



© Isa Cummings, 11th grade

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

MARCH 23, 2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Third Sunday in Lent

McPherson Lectures

March 23, 2025

A SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS AND CONCERNS

Mindy Douglas

PRELUDE

The Gift of Love

O Waly Waly, arr. Kallman

Susan Fancher, saxophone

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Mindy Douglas

Leader: Jesus calls us to life — in all its fullness, not simply a checklist.

People: A life of relationship, of service, of mercy toward all.

Leader: Jesus calls us to notice —

the people around us, the creation, the presence of God in our midst.

People: And having noticed, to be flexible, for this moment matters.

Leader: Jesus calls us to compassion in action —

to allow ourselves to be moved from our plans to God's vision.

People: A vision with room for all.

All: Let us worship God.

***HYMN NO. 14**

For the Beauty of the Earth

Dix

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Esther Hethcox

Call to Prayer

Prayer of Confession (*in unison*)

You say, O God, that the way to abundant life is to live it:

to love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength,

without asking who deserves it, or how much is too much,

or any of the other questions we use to limit your love, and ours.

We confess that we'd really like a list.

Who exactly is our neighbor, and how will we know if someone is or isn't?

What is the appropriate level of attention and care and effort?

Forgive us, Lord, when we demand an itemized checklist before we act on love.

Forgive us when we draw the circle so tightly that we neglect to do mercy.

Forgive us when we are pulled in so many directions

we can no longer see you in the work we do.

Lead us back to your way —

the way of love manifest in the world,

the way of eternal life lived now.

**Those who are able, please stand.*

Silent Confession
Assurance of Pardon

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Esther Hethcox

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

***REGATHERING HYMN NO. 157**

I Danced in the Morning, v.1

Lord of the Dance

*I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.
At Bethlehem I had my birth.*

Refrain:

*Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,*

*and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Franzi Rokoske

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **Ever-present God,**

**we have a lot on our minds,
our to-do lists run off the page,
we flit from one thing to another,
sometimes doing three things at once.**

**Capture our attention today,
that we may focus on what you have given us to do,
be present to the people you have put in our paths,
slow down enough to feel compassion,
and simply to listen. Amen.**

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Leviticus 19:9-18

(Pew Bible, OT page 106)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

Amy Cooper Robertson, cantor

Franzi Rokoske, reader

GOSPEL READING

Luke 10:25-37

(Pew Bible, NT page 71)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

Robert Williamson, Jr.

SERMON

"The Limits of Neighborliness"

Robert Williamson, Jr.

(Silent reflection)

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** from *A Declaration of Faith*

Esther Hethcox

**God created human beings with a need for community
and with freedom to enter into it
by responding to their Maker with grateful obedience
and to one another with love and helpfulness.**

**We believe that we have been created
to relate to God and each other
in freedom and responsibility.**

**We may misuse our freedom and deny our responsibility
by trying to live without God and other people
or against God and other people.**

**Yet we are still bound to them for our life and well-being,
and intended for free and responsible fellowship with them.**

**Since every human being is made
for communion with God and others,
we must treat no one with contempt.**

We are to respect and love all other people and ourselves as well.

***HYMN NO. 771**

What Is the World Like

New World

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

John Weicher

DEDICATION OF OFFERINGS

Invitation to Give

Esther Hethcox

Offertory Anthem

Love Is Little

Shaker Hymn, arr. Ron Barnett

*Love is little, love is low, love will make our spirit grow –
grow in peace, grow in light, love will do the thing that's right.*

*Doxology (Hymn 607)

Old Hundredth

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;
praise God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.***

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

John Weicher

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

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 693

Though I May Speak

Gift of Love

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Robert Williamson, Jr.

*PRIESTLY BENEDICTION

Amy Cooper Robertson, cantor

POSTLUDE

Voluntary on "For the Beauty of the Earth"

Craig Phillips

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY!

Children's Music (Following Worship): The children who are attending the music program can follow Kathy Parkins upstairs to begin rehearsal.

Durham's 51st CROP Hunger Walk is later today with registration opening at 1:30pm. Walkers will step off at 2:30pm from Duke Chapel. FPC's team will meet in front of Duke Chapel at 2:00pm. Thanks to all of the sponsors and walkers for your support.

McPherson Lecture - Community Gathering (4:00pm): "Trusting God, Trusting Neighbor: The Vulnerability of Interdependence." All are welcome to join us for this interfaith event in Watts-Hill Hall.

Meaning in the Middle Fellowship (8:00pm): MnM is a faith formation group and a fellowship community of adults in their late 20s to 40s – single or with life partners. Read our newsletter at <https://firstpres-durham.org/weekly-newsletter/> to learn more. New friends are always welcome!



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.



Sign In

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*** in the sanctuary are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of ***Dr. and Mrs. S. D. McPherson, Sr.*** and ***Dr. and Mrs. Samuel D. McPherson, Jr.*** by the family.

