



FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

September 13, 2020
8:15 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas
Link to worship videos available at: www.fpcbryan.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Abide with Me

arr. Carol Tornquist

WELCOME

We welcome you to worship today.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 66, we find these words:

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. What is the house that you would build for me, if not one part of all that belongs to me?’”

HYMN NO. 307

God of Grace and God of Glory

CWM RHONDDA

**God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient church's story; bring its bud to glorious flower.**

**Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour, for the facing of this hour.**

**Lo! the hosts of evil round us scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise.**

**Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days, for the living of these days.**

**Cure thy children's warring madness; bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.**

**Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal, lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.**

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore.

Let the gift of thy salvation be our glory evermore.

**Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore, serving thee whom we adore.**

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Let us pray ... **Wondrous and merciful God, we sense and we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved you with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Forgive us for all of our failing you and failing the calling and claim you place upon us. Help us to grow toward and become who you would have us be. Let your love fill our lives so that we give of ourselves to you and your world in the way and spirit of Jesus Christ, always to the glory of your name ...** *(We continue our confession, praying in silence.)*

Friends, let us hear and share with gladness the blessed news of the Gospel:

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 581

Glory Be to The Father

GLORIA PATRI

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 1:24-29; 4:2-4,18b,c;
Rev 22:13,20-21

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Jesus Never Far Away:
Remembering Our Chains in the Relay Race by Grace

HYMN NO. 469

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying
**Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send you Spirit in this place,
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love; send us power, send us grace.**

CHILDREN PRAYING

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray . . . O God, as you have brought us into fellowship with you and with your people near and far across the years of our lives and across generations before us: We thank you for relationships of encouragement and support, from the years of childhood to senior adulthood. We thank you for buildings and structures which are meaningful, because of the associations of memories and the symbols of your commitment and others' commitment conveying strength to us. Continually draw near to prompt increased faithfulness, to seek our serving beyond the boundaries within which we have limited ourselves. Fill us with your wisdom and compassion. Heal and lift up your people in and through any challenge and adversity, amid illness, agony, and grief. Build bridges of reconciliation within our nation and this world. Now in these moments of silence, hear our prayers for self and others.

Once again, hear us praying from the words Jesus taught:

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.

Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna! Celebrate this day of days!
Christ is risen! Hush in wonder: all creation is amazed.
In the desert all surrounding, see, a spreading tree has grown.
Healing leaves of grace abounding bring a taste of love unknown.
Christ is risen! Raise your spirits from the caverns of despair.
Walk with gladness in the morning. See what love can do and dare.
Drink the wine of resurrection, not a servant, but a friend.
Jesus is our strong companion. Joy and peace shall never end.
Christ is risen! Earth and heaven nevermore shall be the same.
Break the bread of new creation where the world is still in pain.
Tell its grim, demonic chorus: "Christ is risen! Get you gone!"
God the First and Last is with us. Sing Hosanna everyone!

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

arr. Cindy Berry

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MISSION OPPORTUNITIES. We're reaching out to our adopted school **ANSON JONES ELEMENTARY**. On their list of student needs are: **composition books (wide-ruled), No. 2 pencils, crayons (24-ct), markers (Crayola, 8-ct), Pink Pearl erasers, jumbo glue sticks, 2-gallon zipper bags, case 12-oz. bottled water** (as drinking fountains are not being used), and **disinfecting wipes**. Place your donations on the marked table in the Patio thru Wednesday, September 30. Monetary donations also accepted. Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **Anson Jones**).

Our brothers and sisters in Peru remain in shutdown since March. All the various organizations and churches supported by U.S. based Presbyterian mission teams are exhibiting signs of stress. A **COVID-19 PERU RELIEF FUND** has been established to provide food and assistance to the poorest in Lima (Peru) served by Pastor Pedro Garcia with Joining Hands Network. Here's how you can help! Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **COVID-19 Peru Relief**).

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is working with our international partners where **HURRICANE LAURA** impacted Haiti and the Dominican Republic, in addition to the affected U.S. presbyteries. Here's how you can help! Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **Hurricane Laura, DR000194**).

 Especially in this time, visit the church website, www.fpcbryan.org, for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: www.facebook.com/FPCBryan

NEW!!! on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com. Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan_youth**

Help FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel achieve 345 more subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!
 On www.youtube.com, search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology.

Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list.

The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is Noon, September 20, and will be distributed on Wednesday, September 23. This newsletter will cover news from October 1-14c.

STAY CONNECTED! with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is "**REAL TIME**," and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>.
 For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or office@fpcbryan.org.



