

— September 2023 —

Contemplative Communion Service



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1432 Washtenaw Ave | Ann Arbor, MI 48104
firstpresbyterian.org

WELCOME

We're glad you're here!

Thank you for joining us at this short service of communion. We will be using a simple spoken liturgy with no music. Going forward ordained and lay leadership will together evolve the rhythms and voice of this communion service. October's liturgy draws from a variety of ancient prayers and contemporary poetry, placed in conversation with Scripture.

Ways to Give

Your gift allows us to carry out our mission as an inclusive and diverse faith community.

CASH/CHECK

Place in the offering plate on your way out or in the mail

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VANCO MOBILE APP



October 1, 2023

OPENING PRAYER

- One: God of welcome and grace,
Many: You call us out of the distance and invite us home.
One: At every table, you carve out space for the least and the lost,
Many: You whisper in our ears that we have always belonged here.
One: When we doubt our value,
Many: You affirm it with a shout of love.
One: When we focus on our differences,
Many: You remind us of our unity.
One: You welcome us with grace and love,
Many: Thanks be to God.

CENTERING PRAYER

SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:13-16

“People were bringing children to Jesus in order that he might touch them, and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.”

POETRY READING “And the Table Will Be Wide” Jan Richardson

And the table
will be wide.
And the welcome
will be wide.
And the arms
will open wide
to gather us in.
And our hearts
will open wide
to receive.

And we will come
as children who trust
there is enough.
And we will come
unhindered and free.
And our aching
will be met
with bread.
And our sorrow
will be met
with wine.

And we will open our hands
to the feast
without shame.
And we will turn
toward each other
without fear.
And we will give up
our appetite
for despair.
And we will taste
and know
of delight.

And we will become bread
for a hungry world.
And we will become drink
for those who thirst.
And the blessed
will become the blessing.
And everywhere
will be the feast.

PROCLAMATION

COMMUNION (see page 14)

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

One: God, good beyond all that is good,
fair beyond all that is fair,
in you is calmness, peace, and concord.
Heal the dissensions that divide us from one
another and bring us back to a unity of love
bearing some likeness to your divine nature.

Many: **Through the embrace of love
and the bonds of godly affection,
make us one in the Spirit
by your peace which makes all things peaceful.
We ask this through the grace, mercy, and
tenderness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

-Prayer from Dionysius of Alexandria, 3rd century

October 8, 2023

OPENING SENTENCES

O Lord, open my lips
And my mouth shall proclaim your praise

-Psalm 51:15

The Lord's unfailing love and mercy never cease,
Fresh as the morning and sure as the sunrise.

-Lamentations 3:22-23

CENTERING

SCRIPTURE READING:

Psalm 139: 7-14

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

POETRY READING

"Blessing that Knows Your Name" Jan Richardson

Chances are
there will come a day
when you will forget
every last word
of this blessing.

It does not matter.

Let this blessing
slip through
your fingers.
Let it roll from
the smooth plane
of your palm.
Let each line
disappear
and every syllable
fall away.
Let this blessing
return
to where all
blessings begin.

Let it leave you
until all that remains
is the place where
it pierced you—
whether like fire
or like breath
you could not say,
only that you heard
your name as it entered,
then heard its own
as it blew away.

PROCLAMATION

COMMUNION (see page 14)

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

One: O God, whose greatness knows no limits,
Whose wisdom no bounds,
Whose peace excels all understanding;
You who love and help us beyond measure—
Help us to love you.

Though we cannot fully do so
Many: **Because of your infinite goodness,**
Increase and deepen our understanding
So that we may love you more and more;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

-Prayer from Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153

October 15

OPENING PRAYER

The Spirit of God that breathes us into life, whispers: Come home.
We come home to the open arms of Love.
We come as we are.
We come with joy.
We come hungry for nourishment.
We come beaten down and burnt out.
We come eager to find our place in the whole.
We come bringing all of who we are;
our grief and our anger
our regrets and our longings.
We give God thanks, for Christ's welcome is eternal.

CENTERING

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 15:1-7

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

POETRY READING

"Standing in the Trash Heap"

from *Liturgies from Below*, edited by Cláudio Carvalhaes

Standing in the trash heap
Wondering why no one
Comes to take it away

Pieces of our lives
Broken and rotting in
The hot Jamaican sun

Even the goats move to
Places where the rot is not
So strong

But you, O God, tell us
That we are not trash
Even when the smell has
Soaked our souls

You love us, O God,
Into wholeness
You do not pass us by
But caress us
As the treasures of your heart

Fearfully and wonderfully made
Help us, O Lord, to see
Us through the mirror of your eyes

PROCLAMATION

COMMUNION (see page 9)

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

Let nothing disturb you,
let nothing frighten you,
all things will pass away.
God never changes;
patience obtains all things,
whoever has God lacks nothing.
God alone suffices. Amen.

