

Sunday Worship Service — August 30, 2026

Minimally cleaned transcript: non-spoken audio markers and obvious music-recognition artifacts were removed. Spoken wording, fillers, repetitions, casual phrasing, and sentence structure are otherwise preserved. No bulletin was used to silently correct the readings.

Welcome everyone to worship today at First Presbyterian Church. We're glad you're here. Uh you didn't melt in the rain. So, you got one thing going for you today. For those of you that stayed home to stay dry, well, we welcome you here, too. Those on Zoom and Facebook and YouTube, we're glad that you're here and joining us in worship. We have uh there's a few announcements to be made. Uh there's lots of opportunities to get involved in uh Christian education. Uh there's some lots of classes are starting up for the September season. Please look at that in the signup sheets. Um, in addition, there are uh still opportunities to purchase flowers and uh and other um uh Swedish ivy, zenyas and Swedish ivy and to support the mission committee's efforts as well as I see there is um

monarch butterflies milkweed which is monarch butterflies candy, right? That's what that's what they like to eat. There are some if you'd like to plant some milkweed in your yard. Uh there's some available there as well. For right now, we have an announcement from uh well from the worship committee. Is that right? Come on up.

Good morning. Um I'm here uh to uh remind you that we're uh this year we're going to put out an Advent devotional book that like we had in the past. And in it, um, people would offer their thoughts on either the scripture for that day or it's just something that came to their hearts and minds to share with you. And, um, so we're hoping to fill up our uh, writer's calendar by September 13th. And when you do sign up, um, you'll pick up one of these and it's a um, advent calendar daily breath prayers. And each day has a different breath prayer such as uh when you inhale you you think God weeps and then when you exhale with those who cry out and each day has a different breath prayer that you can think about during that day and ready your hearts for the coming of Christ. So, um I'm hoping that each of you will think about um signing up and when you do sign up on that day Oh, dog on it. Where's my purse? Um, I had these little sheets for you and you can, um, put in the date that you sign up for and then write down the the scripture passages that are available for you to look at and think about. And then we would like all these turned in by October 4th. So that's several weeks from now. So you don't have to rush and hurry yet. And so think about that, please. and look on the um signup sheets in the fellowship hall. There's three examples of uh worship books that uh if you're new to our congregation, you might not have seen before. And this will give you an idea of what we're looking for. So, thank you for thinking about that.

Who do we know ourselves to be in Christ? children of God. That's right. We have been grafted into the family. Jesus is our older brother. And so therefore, as children of God, we are called to constantly work harder than we've worked before, to um overdo things, to overextend ourselves, and pour ourselves out till we have nothing left. Is that right? Ouch. No. Jesus says, "Come all those who are weary and downtrodden, and I will give you rest." We believe in a God who calls us children and calls us to rest. That's not just nap time, but it's something way more than that. So, friends, as restful children of God, let's rise and greet each other with the peace of Christ. Peace of Christ be with you. of the pastoral I will do the call to worship. I can read this right. Oh, give thanks to the Lord. Call on his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him. Sing praises to him. Tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his presence continually.

Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered. And then our opening prayer. Dear Jesus, your response to suffering is constant and steady. You never shy away from our hurts or our harmful environments. You are present in our pain. Help us to see you there. Help us to know your presence in our trials. Remember us also, Lord, of our of your response to evil. While we pray for vindication, you reach out to love the unbearable. While we cry out for self-satisfied justice, you respond to oppression with love. Help us to understand this. Help us to trust that your love will transform the world and uphold our hearts. Amen. And now we sing. Christ has made the rich sure foundation. Christ is the foundation. Christ the victorious might all forever. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. All you might see is Oh my god. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. There are days and nights where we feel like drowning and we can't come up for air. And sometimes, to be honest, what weighs us down is our own faithlessness or lack of belief. Our faults don't simply evaporate like water. We're drenched by their waves. And yet God calls us, beckoning us forth, directing our paths, calming the storms. Together we name those things which cause us to sink so that we may walk freely towards God. Please join me. Lord, it's plain and simple. Our thoughts are not your thoughts. Our ways are different from your ways. Try as we may, we're unable to walk in perfect step with you. We put other things first. Our social lives, our to-do lists, our addictions, our arrogance. And yet you give us chance after chance to shape our thoughts and ways around you. Forgive us our misplaced priorities. Oh God, shape our behavior and our lifestyles by the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus Christ that we might better follow you. Amen. We've taken some time to admit the things that we want or need to change. A mistake, a guilt, a lie, the brokenness of it all. Something somehow has made us feel distant from God. But in Jesus Christ, we can be assured. We are not distant. We have been heard and we are loved and we are forgiven. Amen. It's a prayer for illumination. Jesus, unexpected guest, you come like a thief in the night, encountering in us ways we could not never anticipate. Wake us up. Make key in our senses. Arouse our suspicions of our presence among us. For we know that heaven and earth will pass away. The new heaven and earth are coming. Yet your words, the very words we hear this day endure forever. Amen. Our Old Testament is Jeremiah 15- 21. Oh Lord, you know, remember me and visit me and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In your forbodance, do not take me away. Know that on your account I suffer insult. Your words are found, and I ate them. And your words become to me a joy and the delight of my heart. For I am called by your name, oh Lord, God of hosts. I did not sit in the company of merry makers, nor did I rejoice under the weight of their hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation. Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are there to like a deceitful brook make like waters that fail. Therefore, thus says the Lord, if you take back, I will take you back, and I will stand and you will stand before me. If you set utter what is precious and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them, and I will make you, this people, a fortified wall of bronze. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you. For I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord. I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

The New Testament lesson is John 9:es 1-1. As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned of this man or his parents, that he had been born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man or his parents sinned? He was born blind so that God's work might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day, cuz night is coming when no one can work. As I as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud in the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go wash in the pool of Silom, which means scent." Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" And some were saying, "It is he." Others are saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." But they kept asking him, "Then how are your

eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it in my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Silum, and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight. And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know. And here I have some Play-Doh here. Let's take a seat. So you take a take a piece of Play-Doh here. I'm going take some, too. Okay. Before you open the Play-Doh before, did you just hear the Bible story? Yeah. This is when I was I think when I was your age, I always thought this was pretty fun because did you just hear that Jesus spat on the ground? Can you spit? How far can you spit? Do you think you can spit to the pew? No, you don't know. I think that'd be pretty hard. That's pretty far away. But isn't it funny? Jesus spit and then he made mud. Have you you've you've probably played with mud, right? Probably not mud that you spit at and made mud, but you've played with mud. But then Jesus did another thing. Did you hear that? He put the mud in somebody's eye. Now, if I would do that, I'd get in trouble. Pretty big. Cuz do you want mud in your eye? No. It's kind of gross. It's icky. And I always thought, why did Jesus do that? So, here's what we're going to do with Play-Doh. Let's just pretend because we're I don't I don't know if I want to spit in in the sanctuary. That would be kind of gross. And we don't really have too much dirt, but that's how Jesus made mud, right? And so, let's just pretend that this is mud. Yeah. Yep. And so, um, can you imagine putting that mud on your eyeball? Well, wash. But I always thought, why why did Jesus have to use mine? So here I want you to do can you make an eyeball? You make how would you make an eyeball? Oh yeah, we know we're going to make an eyeball. What do we What parts do we have to do to make an eyeball? See, I got a round shape, right? Do I have to like draw the little What's the eyeball part? It's um an iris, right? Oh, look at that. Look at that. Does that look like an eyeball? Yeah. Yeah. You see? Now, watch this. Okay. Is it going to work for me? Is it? No. I can't see out of it at all.

And you have to put like a little hole in the middle. Yeah. Because like two holes, right? You kind of have the iris and then the pupil. That's what that's called. Right. Um, is this ever going to be an eyeball? No. Even if I spit in the mud. Sorry. Sorry, guys. Even if I spit in the mud and made a a mud ball, it would still be a mud ball, right? Nothing I could do could make a mud ball or a ball of Play-Doh an eyeball because cuz I cuz why? Who can make that into an eyeball? Uh, I think only Jesus.