A WARM WELCOME!

We are delighted to have you worship with us today.

WORSHIP NOTES

PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

LITURGISTS

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

Rev. George E. Klett

USHERS/GREETERS

Adam Espinoza; Shelley Espinoza;
Randy Gholson; BJ Hendler;
Madeline Hendler; Kaitlyn Hendler

MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter, *Pianist*

David Kipp,

Director of Music Ministries

COVER ART

“The Church is the Embodiment
of the New Covenant”

One of 11 faceted windows
in sanctuary of

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

SOUND

Jerry Norris

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Select hymns from

Glory to God:

The Presbyterian Hymnal

African American Heritage Hymnal

CCLI 196019

OneLicense.net A-718836

CVLI 504246321

THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

8:15am ON-SITE OUTDOOR WORSHIP *-

on the northeast part of Gordon and 31st Streets Parking Lot

ONLINE WORSHIP-To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

9:20am Seekers Church School Class-P/via Zoom

9:20am The Word Church School Class-303/via Zoom

9:30am Loose Leaf Church School Class-via Zoom

7:00pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-Fellowship Hall

(Youth and parents, watch your inbox for details via email!)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

2:00pm Circle III (bring your facemask)-P

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

7:00pm Children's Center Ministry Committee-via Zoom

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2020

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

8:15am ON-SITE OUTDOOR WORSHIP *-

on the northeast part of Gordon and 31st Streets Parking Lot

ONLINE WORSHIP-To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

9:20am Seekers Church School Class-P/via Zoom

9:20am The Word Church School Class-303/via Zoom

9:30am Loose Leaf Church School Class-via Zoom

12:00pm NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

7:00pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-Fellowship Hall

(Youth and parents, watch your inbox for details via email!)

* *Loving childcare available in Room 108 in the church*

**For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,
please be in touch with your group's
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.**



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Find “First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas” on FACEBOOK

The Covenant Windows

Designed from Biblical stories by the Smith Glass Co. of Ft. Worth in 1966, eleven windows gird the nave, proclaiming the theme of God's covenant with God's people. The five windows at the congregation's left, moving toward the entrance, portray the covenants of the Old Testament. In counterbalance, the five to the right of the chancel depict the covenants of the New Testament. The window above the main entrance behind the balcony is an expansive Nativity scene.

A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement made by two or more individuals or groups, to do or to keep from doing, a specified action with understood accountability. God's compact with human beings is a commitment, a promise—absolute and certain.

The history of the people of Israel commences with the covenant of God with Israel. Abraham, at the direction of God, left Ur of the Chaldees and journeyed to a land where God promised to make his descendants a great people. The origin of Israel's religion is the covenant given to Moses at Mount Sinai and is referred to as the "old covenant."

The "new covenant" is God's gift of His Son in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So it was that, in the beginning of the Third century, Tertullian began to refer to the two collections of scripture as the Old and New Testaments—by literal definition, the old and new covenants.

The Church is the Embodiment of the New Covenant

Magnificently, this final window portrays eloquently the great commission enjoined by Christ, ". . . go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The figure of Christ is shown in bold stance; in His right hand is the scroll emblazoned with the symbols Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. His left hand is extended, beckoning all to follow Him. Beside Him grows a myrtle bush, an allusion to the Gentiles who were converted by Christ.

Above and behind Him are the catacombs where early Christians gathered to escape persecution and to worship. Higher yet are two structures representing the cathedrals of the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches.

Farther up in the panorama is a replica of the 1906 First Presbyterian Church building on Washington Ave., and above this the 1966 sanctuary structure of First Presbyterian Church as it stands today.

CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING FORM



We invite your prayers for the Nominating Committee which will meet to nominate candidates to serve as Elders (12—Class of 2022); 2021-2022 Nominating Committee members-at-large (5); Foundation Trustees (3—Class of 2026).



2020-2021 CONGREGATION'S NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(a committee of the congregation)

Moderator (Ruling Elder) A.J. Renold; Vice Moderator (Ruling Elder)..... Sally Kate Morse
 Members-at-large Vickie Buenger, Melissa Gathings, Alice Hickerson, John Lee, and Bill Watson

RULING ELDERS

CLASS OF 2020

Lois Basenfelder Jasen Petersen
 Dave Haverland AJ Renold
 Phyllis Lee Don Spencer
 Jo Monroe Rod Thornton
 Jerry Norris Julie Young
 Beth Pennebaker Steve Zimmerman

