

Welcome to
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

September 7, 2025

PHARAOH HARDENS HIS HEART
TO MOSES' REQUESTS

UNRAVELED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART



Welcome to this sanctuary.
Welcome to this time of worship and wonder.
Welcome to this family of faith.

We're glad you're here today and pray that your experience
with us in worship is both challenging and uplifting!

Our ushers are available to assist you as needed.

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, we invite you
to visit our website. There you will find out the ways to keep in touch,
how we live our faith, our different partnerships and so much more.

Our website address is: www.firstpresracine.org

If you're interested in receiving news about the church,
please call 262.632.1686 or email: shelley@firstpresracine.org

Rev. Darren Utley—Church Pastor
pastordarren@firstpresracine.org

TODAY'S SERVICE

PASTOR—Rev. Darren Utley

LITURGIST—Ken Schacht

MUSICIANS—Alejandro Alumbremos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Dave Titus

BULLETIN & GRAPHICS—Shelley Maurer

MEDIA TECH SPECIALIST—Steve Comeau

*Please stand as you are able.

[Bold type] indicates text to be spoken by the congregation.

[Bold italic type] indicates song to be sung by the congregation.



WE GATHER TO WORSHIP

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ken Schacht

Welcome! May you find God's love, peace, grace, and joy as we worship today.

PRELUDE

Prelude (from Prelude & Fugue, BWV 855a: 1. Prelude No. 10 in B Minor) |
J.S. Bach, arr. Víkingur Ólafsson
Alejandro Alumbremos

CALL TO WORSHIP

Listen.
I have a story to tell—
A story of a God who longed for justice.
A story of a God who pushed back
the waters to make dry land.
A story of a God who would not take “no”
for an answer when it came to the safety
of God’s own.
For God’s people were suffering.
God’s people were crying out.
God’s people were shackled and
bound by oppression.
So God said to Moses, “Speak.”
“Let my people Go.”
And Moses spoke—
Over and over again.
Moses stood up for justice,
But over and over again, Pharaoh said no.
Power said no.
The path to justice is never easy, is it?
The path to change is never a straight line, is it?

So like Rosa, who sat on the bus,
and Martin who had a dream,
Moses kept trying.
God kept speaking.
Moses kept listening.
Hope kept breathing.
And when power tried to unravel justice,
The people kept dreaming.
God longed for justice.
God *still* longs for justice.
So let us worship God—
For human injustice will never be strong
enough to unravel God’s dream that
all might be free,
And all might know love.
Let us worship holy God.

*OPENING HYMN

Holy! Holy! Holy
[GtG Hymn #1]

Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Dave Titus, Alejandro Alumbremos

*ACT OF PRAISE

O Lord, Our Lord
[GtG Hymn #613]

***O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is your name in all the earth.
O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is your name in all the earth.
O Lord, we praise your name.
O Lord, we magnify your name:
Prince of Peace, mighty God;
O Lord God Almighty.***

*PASSING THE PEACE

As Christ welcomed everyone, no matter what their background or social standing;
as Christ welcomed enemies & friends, outcasts & leaders,
foreigners & neighbors, let us open our hearts and homes and lives.
Let us be like Christ to everyone we meet.
Peace be with you.
And also with you.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 5:1-2, 7:8-23
[OT 52, 53-54]

SERMON

Pharaoh Hardens His Heart to Moses' Requests
Rev. Darren Utley

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

When Israel Was in Egypt's Land

*SONG OF RESPONSE

Open Your Ears, O Faithful People
[GtG Hymn #453]

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**I believe in God, the Great Sewer—
Who weaves us together in community,
Collecting our loose ends and turning them into belonging.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit—
Who hems us in before and behind,
Catching us when we fall and writing us into God’s holy narrative.**

**And I believe in Jesus Christ—
Who loved and claimed the people society had thrown out,
refusing to disregard anyone as scrap.**

**I believe God has woven part of God’s self into the fiber of our being,
Making us inherently worthy of love and belonging.**

**I believe the fabric of my life is weak,
That I am prone to error and need God’s handiwork to remind me of love.**

**I believe in the Church, and that like a quilt of different fabrics,
She is designed to be as diverse and beautiful as God’s creation.**

**And I believe that when life unravels,
God is there to stitch my wounds together,
To hold me in the palm of God’s hand, to tell me of love,
And to invite me into a new journey.
Amen.**

OFFERING/OFFERTORY

Your Endless Love, Your Might Acts

*DOXOLOGY

***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***

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts,

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

SHARING THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Let Us Break Bread Together | *Trad. Spiritual
arr. James Michael Stevens*

Please be assured that the communion bread will always be gluten-free.