That's right. because Jesus made everything. And that's kind of what Jesus was saying, I think, in my mind, that, hey, you're blind. You were born blind. That was the the man in the story. And that means he's never had eyeballs, never nothing ever worked. It's not like he had an accident. And then Jesus remakes him. Oh, that's a sad face. Can you make a happy face? Because Jesus has the power to remake us. Okay, we we'll have to work on that after the service. That kind of looks interesting. But but isn't that fun that Jesus can remake us even if even our eyeballs and that's part of God's promise? Okay, I think it's time to put our Play-Doh away and it will be available in the um in the fellowship hall. But for right now, it's time for Sunday school. Yeah.

Did you close it? Okay. Thank you very much. And Peggy's right there. Can we take it with us? You want to take the Play-Doh? Oh, yeah. I have plenty. You got it. Okay.

You two can have your own uh hands-on Bible lesson. There's plenty of Play-Doh in the fellowship hall on the kids table. Have you seen one of those viral videos on Facebook or YouTube where there's a child, like normally like a really young child, like a baby, and they're sitting with their parents in the doctor's office, and someone comes over with tiny little baby glasses, and it's the child's first ever time wearing glasses to correct their eyesight. And this child all of a sudden who's only been able to hear their parents' voices, they slide the glasses onto the child and then all of a sudden they can see all of a sudden. And it's kind of scary at first because they've only heard the voices of their parents. They've never seen their parents, but all of a sudden they're connecting the voice with what they see. Why are those videos so fascinating and so powerful? Well, for those of us with glasses or contact lenses, I know like the first time when I got glasses in middle school, I realized that there's actually leaves on

the tree. Like that was amazing. I could actually see like the rays of the sun, you know, coming out through the clouds. And I just thought that that was just in pictures. I didn't know what I was missing. So, how much more can it be for someone to all of a sudden be able to see clearly, especially those who you love so clearly in front of you? The disciples come to Jesus about this man who was born blind. And they ask, "Who was it? This man or his parents who sinned that he was born blind?" And Jesus answers them, "Neither this man nor his parents. This man has been blind since birth. And in those days, it meant that he was not going to have very many opportunities to get anywhere in his life. Perhaps he would have been just one more beggar at the gates in Jerusalem. To make it worse, most of the people that he encountered would have thought that either him or his parents had sinned somewhere in their lives to earn this blindness. Can someone hit the big red button over here? Thank you. Even Jesus disciples wonder what he had done wrong or what his parents did wrong or what had caused him to go be born blind. The disciples had evidently been taught according to their upbringing in Jerusalem that sin and hurt or injury, even handicap would have been linked together with the result of someone's human sin. But that poses many, many questions. We're living in a fallen world. From Genesis to Revelation, the scriptures tell us that we're living in a broken world, a fragmented world, a world which is not as it should be and not as it will be. And for the present, we're afflicted by these hurts and these injuries, these damages and hardships. And that's the hard part of life. It's a result of human sin coming into the world. But many of us think that we've escaped that because we weren't born with those sort of handicaps. But in fact, we all do have handicaps of some kind or another. How many years did that man grope in the darkness? Asking God, why me? Why can everyone else see, but I can't see anything? My whole life, I've listened to people talk about what they've been seeing, and I can only imagine. But I don't even have experiences or memories to aid me in my imagination because I've never seen anything. Why me? I wonder sometime times if things really changed for us in that respect. At our worst, it seems that we assume that people who have gotten ahead in life have somehow been more blessed by God and those who suffer do so as a result of their sin. At our worst, we judge other people based on those assumptions. Or just as bad, we judge ourselves based on those assumptions. But Jesus sees things differently. He tells his disciples that there's more here than meets the eye. This particular man was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. And that God had a plan and a purpose for his life. And that Jesus comes along. And that's true for us, too. For reasons that we don't know, Jesus spits in the mud, takes some dirt and the clay, and takes that clay as if he's almost saying, "Not everyone who has been born blind and had been born from clay got everything right the first time around. Some people are born with birth defects, and this man was one of them." So maybe Jesus was saying, "Let's go back to the clay." Pure speculation, maybe. But there's nothing particularly magical or anything chemically correct about Palestinian clay. Sorry guys, it's just Jesus. There's no perfect formula. And I think that's the point. Jesus is administering a touch. He's got the perfect object lesson, the perfect Sunday school lesson right here. Jesus takes the clay and he puts it on the man's eyes and he sends him to the pool of Salom saying, "Go to the pool of Salom and wash. Go wash in the pool and then come back." And so the man went and washed and came back. And can you imagine what's going through his mind? It's not just like, "Oh, there's the pool right there." Like, he had to go wander through Jerusalem. I don't know if somebody took him by the hand or not, but he had to go to the pool of Salom, wash, and then come back. And when he first opens his eyes for the first time in his entire life, you can imagine he sees blinding light and he sees people. And then he sees all these things that he's only heard about all these many years. But in today's gospel lesson, it's about more than just physical sight. It's about more than just healing this physical malady. In this story, the healing of the man takes place in two verses, real short, but the whole story is 41 verses long, and we read 11 of them this morning. After this man's physical sight is restored, the neighbors start to argue. They start to argue about whether or not he had actually been born blind in the first place. They refuse to see that this miracle has actually occurred. They'd rather be blind themselves