-Prayer from Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582

October 22

OPENING PRAYER

How precious, how fragile, how short is life!
Our lives are but a breath.
The Divine brings us into being,
weaves our lives together,
and ushers us into eternal rest.
Blessed are the Sacred rhythms of life
and holy are these tasks:
to be alive,
to pay attention,
to honor the fleeting with awe and care.

-Prayer from enfleshed

CENTERING

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 34: 1-10

I will bless the Lord at all times;
God's praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt God's name together.
I sought the Lord, and God answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to the Lord, and be radiant,
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor soul cried and was heard by the Lord,
and was saved from every trouble.
The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear God and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good;
happy are those who take refuge in the Lord.
O fear the Lord, you God's holy ones,
for those who fear God have no want.
The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

POETRY READING

“Breadcrumbs”

Sarah Are Speed

Some days are breadcrumb days-
the kind of days where you wake up and say,
“God, please lean a little closer
in a not so subtle way today.
I know that you often speak to us through
music and nature and in other
metaphorical matters,
which I most always love,
but today,
if you could get to the point,
if you could be here now,
I would most appreciate it.”

And then you throw off the covers
and you lace up your shoes
and you move out and about in this
big wide world, and lo and behold
the sun feels like magic
and there’s a woman on the subway who laughs so loud
that everyone smiles.
And a toddler blows kisses at strangers
and the barista learns your name
and you realize that there are breadcrumbs
all over the place. As a matter of fact,
they’re almost ankle deep.

PROCLAMATION

COMMUNION (see page 14)

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

Grant, O Lord Jesus,
that the ears which have heard the voice of your songs
may be closed to the voice of dispute;
that the eyes which have seen your great love
may also behold your blessed hope;

that the tongues which have sung your praise
may speak the truth in love;
that the feet which have walked in your courts
may walk in the region of light;
and that the bodies which have received your living body
may be restored in newness of life.
Glory to you for your inexpressible gift. Amen.

-Liturgy of Malabar, 5th century

Communion

INVITATION

- One: Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!
- Many: **We will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the household of God.**
- One: According to Luke, when the risen Christ was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.
- Many: **Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.**
- One: So come, children of God. All are welcome at this table of justice and love. All are welcome to become one with Christ, not because we are perfect, but because we are loved. Come and be fed.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

- One: The Lord be with you,
- Many: **And also with you.**
- One: Life up your hearts.
- Many: **We lift them up to the Lord.**
- One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- Many: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

From the beginning of time, O God, you have shaped new worlds, brought forth new creatures, given us form, and breathed into us the breath of life. When we settled and established ourselves, you called us on to something new.

You called Abram and Sarai to leave their country, not knowing the place you would show them. You called the Israelites out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness for forty years, and brought them to a new land. When we chose narrow paths and small endeavors, you sent prophets to call us to something greater.

Where we content ourselves with festivals and burnt offerings, you call for justice to roll down like waters. Where we offer our fasting and sackcloth, you call us to loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry. When we grew confident in the order of things, you proclaimed that the wolf shall lie down with the lamb.

In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus, pioneer of our faith, taking us in new directions. He broke rules, crossed boundaries, and loved

fiercely. Where law or illness or poverty or gender constrained your children, Jesus broke those bonds.

He welcomed everyone to every table – disciples and friends, strangers and enemies –and taught us to do the same. He saw our hopelessness and gave us hope. He saw our dead-end paths and gave us new beginnings.

Gracious God, just as you have met us with your loving presence across all of time, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of Christ. By your spirit make us one with Christ, that we may be one with all who share this feast.

God, be with us in this feast, and be with us in all the many places where we yearn to feel your love and presence. Where pain and disconnection plague us, touch us with your loving presence. Where violence and division trouble our world, bring peace and mutual understanding. May we be united by grace as we share this meal, and pray the words 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 thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION


Loving God, you have fed us and renewed us with the bread of life, uniting us with Christ and with one another. Go with us from this place as we seek to love others as you love us. Empower us by your Spirit to proclaim the coming of your love and justice to all the world. As we have been fed at this table, let us feed one another in body, mind, and spirit. Be with us this day and always. Ask much of us, expect much from us, enable much by us, encourage many through us, both as inhabitants of earth and citizens of the commonwealth of heaven. AMEN.


Liturgies adapted from “Sounds of the Eternal and “The Wee Worship Book”



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to visit our website

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