The ***Lenten Banner*** was completed in 1990 and dedicated in 1991. It depicts traditional Lenten symbols. The banner was made possible by funds donated in memory of ***Bess Bryant*** and by the stitching of many devoted members of this congregation.

The ***Pulpit Paraments***: In 2012 First Presbyterian Church commissioned Laurie Wohl to design and create paraments to be hung from the pulpit and lectern during Lent and Advent. Wohl is an internationally known fiber artist who exhibited her work at the church in spring of 2012. Her liturgical projects emphasize the "threads that bind" and the unity of the Old and New Testaments. We are

grateful that the bequest of *Anne 'St. Clair' Williams* made it possible to enhance our sanctuary with these beautiful works of art.

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

Hearing Assistance Receivers are available from the ushers for use in the sanctuary during worship. Before you leave the sanctuary, please turn off the receiver and place it in the specially marked receptacle by the door or return it to the audio/video console at the rear of the sanctuary.

Restroom locations: To the left and right as you exit the rear of the sanctuary; on the second floor 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.

We thank **Susan Fancher** and **Ann Huff** for sharing their special music with us this morning.

Today's **bulletin cover** was created by 11th grader **Isa Cummings**. Isa writes, "Sometimes being a neighbor is just about being there when someone needs it." Throughout Lent, bulletin art will be in grayscale or pencil, as a mark of the solemnity of the season.

Portions of today's worship resources were reprinted from: Teri Peterson, BibleWorm Liturgist. Music is reprinted under Onelicense.net: A.713926.

Flower Donation Opportunities Available: There are open dates for worship flower donors during the next few months. To sign up, click on the flowers link in the bi-weekly newsletter, or on the link on the homepage of the FPC website at <https://firstpres-durham.org/>.

These Days devotional books for April-June (regular and large print) are available in the foyer.



First Friends Hike
Occoneechee Mountain

First Friends Hike
Occoneechee Mountain
March 29 at 10:15 a.m.

RSVP by sending a text to Catherine Dumas, at 919-218-8291 or email dumas.connect@gmail.com.

*625 Virginia Cates Road,
Hillsborough, NC 27278*



Day Timers' Luncheon
March 25 at 11:30 a.m.

Thai Café - 2501 University Drive, Durham

Hosted by Joe Harvard. RSVP to either Joe at jsharvard3@gmail.com or Mickey Velkey at 601.750.3619 by March 23.

The McPherson Lectureship

Loving Your Neighbor in a Fearful World!

We welcome to worship longtime thought partners *Dr. Amy Cooper Robertson, PhD* and *Prof. Robert (Bobby) Williamson, Jr., PhD* our 2025 lecturers for the McPherson Lectureship. Together, they produce BibleWorm, a weekly Biblical podcast discussing the Narrative Lectionary text, both as Biblical scholars and as people of faith - one Jewish, one Christian. **Monday, March 24th** at 9:00am we will gather for our clergy breakfast “Spiritual Leadership in a Fearful World.”

McPherson Lecture - Community Gathering (4:00pm): “Trusting God, Trusting Neighbor: The Vulnerability of Interdependence.” All are welcome.

~ About Our Lecturers ~

Robert (Bobby) Williamson, Jr., PhD, is Margaret Berry Hutton Odyssey Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) he was the founding pastor of Mercy Community Church and currently serves as Theologian in Residence at Canvas Community, both welcoming all people, especially those living on the streets, in Little Rock, Arkansas. He earned a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Emory, a post-graduate diploma in Jewish Studies from Oxford, a Master of Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, and a bachelor’s degree from Clemson. He is the author of *The Forgotten Books of the Bible: Recovering the Five Scrolls for Today* (Fortress Press, 2018).

Amy Cooper Robertson, PhD, is Director of Lifelong Learning and Music at Congregation Or Hadash in Sandy Springs, Georgia. She studied Jewish texts and language at Harvard Divinity School and later at Emory, where she earned a PhD in Religion/Hebrew Bible. In Atlanta and in Cambridge, MA, Dr. Robertson has taught Tanakh, Judaism, Biblical Hebrew, and critical thinking and writing to undergraduates and graduate students. She is the author of several articles, including “Kohelet Teaches Us to Live for Today: Unexpected Wisdom for the Real World from Ecclesiastes.”

~ About the McPherson Lectureship ~

The McPherson Lectureship is dedicated to enriching the faith and life of First Presbyterian Church and the Durham community. Inaugurated in the year 1999, the Lectureship is made possible through an endowment given by the McPherson family in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Samuel D. McPherson, Sr. and Dr. and Mrs. Samuel D. McPherson, Jr.

