



First United

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Unitedprestroy.org † (518)272-2771

JULY 6, 2025

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

GATHERING MUSIC

Highland Cathedral (*Korb/Röver*)

arr. Charles Callahan (1951-2023)

Meditation on "This Is My Song" (*Finlandia*)

Franklin D. Ashdown (1942-2023)

WELCOME & FRAMING

Good morning, FUPC!

Today is a jam-packed Sunday in the life of our church:

we'll ordain and install Noel as a deacon,

we'll share in the Lord's Supper,

we'll hear some special music from Rick and Miriam,

and, we'll celebrate immigration Sunday.

Our PCUSA liturgical calendar schedules Immigration Sunday for the Sunday closest to July 4th every year. It is a reminder that any celebration of our country is a celebration of the gifts of immigrants, and a call for us to recommit ourselves to advocating for welcome.

*GATHERING WORDS

Let us gather for worship with our hearts set on hospitality—

here strangers and friends are welcomed into the family of God!

The Spirit invites us to dwell together as God's house-guests—

Let us be openhearted and learn from other sojourners along the way!

The kin-dom of God knows no borders and requires no documents.

We sing praises to the God of every nation, praying for peace and giving thanks for the immigrants whose energy, talent, and gifts make our country rich!

*OPENING HYMN

#340- This is My Song

***This is my song, O God of all the nations,
a song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine,
But other hearts in other lands are beating
With homes and dreams as true and high as mine.***

***My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on clover-leaf and pine.
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
So hear my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace for their land and for mine.***

***This is my prayer, O Lord of all earth's kingdoms:
Thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done.
Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him,
And hearts united learn to live as one.
So hear my prayer, O God of all the nations:
Myself I give thee; let thy will be done.***

CALL TO CONFESSION

Exodus 23:9: "Do not oppress immigrants, for you know what it is to be an immigrant—you were immigrants in Egypt."

Leviticus 19:33-34: "Do not mistreat the immigrant who resides in your land. The immigrant who lives among you must be treated like one of your own. Love them as you love yourself, for you too were an immigrant in the land of Egypt."

Deuteronomy 27:19: "Cursed are those who withhold justice from immigrants or orphans or widows."

Hebrews 13:1-3: "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to immigrants, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those immigrants who are detained in prison, as though you were in prison with them; remember those immigrants who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured."

Matthew 25:35: Jesus declares "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was an immigrant and you welcomed me."

More than 400 times, scripture demands that we meet the foreigner, the stranger, the immigrant with compassion, justice, and hospitality. 400 repetitions suggests that God's people have struggled to treat immigrants well for a long time, and Church, even with thousands of years and hundreds of reminders, we are no closer to getting it right.

Hear the sound of love poured out.

Trusting that the God who claims us in water will not let us go,
let us confess our shortcomings together:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

adapted from Rev. Jennifer R. Evans

God of Mercy, your heart breaks with grief and outrage when you hear the cries of your beloved children—farmworkers torn from their fields, families separated, and communities living in fear. We confess that we often forget those workers who rise before dawn, who sweat under the sun to feed us, yet are denied the fruits of their labor. We avert our eyes

from the parents detained, the children who weep in uncertainty, and the neighbors who wonder who will be next.

Forgive us for the ways we have benefited from injustice, and accepted policies that dehumanize our immigrant neighbors. Stir us to action and help us move our feet, our resources, and our voices for justice. Make your Church a refuge, a place of healing where we protect the vulnerable. Help us embody the Beloved Community where all are fed, all are free, and no one is illegal. In the name of the Liberator Christ, who was himself a refugee and migrant, we pray. Amen.

Silence is kept for Prayer and Reflection.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Later, we'll hear part of Paul's letter to the Galatians:

"May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Savior Jesus Christ! Through it the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. [...] All that matters is that one is created anew."

