



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

February 28, 2016
8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
Third Sunday of Lent

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

*Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, **please silence your cell phone.** The nursery is available downstairs during both services. Consult an usher if you need a personal hearing device, large-print bulletin or large-print hymnal.*

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Prelude *Improvisation on SHADES MOUNTAIN* John Coble

Words of Welcome and Concerns of the Church

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad.

Song of Gathering

TALLIS' CANON

**The glory of these forty days
we celebrate with songs of praise;
for Christ, by whom all things were made,
himself has fasted and has prayed.**

Call to Worship

adapted from Psalm 63

Leader: O God, you are our God.

We seek you, our souls thirst for you.

People: Our flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land.

Leader: Your steadfast love is better than life.

People: We will bless you and call on your name.

Leader: Come, let us worship God.

*Hymn No. 461

God Is Here!

ABBOT'S LEIGH

****Latecomers may be seated.*

The prelude is based on the hymn tune of today's anthem, *The Tree of Life*.

Commissioned for the dedication of a renovated worship space in Austin, Texas, the text of Hymn 461 is one of the few to devote attention to how customary church features facilitate worship.

*Those who are able may stand.

***Call to Confession**

***Prayer of Confession**

Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name and what our hearts can no longer bear.

Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image; through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

***Congregational Response**

Hymn No. 572

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

***Assurance of Pardon**

***Passing of the Peace**

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Worshipers may greet each other by saying, "The peace of Christ be with you," and responding, "And also with you."

*****Latecomers may be seated.*

11:00 a.m. Sacrament of Baptism

Receiving the sacrament of baptism is Thomas Vincent Sperr, son of Megan and Brad Sperr.

***Question to Congregation**

Do we, as members of the church of Jesus Christ promise to guide and nurture Thomas by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging him to know and follow Christ? Do We? **We do.**

***Affirmation of Faith** *The Apostles' Creed* Hymnal, p.14

Baptism Hymn No. 498 *Child of Blessing, Child of Promise* KINGDOM

11:00 a.m. A Time for Young Children

Children, age four through grade two, may come forward for a message and then leave for Children's Church located in the Children's Ministry Suite. To pick up your child after the service, please go through the Atrium and down the stairs.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Congregational Prayer for Illumination *(spoken)*

**O God, by your Spirit tell us what we need to hear,
and show us what we ought to do,
to obey Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

First Lesson Philippians 4:4-9, page 1073

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

***8:45 a.m. Hymn No. 329** *Break Thou the Bread of Life* BREAD OF LIFE

Children's Church is a special time for our youngest members to learn scripture through song, art, and play.

The phrase "bread of life" as a metaphor for scripture has misled many people into thinking of Hymn 329 as being connected with the Lord's Supper, when its true subject is Bible study. Both the author and the composer were active in the work of the Chautauqua Assembly.

11:00 a.m. Anthem

The Tree of Life

K. Lee Scott

The congregation is asked to remain seated and join the choirs in singing stanza 6.

The anthem, sung by the Celebration Singers and Chancel Choir, joined by the congregation on the final stanza, is a setting of a hymn. These evocative stanzas on Christ's Passion come from a twelve-stanza hymn by a 17th century Hungarian pastor, as translated by the preeminent 20th century hymnologist of the English-speaking world, Eric Routley. The tune, called SHADES MOUNTAIN, honors the composer's home in the foothills of the Appalachians.

1. There in God's garden stand the tree of Wisdom,
whose leaves hold forth the healing of the nations:
tree of all knowledge, tree of all compassion, tree of all beauty.
2. Its name is Jesus, name that says, "Our Savior!"
There on its branches see the scars of suffering;
see there the tendrils of our human self-hood feed on its life-blood.
3. Thorns not its own are tangled in its foliage;
our greed has starved it; our despite has choked it.
Yet, look! it lives! its grief has not destroyed it nor fire consumed it.
4. See how its branches reach to us in welcome;
hear what the Voice says, "Come to me, ye weary!
Give me your sickness; give me all your sorrow; I will give blessing."
5. This is my ending; this, my resurrection;
into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit.
This have I searched for; now I can possess it. This ground is holy.

6 All heav'n is sing - ing, "Thanks to Christ whose pas - sion of - fers in mer - cy
 heal - ing, strength, and par - don. Peo - ples and na - tions,
 take it, take it free - ly!" A - men! My Mas - ter!

Second Lesson

Isaiah 55:1-9, page 671

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

Sermon

Hungry?

Dr. Strickland

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

***Hymn No. 510**

Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts

QUEBEC

Commissioning of Honduras Mission Trip Participants

Leader: We are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, a sign in the world today of what God intends for all humankind.

Congregation: The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

Leader: You gathered here have committed to serve in Honduras on our church's behalf. Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word, and showing his love?

Mission Trip Participants: We will, with God's help.

Congregation: Faithful God, in baptism you claimed us, and by your Holy Spirit you are working in our lives, empowering us to live a life worthy of our calling. We thank you for these brothers and sisters who have answered this particular call to share your love. Establish them in your truth. Guide them by your Spirit. Prosper their efforts, that they and those they serve may grow in faith, hope and love. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Hymnal p. 16
... forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ...

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Every worshiper, young and old, is encouraged to offer a gift out of gratitude to God.

Offertory *Deck Yourself, My Soul, with Gladness* Johannes Brahms

***Doxology** Hymn No. 592

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

***Benediction**

Following worship, all are invited for a time of fellowship and refreshment in the Atrium.

***Congregational Response** Hymn No. 396, Stanza 4

**So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame;
so purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.**

Postlude *Toccata in G Minor* Johann Pachelbel

2016 Honduras Mission
Trip Participants:

Ron Balthazor
Wanda Barlow
Paul Duncan
Bob Glascock
Emma Holman
Dan Horton
Denise Horton
Jane Hudson
Sydney Jackson
Tommy Jackson
Paige Oelke
Xan Palmer
Harry Shuford
Carol Strickland
Sally Vandiver

The postlude is an example of a pedal point toccata. A long low note is held down in the pedal division, while the hands play rapid figurations outlining changing harmonies on the keyboards above.