



Jesus and the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Artist Unknown

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

July 26, 2026

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Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026

A SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

(As we prepare to worship, please silence all mobile devices.)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS AND CONCERNS

Esther Hethcox

PRELUDE

Duo

Jean-François Dandrieu

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Esther Hethcox

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

**People: Sing to God, sing praises;
tell of all the Lord has done.**

Leader: Glory in God's holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

People: Seek the presence of the Lord continually.

Leader: Remember the wonderful works of God,
and rejoice in God's eternal love.

All: Come, let us worship God!

***HYMN NO. 22**

God of the Sparrow

Roeder

***CONFESSION OF SIN**

Haley Winslow Stephenson

Call to Prayer

Prayer of Confession

**God of mystery, God of life,
we imagine that we are capable judges
of power and wisdom and goodness.**

**We trust our own standards;
we separate and categorize;
we mark the performance of others.**

**We fail to trust your power, hidden in all things.
We fail to watch for you, working out your purposes.**

Gracious God, hidden and manifest, forgive us.

**Transform our withered imaginations
until we yield the judgments we trust
to a love we cannot control.**

Silent Confession

Assurance of Forgiveness

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

**Those who are able, please stand.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Michael Roane

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Spirit of life,

meet us in words written, in words spoken;

intercede for us with sighs too deep for words,

until we shine with the hope that is hidden in our hearts,

for we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

PSALM READING

Psalm 128

(Pew Bible, OT Page 556)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Michael Roane

People: Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 13:31-32

(Pew Bible, NT Page 14)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Esther Hethcox

People: Thanks be to God!

SERMON

"Imagining Our Own Parable"

Esther Hethcox

(silent reflection)

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

From A Declaration of Faith

Haley Winslow Stephenson

Jesus announced the coming of God's kingdom

and its hidden presence in the midst of the world's kingdoms.

He taught his disciples to seek God's kingdom first.

We believe Christ gives us and demands of us

lives in pilgrimage toward God's kingdom.

Our confidence and hope for ourselves and other people

do not rest in the powers and achievements of this world,

but in the coming and hidden presence of God's kingdom.

Christ calls each of us to a life appropriate to that kingdom:

to serve as he has served us;

to take up our cross,

risking the consequences of faithful discipleship;

to walk by faith, not by sight,

to hope for what we have not seen.

***HYMN NO. 749**

Come! Live in the Light!

We Are Called

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

Lenore Champion

DEDICATION OF OFFERINGS

Invitation to Give

Offertory

Rejoice Greatly, O My Soul

Haley Winslow Stephenson

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

*Doxology with Alleluias

Lasst Uns Erfreuen

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia; Alleluia;

Praise God above, ye heavenly host;

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

The Hunger for Change offering will be received.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Haley Winslow Stephenson

(In unison)

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lord, satisfy us with your love in the morning,

People: and we will live this day with joy and praise.

Leader: Let us pray.

(Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession)

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.

*HYMN NO. 450

Be Thou My Vision

Slane

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Esther Hethcox

*POSTLUDE

Thanks Be to God

John Dunstable

Worship Notes



Sign In

First Presbyterian Church welcomes all who worship with us. Let us know you have joined us for worship by scanning the QR code to the left. For online giving, scan the QR code to the right.



Donate Online

We honor and celebrate the human diversity and unity that God gives us in Jesus Christ. First Presbyterian welcomes individuals of every age, race, nationality, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, and economic circumstance to participate fully in the life of the church.

So that you may know who is sitting nearby, please sign the *Friendship Pad*, pass it along the pew, and **then return it to the starting point**, noting the names of those sitting near you.

The flowers are given to the glory of God and in celebration of the 60th wedding anniversary of *Judith and Al Arrowood*.

Hunger for Change: Hunger for Change supports local and international hunger relief through the Presbyterian Hunger Relief Program. Your gift helps neighbors here in Durham and around the world.

Flower Donation Opportunities Available: There are open dates for worship flower donors in September. To sign up, visit bit.ly/FPCflowers26 or click on the flowers link in the bi-weekly newsletter.

A special thanks today for organist **Tom Bloom** and liturgist **Haley Winslow Stephenson**.