Every time we wash our hands,
water our gardens,
or get caught in a summer down-pour,
we experience that newness all over again.
Beloved, 400 times we have failed to love our immigrant neighbors,
and 400 times, God has forgiven us and given us the opportunity to love better.
Know that we are forgiven.
And, may we never need a 401st reminder.
Thanks be to God!

*RESPONSE TO GRACE

#659- *Know that God is Good*

***Know that God is good. Know that God is good.
Know that God is good, God is good, God is good.
Halle, hallelujah. Halle, hallelujah.
Halle, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.***

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

The Peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you!
And also with you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EMBODIED PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE

Gal 6:1-16
Luke 10:1-11; 16-20

SERMON

"Sheep Amid Coyotes"

Friends, if I had waited a bit longer before printing the bulletins, this sermon would be titled, "Sheep Amid Alligators." In this past week, we have witnessed cruelty in our world that breaks God's heart and causes us to grieve: rich and powerful men dodging justice and accountability in court; a budget bill that is anything but beautiful; and jokes and merchandise profiting over a new ICE facility in Florida, "Alligator Alcatraz," a uniquely American concentration camp. In

the face of such evil, it is difficult to trust Jesus' words that God's kin-dom is drawing near. Where do we start?

In our gospel reading today, Jesus gives instructions to his followers before sending them ahead to prepare the villages he intends to visit. When we are feeling overwhelmed, Jesus gives us some ground rules for discipleship:

1. First, bring a buddy: we do not enter ministry of any sort alone. We need each other.
2. Second, discipleship requires vulnerability. Jesus tells folks what not to bring—no weapons for self-defense and no baggage. We are to enter new spaces with our guards down, and not be weighed down by preconceived notions of who we might meet along the way.
3. Third, our first job in every place we enter is to bring peace and blessings of shalom—wholeness, restoration, flourishing. You can almost picture peace like a dove alighting as a gift. Jesus also assures us that no offering of peace is every in vain. If the village rejects it, the spirit of peace will come home to roost. No gesture of peace, wholeness, and reconciliation is ever a lost cause.
4. Fourth, we must accept hospitality. Break bread with folks and share wine and songs and stories. Receive whatever they offer you with gratitude and joy.
5. Fifth, focus on deepening relationships by staying in one household for the duration of the visit. We must commit to remaining in relationship with our neighbors, even when we are tempted to pack up and start over again somewhere new, somewhere with people who live and think and believe more like we do.
6. Next, heal the sick. As we well know, universal FREE healthcare is a deeply Christian value, and if we ourselves cannot do the work of healing and mending, we must advocate for folks to receive the care they need.
7. Finally, help folks to notice how the kin-dom of God has already drawn near. This is the heart of our message—the Good News that God's kin-dom is already emerging, if not yet fully realized.

Not only does Jesus give us these rules for discipleship, he also teaches us how to respond to rejection with grace—not reciprocity. First, he gives them a ritual action of removing the dust from their shoes, an action based on the rituals that Jews completed when returning home from a journey. Shaking off the dust declares that the village in question is not home and gives those who are feeling hurt a chance to restore a sense of dignity and agency. Further, Jesus reminds us to check our egos—whether we are received or rejected is not about us, but about God. We cannot take someone else's spiritual journey personally—not when folks are closed off, but neither when they are flourishing. It's never about us, but about the work of the Spirit.

Now, friends, you may be thinking, "This is all well and good, but the truth is, we are more settled as a community. Few of us will hit the road without a hotel booked and a course charted." Indeed, First United, we are more likely to identify with the communities that are being visited. Our discipleship looks more like offering hospitality, feeding and housing the stranger, being open to receive peace and wholeness from those on the margins, and opening our eyes to see the kin-dom of God emerging in the ordinariness of our day to day lives.

For a better understanding of what discipleship looks like in more permanent communities, we turn to the epistles and today's reading from the end Paul's letter to the Galatians. Here, Paul offers some pastoral advice and words of encouragement. Unsurprisingly, Paul's main point is about what to do after someone makes a mistake and feelings are hurt—for truly, the most difficult part of living together intentionally as a community is dealing with the aftermath of conflict and finding ways to restore relationships.