CLASS OF 2021

Fan Cloud Marcia Miculek
 Ruth Ann Gholson Sally Kate Morse
 Adam Hartman Bookman Peters
 Anton Leontyev Roger Reese
 Karon Mathews Janice Sahn
 Nicole McKinley Yunior Torres Camargo

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. — I Corinthians 12:4

Gifts and requirements for serving as a church officer are: Elders are called to exercise special functions in the Church. God gives these persons suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. (*Book of Order G-2.01*)

ELDERS are those, in a Presbyterian Church, who compose the Session which is the governing body of the church. They are responsible for decisions of the daily life of the church through committees such as Administration, Caring Support, Christian Education, Membership Building & Evangelism, Missions—Local and Beyond, Property, Stewardship & Finance, and Worship.

TRUSTEES are those who compose the Board of Trustees of First Presbyterian Church of Bryan Foundation.

You do not need to confer with those whose names you suggest. The Congregation's Nominating Committee will ask potential nominees of their willingness to serve. Please list your suggestions for nominees whom you feel will be the best suited to serve in a new class of leaders at First Presbyterian Church:

Nominee(s) for Elder (Class of 2022) _____

Nominee(s) for Nominating Committee Member-at-Large (2021-2022) _____

Nominee(s) for Foundation Trustees (Class of 2026) _____

**Place the form in the offering box or
 email suggestions to office@fpcbryan.org by Sunday, September 20.**

Jesus Never Far Away: Remembering Our Chains in the Relay Race by Grace

Colossians 1:24-29; 4:2-4,18 b,c; and Revelation 22:13,20-21

September 13, 2020

Ted V. Foote, Jr.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

In First Presbyterian's faceted glass window #11, it's easy to be fascinated by the sequential illustrations from the middle of the window moving up. These images portray locations of worshipping communities across the centuries, from the persecuted early church's catacombs underneath the city of Rome, to a cathedral of neo-Byzantine architecture, likely representing the Russian Orthodox tradition, to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris from the Roman Catholic tradition, then jumping the Protestant Reformation and the Atlantic Ocean to illustrate First Presbyterian of Bryan, Texas' buildings from 1906 and 1966. This shows a historical time-line, and we might think it's related to human progress. I now think, though, that Mr. Gordon Smith, the windows' design artist in 1966, intended something more Biblical than a notion that human beings might make progress toward God.

If you drive a vehicle into a parking place front-forward, and if there is a barrier of some sort in front of where you pull up, then you have to put the vehicle in reverse and back out of that location before you can put it in drive and go forward again. That's what we need to do examining First Presbyterian's faceted-glass window Number 11. The window's lower-half illustration of Jesus includes the name-tag-sort-of scroll he holds with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, the equivalent of English's A and Z. The final book in the Bible's collection entitled "The Revelation" (22:13) includes this name for Jesus: The Alpha and Omega; The First and the Last; The Completion NOT of God's Alphabet, but The Completion of God's Love Revealed in Certain Chapters of Time. So we know the window's illustration is taken from the last chapter in the Bible, and that Jesus is pointing up, or forward through years and centuries upcoming, the time yet to unfold. Here's where matters become confusing, at least to me. The last chapter of Revelation (22:20-21) reports words from a vision with Jesus, saying: "Surely I am coming soon;" and the church of Jesus' disciples prays for his returning presence: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Any Bible reader may ask: "Has Jesus yet showed up?" Phrased another way, "If we are Jesus' disciples, how do we live in a way that indicates Jesus is (or will be) showing up?" There are at least three possible responses. One response to the question, "Has Jesus showed up yet?" is a "that's ridiculous" response: "Jesus is not going to show up, and any such Biblical suggestion is a fantasy or a fraud." A second response to the question, "Has Jesus showed up yet?" is the "still around" response: "God has sacred purposes for the world in time, and struggles are part of the way 'the world is the world' and 'history is history.' The Spirit of Jesus is yet abiding invisibly among people. One person has written: 'I doubt that Jesus has really ever been very far away – in suffering and resurrection love.'" A third response to the question, "Has Jesus showed up yet?" is the "religious rescue" response: "Life has deteriorated so much, that surely the end is near, and God is going to wrap-up this whole enterprise with Jesus coming from the clouds to separate 'wheat from chaff' and 'good from evil.'" Jesus showing up? (1) Ridiculous? (2) Never far away? (3) Coming to the rescue?