Rev. Mindy Douglas is away on vacation.

Portions of today's worship resources come from *A Declaration of Faith*, and *Feasting on the Word*. Music is reprinted under Onelicense.net: A.713926.

Childcare: A staffed nursery and children's playroom are available on the second floor of the education building during worship. **Activity bags and baskets** are available in the foyer for children. Please return them to the foyer at the end of worship.

Restroom locations: To the left and right as you exit the rear of the sanctuary; on the first and second floors of the education building; and on the first and second floors of the church house. There is an infant changing table in the restroom area located to the left as you exit the rear of the sanctuary.

Upcoming Events

Many of our events are posted in the bi-weekly newsletter. You may read past newsletters and join our mailing list at <https://firstpres-durham.org/weekly-newsletter/>



Yoga meets this week. Contact **Jane Wettach** for more information at janewettach@gmail.com.

Urban Ministries of Durham: We need volunteers to help us make and serve breakfast and lunch at Urban Ministries of Durham. We make bag lunches twice a month from 9:30 to 10:30, and we make and serve breakfast once or twice a month from 7:00 to 9:00. We will team you with a seasoned volunteer who will guide you through. If you are interested in being on the sign-up list, please contact **Jancy Johnstone**, 919.824.6489 or jancyjohnstone@gmail.com.

First Friends August Gathering: Join us for First Friends' August gathering, **Saturday, August 1 at 6:00 p.m.**, hosted by **Deborah and Tyler Momsen-Hudson**. Bring a side, dessert, or drink to share, plus outdoor chairs if you have them. We'll be outdoors, dress accordingly.

Cantanti North Carolina Presents "Inflections": Sunday, August 2 at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. A choral concert exploring the moments that change us, presented by Cantanti North Carolina. Admission is free with a suggested donation of \$5, benefiting Urban Ministries of Durham. All are welcome.

25th Anniversary of Fill That Bus!: It's that time of year again! For 25 years, FPC has helped stock the Teacher Store with free classroom supplies for DPS educators. Last year we donated over \$1,250 in goods. Help us reach 2,400+ teachers and staff at 100% of DPS schools this year. See the supply list in our latest newsletter and drop off in our foyer by **August 14, 2026**.

~ Celebrations and Concerns of the Congregation ~

We offer our condolences to:

Chris Brown and family upon the death of his relative **Ida Little**.

We remember in prayer:

George Bernhardt, who is in the hospital to receive a pacemaker.

Esther Hethcox's dad, Larry Hethcox, with a new diagnosis.

Sophie Wilkins, who is home after a hospital stay.

Tony Brown

Sue Fricks

Lee House

Harriett Mitchell

Paul Cornsweet

Christy Gudaitis

Ann Huff

Fred Moore

Sam Crabtree

Elizabeth High

Charlie Kelley

Sara Radtke

Susan Cyr

Kerry Holbrook

Elizabeth Manceras

Franzi Rokoske

Care Communities:

Croasdaile Pavilion: **Dub Gulley, Alfred Tisdale**

Hillcrest Convalescent: **Carol Wills**

Brookdale Senior Living: **Debbie Mathews**

Chatham Ridge Assisted Living: **John Fricks**

Durham Ridge: **Phillip Herndon**

Pruitt Health - Durham: **Fred Callaway**

Southpoint Atria: **Madge McKeithen**

Family and Friends of the Congregation

Ashley Alvord, colleague of Sharon Hirsch

Eddie Cheatham, mother-in-law of Donald Turner

Francisca Cristobal, relative of Al and Judy Arrowood

Kim Cummings, father of Drew Cummings

Sara Degand, cousin of Deborah Momsen-Hudson

Minnie Sue Douglas, mother of Mindy Douglas

Rosalynn Farrell, mother of Rachel Bethune

Linda Foster-Momsen, mother of Deborah Momsen-Hudson

Cheryl Fowler, friend of Cheri Reece

Jennifer Hervey, daughter-in-law of Jeanne Hervey

Donna Holladay, friend of Jane & Robert Brawley

Katie Jackson, wife of Matthew Hirsch

Donna Johnson, mother of Ann Huff

Edward & Meryl Keenan, brother and sister-in-law of Mary-Jo Keenan.

