed in bold.

WE GATHER IN GOD’S NAME

Prelude

Here I Am to Worship

arr. Stan Pethel

Choral Introit

Love in Any Language

Welcome, Announcements, and Minute for Covenant Giving

Litany of Unity: 1 Peter 2:9-10

English (Alex Collier)

Leader: Today we declare God’s people are holy, as the scriptures reveal to us,

All: We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,

Leader: in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him

All: who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Leader: Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people;

All: once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy.

Leader: People of God,

All: all of us together have received God’s mercy in Christ.

Leader: In Christ we are forgiven, redeemed,

All: and made to be a community united in faith. Thanks be to God.

***Opening Hymn: Gather Us In (Here In This Place)**

Here in this place, new light is streaming, now is the darkness, vanished away,
see in this space, our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken; gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery; we are the old, who yearn for your face,
we have been sung throughout all of history, called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty; gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly, give us the courage to enter the song.

Here we will take the wine and the water, here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters, call us anew to be salt for the earth.

Give us to drink the wine of compassion, give us to eat, the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

Not in the dark of buildings confining, not in some heaven light years away,
but here in this space, the new light is shining, now is the kingdom, now is the day.

Gather us in, and hold us forever; gather us in, and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 133

Ephesians 4:1-6

John 17:20-24

Cantonese (YnDo Jones)

Portuguese (Alex Short)

Russian (Kinkade Garland)

***Affirmation of Faith: Confession of Belhar**

“We believe in the one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe that Christ’s work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God’s Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain; that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted; that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways;

- **in that we love one another;**
- **that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another;**
- **that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another;**
- **that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind;**
- **have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope;**
- **together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ;**
- **together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity;**
- **together know and bear one another’s burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ;**

- that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another;
- that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;

that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God; that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church.”

Children’s Moment

Choral Anthem

The Welcome Table

arr. Joel Raney

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD

Celebrating World Communion

Invitation and Great Prayer

English (Nancy Dawson)

Lord’s Prayer

Latin (William Neal)

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Words of Institution

Hebrew (Peter Thompson)

“Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the ground.”

“Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.”

Doxology

Hawaiian (Jean Hannon)

*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.*

WE GO OUT IN GOD’S SERVICE

*Hymn: Siyahamba/We are Marching in the Light of God

ZULU

*Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’,
Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’,
Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’,
Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’,
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’,
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba, ekukanyen’ kwenkos’.*

ENGLISH

*We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, we are marching, ooh,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, we are marching, ooh,
We are marching in the light of God.*

*Benediction

Go in peace to love and serve our Lord.

*Postlude

How Great is Our God

arr. Stan Pethel