In his book from 2007, "The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus," Dr. Peter Gomes argues against the first of those considerations, the "that's ridiculous" response, telling how convinced he is that God has open-ended and unfinished purposes and asserting this is neither fantasy nor fraud. Also, Dr. Gomes rejects the third of those considerations, that Jesus is likely soon coming from the clouds to "rescue the truly religious Christians" because God is finally sick and tired after centuries of plenty happening from people in the world for God to be sick and tired of (p.4). Instead of endorsing the first or third considerations, Dr. Gomes is convinced how Jesus – with his life and teachings – points forward, possibly in a way similar to Mr. Smith's faceted glass window #11. In this window, Jesus is identified as "The Alpha and the Omega" and therefore as "The Completion of God's Love Revealed in a Certain 30 Year Chapter of Time." Mr. Smith's Window #11 illustrates Jesus motioning over his left shoulder with an open palm to indicate how, beyond his life, there is "more to come." "More to come" is not "progress"

as in “better and better.” It is that God is still abiding with sacred purposes, amid struggles and joy, essentially invisible, but never far away from suffering and resurrection love. God’s people as the church live this witness, speak this witness, and share this witness – imperfectly and often messing up; but the witness says, “God intends more to come.”

In “The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus,” Dr. Gomes tells how he was encouraged by a person named Edward Farley to “not preach the Bible” but “from the Bible, to preach the Gospel,” meaning that Bible-Scripture words and stories are literary windows from the past testifying to God’s good news of love, care, and liberation in the present and for the future.

In David Brooks’ book from 2019, “The Second Mountain,” Mr. Brooks tells how, in college in the late 1970s, he was assigned to read writings by the 1700s English philosopher and politician, Edmund Burke. Mr. Burke wrote that looking backward to assess critically the contributions of ancestors helps us grasp our indebtedness to them for their sacrifices coming before us. We now have a responsibility to “pay forward” our debt. “We receive; and what we have received, we hold, cherish, and enjoy. We then improve what we have received for transmission to others” (p.283).

In Eddie Glaude, Jr.’s recent book, “Begin Again: James Baldwin’s America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own,” Professor Glaude is very clear that he was beyond his undergraduate studies before the writings of James Baldwin were a hurdle he approached (xxiv-xv). Yet he says that, amid racial brokenness in America deeply felt still today by so many, Mr. Baldwin’s writings have helped him (1) see beyond racial brokenness which is very real and (2) live with a sense that there is a greater purpose, which is related to healing. Professor Glaude quotes from Mr. Baldwin’s last novel (“Just Above My Head”): “When the dream was slaughtered and all the love and labor seemed to have come to nothing, we scattered. (Yet) not everything is lost. Responsibility cannot be lost. It can only be abdicated. If one refuses to abdicate responsibility (to turn from it), one begins again” (xxix).

Mr. Smith’s Window #11 is not saying to us that the Kingdom of God, or the Commonwealth of God is completed in the 1966 sanctuary building of First Presbyterian-Bryan, Texas. Not at all. Mr. Smith – who schooled himself in the stories, hardships, struggles, betrayals, and persecutions experienced by the Native American Plains Indians, is not saying that starting in 1966 God completed all God intends with First Presbyterian or any other church community. Rather, like a relay runner with a baton in a hand, Mr. Smith is saying that the structure of bricks and mortar which is this building at this location, is a gathering place where God’s people have been encountered by God’s suffering-and-resurrection-love, and they are still running their part of the historical relay – we are still running our part – so to speak, before passing on the baton of faith, hope, and love to others.

Professor Glaude also quotes Mr. Baldwin: “Salvation is not flight from the wrath of God. It is accepting and reciprocating the love of God. Salvation does not divide. Salvation connects. It is not the exclusive property of any set theology, creed, or church” (pgs.213-14). The writer of “Colossians” concluded (4:18): “Remember my chains. Grace be with you.” Professor Glaude concludes: “In the end, we cannot hide from each other. When we imprison our fellows in categories that cut off their humanity from our own, we end up imprisoning ourselves. In love, however, a profound mutuality develops and becomes the basis for genuine democratic community where we all can flourish, if we so choose. This was Baldwin’s prayer. It has become my own” (pgs.213-14).

I once thought Mr. Smith intended at Window #11 to illustrate the finish of our relay in faith, hope, and love. Today I think it’s wrong for me to think in that direction. Mr. Smith wants us to begin again, over at Window #1. The journey continues. Carry the baton another lap. “Remember our chains” in the world. Go forward still sharing the grace from God which redeems and makes us new. God’s suffering and resurrection-love are never far away. We share both chains and God’s caring love with every child of God. Isn’t that the relay race and journey of stewardship in life to which all eleven of those sanctuary windows continually encourage us? – All honor and praise be to God.