Anthony Ketcham, brother-in-law of Wil James

Sandra Mikush, mother of Katie Fogleman

Ana Sofia Ochoa, family member of Becky Martin

Patrick O'Neill, father of Brianna Bennett

Janet and **James Ouzts**, sister and brother-in-law of Celia Dickerson

Rebecca Todd ("Toddie") Peters, mother of Sophie Peters

Bill Prochaska, friend of Al and Judy Arrowood

Joe Quirk, stepfather of Tim O'Brien

Annie Reaves, great-niece of Floalice and Robert Reaves

Vivian Turner, mother of Donald Turner

Jim Vacca, father of Jamie Chambliss

Newton Wong, nephew of Paul Lee

HYMN NO. 22

God of the Sparrow

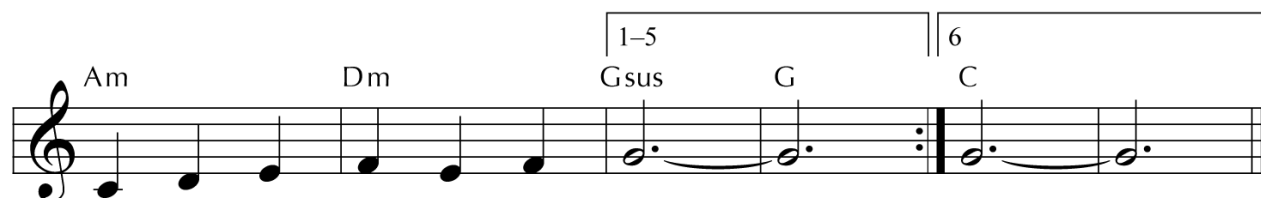
Roeder



1	God	of	the	spar - row	God	of	the	whale	God	of	the
2	God	of	the	earth - quake	God	of	the	storm	God	of	the
3	God	of	the	rain - bow	God	of	the	cross	God	of	the
4	God	of	the	hun - gry	God	of	the	sick	God	of	the
5	God	of	the	neigh - bor	God	of	the	foe	God	of	the
6	God	of	the	a - ges	God	near	at	hand	God	of	the



swirl - ing	stars	How does the	crea - ture	say	Awe
trum - pet	blast	How does the	crea - ture	cry	Woe
emp - ty	grave	How does the	crea - ture	say	Grace
prod - i - gal		How does the	crea - ture	say	Care
prun - ing	hook	How does the	crea - ture	say	Love
lov - ing	heart	How do your	chil - dren	say	Joy



How does the	crea - ture	say	Praise
How does the	crea - ture	cry	Save
How does the	crea - ture	say	Thanks
How does the	crea - ture	say	Life
How does the	crea - ture	say	Peace
How do your	chil - dren	say	Home



1 Come! Live in the light! Shine with the
 2 Come! O - pen your heart! Show your
 3 Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that



joy and the love of the Lord! We are called
 mer - cy to all those in fear! We are called
 great day when all will be one! God will reign,



to be light for the king - dom, to live in the
 to be hope for the hope - less so ha - tred and
 and we'll walk with each oth - er as sis - ters and



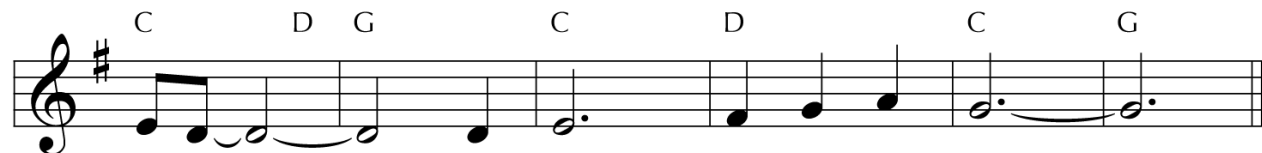
free - dom of the cit - y of God.
 vio - lence will be no more.
 broth - ers u - nit - ed in love.

