



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FENTON

To be a loving community of faith dedicated to helping people
know Jesus Christ and grow, share and serve as his disciples.

2nd Sunday after Pentecost
June 22nd, 2025 10:00 a.m.

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GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

PRELUDE

WELCOME

2 Corinthians 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 42

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

**2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.**

**When shall I come and behold
the face of God?**

3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

**4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.**

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

**6 My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you**

7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your torrents;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

**8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.**

9 I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”

**11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.**

OPENING PRAYER written by Eugene Blair

Almighty God, we come to worship you today with open hearts and open minds. We want to hear and receive what you have to say to us in this service. Speak to us today as you spoke to those who went before us. Tell us the stories of your wonder and greatness. We are ready to hear them. Remind us once again of your grace and love. Help us teach your goodness to our children and the next generation. Amen.

HYMN PH #339 BH #563 “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

CALL TO CONFESSION

On March 4, 1865, after four years of a bloody civil war, Abraham Lincoln spoke to the nation on the occasion of his inauguration to a second term as President. He recognized that many in both North and South prayed to the same God, asking for help to defeat the other side. He wrestled with a perennial question: how do we know God’s will amid our own conflicting claims? Lincoln said he hoped and prayed that the war would end quickly but recognized that God’s judgments are right, even if God allowed more blood to be shed. He concluded by advocating “malice toward none” and “charity toward all” as the nation worked toward “a just and lasting peace.”

The following prayer was written by Barbara and Ronald Feenstra and draws from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Join on the bold)

Dear Lord,

Just as President Abraham Lincoln wrestled to understand your will amid war, we too struggle to see your hand in our own troubled world.

Conflicts, war, and suffering haunt so many in our day.

As in Lincoln's time, Christians line up on opposite sides of important struggles. We pray for our side to prevail, sometimes without reckoning with valid claims of the other side.

We try to enlist you in our cause rather than aligning ourselves with your will.

We think we know what you want rather than acknowledging that your judgments "are true and righteous altogether."

Forgive us, Lord, for our narrowness and selfishness. Move in our hearts so that we will hold "malice toward none" and "charity toward all."

Give us wisdom to see your righteous will and courage to "bind up" the wounds inflicted by the conflicts of our time.

Above all, we ask, O Lord, that you will grant us "a just and lasting peace among ourselves" and with others. Amen.

DECLARATION OF PARDON

Excerpt from the song: 'I'll Make the Darkness Light' written by Charles Price Jones

"I will make the darkness light before thee. All thy battles I will fight before thee. The high place I will bring down. When thou walkest by the way, I'll lead thee. On the fatness of the land, I'll feed thee, and a mansion in the sky I'll deed thee."

Know that God is a god of forgiveness and be at peace.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God in heaven, may we overcome our narrow understandings and limited perspectives as we read your scripture. May we walk hand in hand with our brothers and sisters as we hear your word. So that, as we hear it we may turn to each other

and ask what did you hear in that? What is the Spirit saying to you on this matter? And in so doing may we live in your light that shines from your word and may we walk in paths illuminated by your will. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Genesis 3:13-15

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” **14** The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: Acts 17:22-31

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. **23** For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. **24** The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, **25** nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. **26** From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, **27** so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. **28** For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we, too, are his offspring.’

29 “Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. **30** While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

SERMON “The Philosopher’s Club”

Rabbi Larry Zimble

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

A MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

Have you ever been exposed to any philosophical arguments or discussions when you found yourself doubting your faith?

Have you ever called on the Spirit to lift you away from compromising philosophies?

HYMN PH #750 “Goodness is Stronger than Evil”

This Hymn was written by Desmond Tutu, the South African Anglican bishop who famously practiced love while resisting apartheid.

BEARING THE WORD OUT INTO THE WORLD

OFFERING

Let us give in celebration of the blessings that God has bestowed on us, knowing that blessings that are not shared lose their benefit in isolation.

Let us pray...

Jesus, you set us free from the yoke of slavery. May these gifts honor this freedom you give us and may it be used to grant freedom to each other, our neighbors, our friends, and our enemies. Amen.

(If you would like a written prayer request included in our prayers today, please indicate that and an usher will collect them)

Will the Ushers Please come forward.

OFFERTORY When Israel Was in Egypt Land [PH #52]

Robbie Carnes

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.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Dear Lord,

We commemorate freedom on this Juneteeth and we also remember that: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” You have created us as your children and tied us together in “an inescapable network of mutuality.” Whatever affects any of us directly affects all of us indirectly. Injustice pervades our world, distorting and harming your people. But you are a God of justice whose laws are just. You entered our world, not advocating “bitterness and hatred,” but “love, truth, and goodness.”

You have called your people not to preserve injustice, but to advocate for “the cause of justice.” You have called us as your church, not to be an “irrelevant social club,” but instead to carve “a tunnel of hope” through a mountain of injustices. Help us, as your people, to “meet the challenge of this decisive hour” by working to advance your “eternal will.” We are the beneficiaries of so many good gifts and blessings. We enjoy freedoms to live and worship that were unknown throughout most of human history. For the many blessings we have received from you, including the blessing of living in this country, we thank you. Yet so many people in our society and our world do not experience the blessing of freedom. Many are slaves to unrelenting debt, to dead-end jobs, to addictions, or to abuse in their homes or at work. They are vulnerable in their own communities, yet no other community will take them in and provide refuge. We look at people in such desperate conditions and do not see them as our equals. Like the enslaved people Frederick Douglass described in 1852, talk of freedom seems like mockery to them. Our rejoicing seems “empty and heartless,” our boasting about our “national greatness” looks like “vanity,” and our public thanksgivings look like hypocrisy covering up so much wrongdoing. We look critically at those on the margins of society, ignoring their voices and pleadings. Despite Hosea’s proclamation that you desire mercy rather than sacrifice, we focus on the letter of the law rather than feeding the hungry and sheltering the stranger. We complain when we see threats to our freedom of worship, but not when we see threats to the vulnerable. We walk paths of injustice instead of following your just will. O

Lord, please hasten the day when tyrants fall and give way to justice and equality among all who bear your image! Amen.

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.

TABLETALK WITH GOD'S CHILDREN

HYMN PH #353 BH #379 "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

CHARGE Galatians 1:13,14

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, "*You must love your neighbor as yourself.*"

BENEDICTION "Fruit We Bear"

LET US AGREE, THAT WE WILL BE
SIGNS OF THE LIFE TO COME
AND MAY WE BELIEVE, AND FREELY RECEIVE
ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE

MAY THE FRUIT WE BEAR BE CHRIST
MAY THE HARVEST BE RIPE
OH THE FRUIT WON'T FALL SO FAR FROM THE TREE
ABIDE IN YOU, ABIDE IN ME
AND THE FATHER IS GLORIFIED
AND THE FRUIT WE BEAR IS CHRIST

AS WE LIVE, MAY WE FORGIVE
GRATEFULLY EACH DAY
AND FOR PEACE, FOR LOVE TO INCREASE
HOLY SPIRIT, WE PRAY

MAY THE FRUIT WE BEAR BE CHRIST
MAY THE HARVEST BE RIPE
OH THE FRUIT WON'T FALL SO FAR FROM THE TREE
ABIDE IN YOU, ABIDE IN ME
AND THE FATHER IS GLORIFIED
AND THE FRUIT WE BEAR IS CHRIST

LET US AGREE, THAT WE WILL BE
SIGNS OF THE LIFE TO COME
AND MAY WE BELIEVE, AND FREELY RECEIVE
ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE

POSTLUDE

Peace be with you!...and also with you!