about what's happening here than having to rethink their entire world and their place in it. And so, it's almost like they can't see the miracle that's happened right in front of them. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are a little less concerned about whether the miracle has occurred or not. Their concern is that it happened on the Sabbath. They too are unable to see that this miracle happened because they're blinded by their rules and their regulations about what is or isn't allowed to happen on the Sabbath. And then there's the blind man's parents. They're so afraid about being kicked out of the synagogue for being followers of Jesus that they refuse to believe what's happened to their son. They say, "Well, let him speak for himself. He's an adult." they tell the Pharisees because their fear has blinded them from seeing and celebrating this miracle too. And they had probably been praying for that their entire lives. And all of this leads me to wonder, is there anyone in this story who's not been born blind in some way? By the end of the story, there's one person who does finally see it all, and that's the blind man. He's got to grow in his faith in this very short amount of time. But he comes to believe and see who Jesus truly is. After his physical sight is restored, he's brought back to the Pharisees and they badger him with questions. Can you imagine having to stand up before a judge or somebody who's really smart kind of like a PhD person like defending their thesis? Like here's this guy who, you know, who's been born blind, probably hasn't been to school, and he's before these like theological giants and he shares just what's happened to him. He doesn't go into any big long speech. He just openly and honestly like shared what happened. And when they ask him what he thinks about Jesus, he says to them, "He's a prophet." You see, he's beginning to see. He's not quite there yet. But later, after his own parents have abandoned him, he's brought before the Pharisees again, and they demand him to tell them that Jesus is a sinner because obviously Jesus has done things on the Sabbath that weren't things he was supposed to be doing. And so they're trying to, you know, catch him in this and they demand him to tell them that Jesus is a sinner. But his answer is this. I don't know whether or not he's a sinner. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see. But the Pharisees do not like his answer. Of course, they kick him out of the synagogue just like they had threatened to do to his parents. And perhaps this suffering was part of the process towards seeing who Jesus was that God can use even our most difficult experiences to help us believe in him. So this blind man who had been physically healed by Jesus has now been rejected by his family. He's now been kicked out of his community. And who's left? Jesus is still standing there before him.

When Jesus had heard that the Pharisees kicked this man out of the synagogue, he returned. And we don't know why Jesus left, but we do know why he returned. To help the blind man see. Jesus says, "Do you believe in the son of man?" And the blind man says, "Well, and who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him." And by this very question, we can see that this man is ready to believe. He's searching for answers to his questions. Sometimes I feel like our questions reveal more to us than our answers. But this man's questions reveal his humility, his openness, and a faith that we just don't see in anyone else in this story. Who is he? Who is this Jesus? And Jesus answers him, "You've seen him, and the one you are speaking to now is he." Whoa. And this man believes what Jesus says. Lord, I believe, he says. And now this man born blind can see it all. He can see what all the other people in the story missed out on seeing. He believes in Jesus. And what else can he do but turn around and worship Jesus? This calls to mind another story about a man who was sitting across the street from an artist studio. He was a homeless man who was sitting there with his hat begging for coins or dollars and the artist saw him through the window and he thought it would make a really interesting uh portrait study of this man. And so from a distance you could see the discouraged look of this man, his downcast eyes, his almost defeated look on his face. But when the artist finished the picture, he took it over to the man so that he could look at it. And the man said, "Well, who's that?" Cuz the portrait faintly, you know, resembled him, but the person in the picture was someone who had dignity, who was sitting upright, who had a brightness in his eyes and a look that met the person in the eyes, a determined look. The