Our Inclusive Bible translation describes more ~spiritual~ community members "correcting" the offender in a spirit of gentleness, but the verb for "correct," (καταρτίζω - Katartizo) is the same word for setting a broken bone, or popping a joint back into place. It means to repair or restore to wholeness. When we speak about justice after conflict, we default to thinking about the victim who was harmed, but Paul insists that it is the perpetrator who acted out of a place of woundedness and it is the responsibility of the community to walk alongside the offender and take part in their healing so that the community may be made whole again. "Bear one another's burdens" does not mean locking someone up in a carceral system, but deep commitment to remaining in relationship and helping to carry their load while they heal. Discipleship means being collectively responsible for the well-being of the whole community.

Now, lest those folks deemed "more spiritual" get too cocky, Paul urges us not to compare our progress with any other person's, but to take stock internally of how far we have yet to go on our spiritual journeys. "Carry your own load," here means we each have to show up to do our own work to pursue wholeness for ourselves. Therapy isn't just about intervening during a crisis, but about doing the day-to-day maintenance and slow healing to make sure that we do not lash out and harm someone else. Discipleship means managing our internal weather-systems patiently and responsibly.

Finally, while it's easy for us to tune out whenever Paul starts talking about circumcision, it's important for us to keep the bigger picture in mind. In a binary world where conquered nations either worshipped the emperor as God or, if Jewish AND circumcised, prayed to God on behalf of the emperor, the growing Jesus movement defied category. For Paul, the whole point of Jesus' message was liberation and salvation for the whole world—for every ethnicity and every nation. Paul was insistent that followers of the way did not have to become Jewish in order to worship God. But this also meant that Christians did not pledge allegiance to any one flag or leader or country—in fact, the very nature of being Christian mean resisting the state and rejecting the idea that any one nation is closer to God than any other country. Faithful discipleship means rejecting the myth of American exceptionalism and protesting any sort of state-sponsored religion in all of the insidious ways that Christian nationalism shows up.

*RESPONSE

#154- *Jesus Entered Egypt*

***Jesus entered Egypt fleeing Herod's hand,
living as an alien in a foreign land.
Far from home and country with his family,
was there room and welcome for this refugee?
Jesus was a migrant living as a guest
with the friends and strangers who could offer rest.***

***Do we hold wealth lightly so that we can share
shelter with the homeless, and abundant care?
Jesus crosses borders with the wandering poor,
searching for a refuge, for an open door.
Do our words and actions answer Jesus' plea:
"Give the lowly welcome, and you welcome me?"***

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTORAL PRAYER

You are the God who makes miracles,
the one who turns the sea into dry land,
mourning into dancing,
enemies into friends,
and empires into dust.

You ask the simple things from us:

to eat each other's foods
and enjoy each other's company.

You ask the hard things from us:

to love one another,
embrace our differences,
and seek forgiveness.

God of compassion,

hear the cries of the oppressed throughout the world,
from those languishing in jail without a trial in our own cities
to those fleeing destruction abroad.

We pray especially for immigrants and refugees within our borders,
who have escaped violence and lack of opportunity,
only to face discrimination and fear here where they hoped to be safe.

May we remember that these are also children of God, our siblings.

Transform us to find hope where there is despair
and passion where there is apathy.

Give us trust in your abundance
and grant us patience when we see only scarcity,
that we might answer your call to be laborers
in the fields you are sowing. Amen.

DEACON ORDINATION &
INSTALLATION

Noel Hains

LITANY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 27

There are varieties of gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives them.

There are different ways of serving God, but it is the same Lord who is served.

God works through each person in a unique way,
but it is God's purpose that is accomplished.

To each is given a gift of the Spirit to be used for the common good.