Former lecturers have been:

- *John Kuykendall* (1999)
- *J. Barrie Shepherd* (2001)
- *Beverly Gaventa* (2002)
- *Tom Long* (2003)
- *Joanna Adams* (2004)
- *Charles Kimball* (2005)
- *Nicholas Wolterstorff* (2006)
- *Joseph L. Roberts, Jr.* (2007)
- *Richard A. Lischer* (2008)
- *Stephen A. Hayner* (2009)
- *Barbara Brown Taylor* (2010)
- *Leighton Ford* (2011)
- *Martha Moore-Keish* (2012)
- *Samuel L. Adams* (2013)
- *Emilie M. Townes* (2014)
- *Ron Cole-Turner* (2015)
- *Douglas F. Ottati* (2016)
- *Miroslav Volf* (2017)
- *Starsky D. Wilson* (2018)
- *Mary Louise Brindle* (2019)
- *Macky Alston* (2021, 2022)
- *Catherine Barsotti & Robert Johnston* (2023)
- *Willie Jennings* (2024)

~Celebrations and Concerns of the Congregation ~

Condolences:

Emily Wilkins upon the death of Emily's friend **Janet Bodisco-Massink** on March 16th.

We remember in prayer:

Dennis Buckley recovering at Croasdaile Pavilion Rehabilitation following a stroke.

Evan Breyer, grandson of friends of Jo Ann Moore, was recently diagnosed with cancer.

Tony Brown

Paul Cornsweet

Sam Crabtree

Susan Cyr

Kerry Holbrook

Lee House

Ann Huff

Jenni James

Maryn Leonard

Mitzi Lesher-Thomas

Jen McGonigle

Madge McKeithen

Harriett Mitchell

Franzi Rokoske

Keith Rokoske

Alfred Tisdale

Phyllis Verhey

Care Communities

Croasdaile Pavilion: *Dub Gulley, Harvey Estes*

Durham Ridge: *Phillip Herndon*

Hillcrest Convalescent: *Carol Wills*

Pruitt Health - Durham: *Fred Callaway*

Brookdale Senior Living: *Debbie Mathews*

Family and Friends of the Congregation

Julia Allen, grandmother of Amy Wilson

Francisca Cristobal, relative of Al and Judy Arrowwood

Jacqueline Culver, niece-in-law of Mary Jo Keenan

Kim Cummings, father of Drew Cummings

Linda Foster-Momsen, mother of Deborah Momsen-Hudson

Cheryl Fowler, friend of Cheri Reece

Doug Hervey, son of Jeanne Hervey

Jennifer Hervey, daughter-in-law of Jeanne Hervey

Katie Jackson, wife of Matthew Hirsch

Donna Johnson, mother of Ann Huff

Alan Petersburg, brother-in-law of Jenni James

Aaron Pritchard, friend of Kathy Parkins

Wu-Chou Su, father of Claire Su

Logan Tice, friend of the congregation

Jim Vacca, father of Jamie Chambliss

This Week at a Glance!

<p style="text-align: center;">Later Today <i>Newsletter Deadline</i></p> <p>12:00 PM Diaconate (Watts-Hill Hall)</p> <p>12:15 PM Children's Choir (Choir Room)</p> <p>1:30 PM Durham CROP Walk (Duke Chapel, meet at 2pm)</p> <p>4:00 PM McPherson Lecture (Watts-Hill Hall)</p> <p>5:00 PM Youth Groups at Farm Church (Watts & Green Sts.)</p> <p>8:00 PM MnM's/Meaning in the Middle Fellowship (via Zoom)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Monday, March 24</p> <p>9:00 AM McPherson Clergy Breakfast (Watts-Hill Hall)</p> <p>1:30 PM Worship Planning (Mindy's Office)</p> <p>7:00 PM Session (Watts-Hill Hall)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, March 25 <i>Newsletter Release</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 PM Somethings Prayer Service (Wilson Parlor)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, March 26</p> <p>11:30 AM Daytimers' Luncheon (Thai Cafe)</p> <p>1:00 PM Staff Meeting (Daye Meeting Room)</p> <p>4:30 PM Yoga (Room 201)</p> <p>7:00 PM Choir (Choir Room)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, March 27</p> <p>1:30 PM Durham CAN (Daye Meeting Room)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Saturday, March 29</p> <p>9:00 AM - 3:00 PM New Hope Presbytery (Wilson, NC)</p> <p>10:15 AM First Friends Hike (Occonechee Trail)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Friday, March 28</p> <p>10:30 AM Yoga (Room 201)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Sunday, March 30 <i>4th Sunday in Lent</i></p> <p>9:45 AM Faith Formation (Classes available for children and adults.)</p> <p>11:00 AM Worship; Wilson Gunn, Preaching</p> <p>12:15 PM Children's Music (Choir Room)</p> <p>No Youth Groups today!</p> <p>8:00 PM MnM's/Meaning in the Middle Fellowship (via Zoom)</p>		

CHURCH STAFF

Shakira Bethea, Church Administrator
Tom Bloom, Business Administrator
Lenore Champion, Children's Ministry Director
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
Sybil King, Administrative Assistant
Kathy Parkins, Minister of Music
John Weicher, Associate Pastor
Mitzi Leshner-Thomas, Associate Pastor
 (Medical Leave)

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

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