beggar said to the artist, "Is that me? Because I don't look like that." But the artist replied, "That's the person that I see in you." It's true for the artist named Jesus, too. Jesus sees something in us before we see it in ourselves. And Jesus wants us to see our dignity, to forgive our sin, to reconcile us back to God. In other words, to help us see the things that we just can't see through our own blindness, so that we can see who we are. So that we can see who others are. and to see ourselves and them as God sees them. Amen. If you'll please stand for our response hymn.

I want the world to see. Christ. Christ. Mother. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat. Yeah. Heat.

burying the world out into the world. What does it mean to offer something to sacrifice a belonging you would rather keep to freely give a gift? When we as followers of Christ talk about suffering, we have to consider that God is actually asking us to offer ourselves and not just things we own. In this time of offering, take your mind off material things to give away. Instead, think about how you can offer your time, your imagination, your education, your compassion, and your plans for the future. Willingly give from your heart. God will receive it. If you'd like a written prayer request included in your prayer today, please indicate that and the ushers will collect them. Will the ushers please come forward?

Praise God. Praise God. Heat. Heat.

Please be seated. Prayers this morning for Ellen Horton who's been hospitalized. Um prayers for Laura as she travels today to the Mayo Clinic seeking relief from her illnesses. Uh prayers for those in Nepal and for others um in the earthquakes that have buried their homes as well. If you'll bow your heads with me in prayer. Lord, we come before you acknowledging that we often walk in shadows, bound by our own limitations and the darkness of this broken world. And like the man who sat blind from birth, we confess that there's places in our lives where we can't see the way forward. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are the light of the world. That you don't wait for us to find our way to you. that you take the initiative to seek us out in our quiet despair. Forgive us when we look at the pain and trials of those around us and assign blame or when we're blind to the dignity of our neighbors living on the margins. Open the eyes of our hearts, oh Lord. Heal the places in us that feel broken or irreversible or forgotten and remind us that in our struggles is an opportunity for your grace and your works to be displayed. Give us the courage of the man who washed at the pool of Salom. The courage to obey, to stand in your truth and simply say, "I was once blind, but now I see." Grant your church the boldness to share your light with the hurting world and bring hope where there's despair and sight where there is unbelief. And Lord, we pray in your holy and healing name as you taught us to pray, saying, "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 the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Our our final hymn is amazing grace. And the the story behind the hymn Amazing Grace is pretty amazing in itself. Um it was written by John Newton um in the 1700s late 1700s and he wrote it kind of as a personal confession of his own dramatic um you know change in his life. He had been um you know for many many years um the captain or on a slaving ship and realized just from the depth of his own humanity what he had done to others. And so this song is you know we can sing someone else's words just like we do in scripture when we pray the psalms but imagine that transformation and um how it might mirror your own. Please rise.

and sings. Let my heart You gracious. praise you. Heat. Heat. and the Lord has to Heat. Heat.

You're our charge. We are called and commanded to live a life that demonstrates goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, compassion, and above all, love. What does that mean? It means in all of our lives, wherever we go, whatever we do, we are to embody those aspects of

our faith. In the peaks and in the valleys, in the wonderland, in the wilderness of life, go in the confidence of God's love and care for you. and go in the assurance of God's presence and permanence. Receive now this blessing. God bless you and keep you. God smile upon you and gift you. God look you full in the face and make you prosper. May the peace of Christ be with you.

Amen. Christmas. Hallelujah. Heat. Heat. Heat. Heat.