Together we are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

STATEMENT ON ORDINATION

PROFESSION OF FAITH

THE IMMIGRANT APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in Almighty God, who guided the people in exile and in exodus, the God of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean, who was born away from his people and his home, who fled his country with his parents when his life was in danger. When he returned to his own country he suffered under the oppression of Pontius Pilate, the servant of a foreign power. Jesus was persecuted, beaten, tortured, and unjustly condemned to death. But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, not as a scorned foreigner but to offer us citizenship in God's kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal immigrant from God's kingdom among us, who speaks all languages, lives in all countries, and reunites all races. I believe that the Church is the secure home for foreigners and for all believers. I believe that the communion of saints begins when we embrace all God's people in all their diversity. I believe in forgiveness, which makes us all equal before God, and in reconciliation, which heals our brokenness. I believe that in the Resurrection God will unite us as one people in which all are distinct and all are alike at the same time. I believe in life eternal, in which no one will be foreigner but all will be citizens of the kingdom where God reigns forever and ever. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS

PRAYER OF ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

All who have ever served as a deacon, elder, or pastor are invited to come for the laying of hands.

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

*An offering plate will be passed during the service,
or you may give online through Tithe.ly: <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1309305>
Please note where you would like your gift to be directed (general fund, deacons, etc.)*

OFFERTORY

"The Dreamer"

Jackson Browne

Rick Moyer, guitar and Miriam Parmelee, vocalist

*DOXOLOGY

"Glory, Gratitude, and Praise"

Glory and gratitude and praise now let earth to heaven raise.

Glory and gratitude and praise: these we offer to God.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

In the offering of our gifts, as well as the living of our days, may we never grow weary of doing what is right, but commit to welcoming the stranger, advocating for the marginalized, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and sharing whole-heartedly in the work of justice and compassion. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

COMMUNION

INVITATION

God be with you,
And also with you.
Open wide your hearts!
We open them up to God.
Let us give thanks for this time and space,
We praise God for this meal we will share.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR
GOD

SANCTUS

#596- *You Are Holy*

You are holy, you are whole. You are always ever more than we ever understand. You are always at hand. Blessed are you coming near. Blessed are you coming here to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead. You are holy, you are wholeness; you are present. Let the cosmos praise you, Lord! Sing hosanna in the highest! Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna to our God!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR
CHRIST

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

**Jesus died, bearing our burdens;
Jesus was raised, shaking off death's dust;
Jesus will return, rejoicing in doing God's work.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SHARING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*CLOSING SONG

#727- *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*

***Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.
We are pilgrims on a journey; we're together on the road.***

***We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.
I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.
When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.
Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.***

BLESSING & SENDING

Go now, and proclaim that the reign of God is near.
Travel lightly, but bear one another's burdens,
and so fulfil the law of Christ.
Work for the good of all,
avoid temptation,
and pray that God will send more laborers
into the harvest.

And may God give you mercy and peace;
May Christ Jesus give you power over all that would harm you;
And may the Holy Spirit produce within you
a rich harvest of joy and life.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

SENDING MUSIC

Postlude in D Minor

Flor Peeters (1903-1986)



Pastor: Rev. Marranda Major (marranda@unitedprestroy.org)
Guest Organist: David A. Vrendenburg – Eastern NY Chapter,
American Guild of Organists (AGO)
Guest Musicians: Rick Moyer and Miriam Parmelee
Onscreen Visuals: Charlotte Albertin, Martha Juenger,
and Jim Parmelee
Audiovisual Production: Jim Parmelee and Don Drew

	Session	
<u><i>Class of 2026</i></u> Dan Rogers Peggy Smith Savchik Sue Wright	<u><i>Class of 2027</i></u> Jim Parmelee Sue Steele Marilynn O'Dell	<u><i>Class of 2028</i></u> Alan Chandler Kodzo Dzikunu Bruce Reed
<u><i>Class of 2026</i></u> Peg Drew Martha Juenger Pat Rudebush	Diaconate <u><i>Class of 2027</i></u> Debbie Brown Miriam Parmelee Brenda Westbrook	<u><i>Class of 2028</i></u> Diane Chandler Olga Green Noel Hains