Refrain

We are called to act with jus - tice; we are called to



love ten - der - ly; we are called to serve one an -



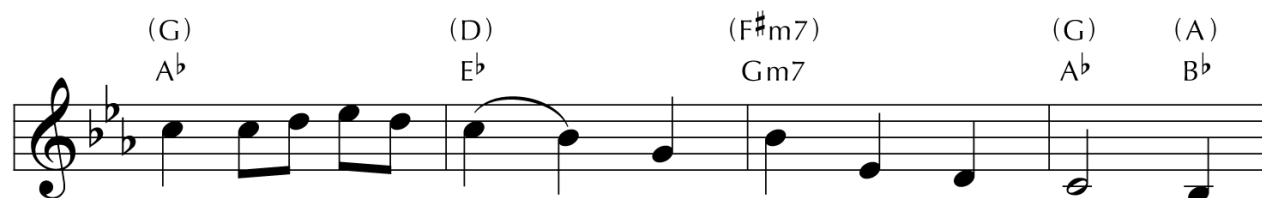
oth - er, to walk hum - bly with God.



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true Word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise;
 4 High King of Heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord;
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways;
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!



thou my best thought, by day or by night,
 thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tower;
 thou and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heaven - ward, O Power of my power.
 High King of Heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

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

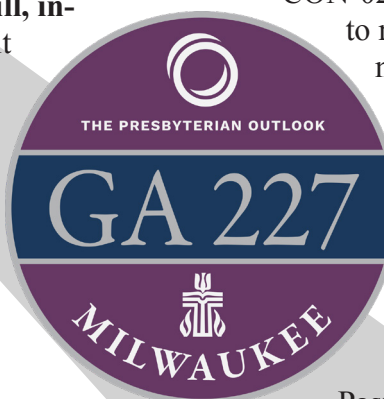
Following testimony on staff dismissals during **World Mission's closure**, the assembly approved CON-02, directing PL&W and the A Corporation to revise employment policies to prohibit nondisclosure covenants for employees, with a report due to the 2028 assembly. RIW-01 calls for review of the processes 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.

For full stories about General Assembly or other news from the PC(USA):

Visit our website: pres-outlook.org

Follow us on social:

Facebook: Presbyterian Outlook

Bluesky: [@presoutlook.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/presoutlook.bsky.social)



This Week at a Glance!

Sunday, July 26

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Hunger for Change Offering

Youth Leave for Montreat

9:45 AM Adult Faith Formation (Lectionary Class)

9:45 AM Children's Summer Faith Formation

11:00 AM Worship: Esther Hethcox, preaching

Monday, July 27

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Walk-In Ministry

1:30 PM Worship Planning (Pastor's Study)

4:30 PM Floor Yoga

All Day Montreat Youth Conference

Thursday, July 30

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Walk-In Ministry

6:15 AM Youth Summer Book Club (Daye Meeting Room)

All Day Montreat Youth Conference

Tuesday, July 28

8:00 AM Presbytery of New Hope Meeting (Trinity Ave. Presbytery)

11:30 AM Daytimers' Luncheon (Pomodoro's Italian Kitchen)

All Day Montreat Youth Conference

Friday, July 31

10:30 AM Chair Yoga

All Day Montreat Youth Conference

Wednesday, July 29

1:00 PM FPC Program Staff Meeting (Pastor's Study)

All Day Montreat Youth Conference

Saturday, August 1

All Day Youth Return from Montreat

Sunday, August 2

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:45 AM Adult Faith Formation (Lectionary Class)

9:45 AM Children's Summer Faith Formation

11:00 AM Worship: Mindy Douglas, preaching

3:00 PM Concert: Cantanti North Carolina

CHURCH STAFF

Janet Askew, Business Administrator
Lenore Champion, Director of Children's Ministry
Vernon Cooper, Sexton
Mindy Douglas, Pastor/Head of Staff
Susan Dunlap, Parish Associate
Omar Guess, Sr., Sunday Morning Sexton



Joseph Harvard, Pastor Emeritus
Esther Hethcox, Associate Pastor
Brandi Kirkland, Communications Associate
Matthew Moore, Minister of Music
Donald Turner, Facilities Associate
John Weicher, Associate Pastor

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, email the church office:
office@firstpres-durham.org or visit our website: <https://firstpres-durham.org>.

305 EAST MAIN STREET DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701 919.682.5511 ORGANIZED 1871