GOING FORTH TO MINISTER

*CLOSING HYMN

We Praise You, O God
[GtG Hymn #612]

*BENEDICTION

*SUNG BLESSING

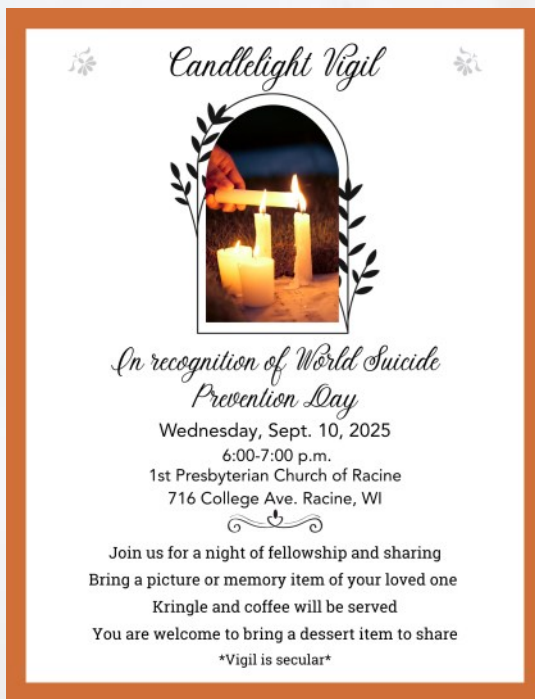
God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me
[GtG Hymn #543, v. 4]

***Walking behind to hem my journey,
Going ahead to light my way,
And from beneath, above, and all ways:
O Christ, surround me;
O Christ, surround me.***

POSTLUDE

Lord, You Have My Heart | Martin Smith, arr. Phillip Keveren

Prayers by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org





Anti-Creation Narrative | *Hannah Garrity*

As a courtesy to everyone, please mute your mobile device.



UNRAVELED

PHARAOH HARDENS HIS HEART TO MOSES' REQUESTS

When Humans Unravel God's Plans for Justice

READ // EXODUS 5:1-2; 7:8-23

FROM THE ARTIST // LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

As I sketched this image of Pharaoh, I realized how cartoonish and irrelevant this character had become in my mind. What would Pharaoh look like today? I sat with this question as a creeping sense of irony came over my body. I would argue, to my surprise, that a modern Pharaoh might look a bit like the reflection in my mirror, and maybe in yours.

This story of Pharaoh's hardening heart leads to a kind of anti-creation narrative—one where the world is coming undone and actively being destroyed. Sound familiar?

As a society, we are actively undoing God's creation through our consumption while clinging to ease, convenience, and our power over our environment. We harden our hearts to the ways our actions cause harm. We value our comfort over the health of our coastlines while the first climate refugees flee their homes due to rising tides and sinking land. As water becomes scarce, violence will increase. Many will have to fight for their basic needs. I believe Pharaoh's hardening heart is prophetic. This narrative reveals to us how a person's clinging to power can literally unravel creation. We often undo the threads of creation, while God entreats us to become co-creators. We have seam rippers in our hands when God wants us to have needle and thread. There is a difficult hope in the narrative, however. Our own unraveling of God's dream for creation is not strong enough to thwart God's plan. Ultimately the Israelites find liberation. In this image, the waters of the parted Red Sea frame the chaos of the plagues. We will succeed, with God's help, in healing the earth. We just need to allow God to soften our hearts, to take initiative in changing our perspective, and to welcome the challenge of restoring creation.



RESPOND

PHARAOH HARDENS HIS HEART TO MOSES' REQUESTS

When Humans Unravel God's Plans for Justice



LOOK

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Breathe deeply in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form.

Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook?

Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?



REFLECT

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story?
- To what, exactly, is Pharaoh's heart hardened? Why is he driven by power and control?
- Artist Lauren Wright Pittman writes, *"This narrative reveals to us how a person's clinging to power can literally unravel creation."* In what ways is your heart hardened? What might it look like to soften your heart to actions and practices that cause harm?



PRAY

Soften my hardened heart and unravel me from living a life led by scarcity. Amen.

⁴ Walter Brueggemann. "The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity." Published on *Religion Online*. Article first published in the *Christian Century*, March 24-31, 1999. https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-liturgy-of-abundance-the-myth-of-scarcity/?fbclid=IwAR1fxG2e4klTWshJDp4EfW5jd0pTZ88Dw6bSAbTzDCwXp7df_v1sDSq7oRo#content

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Sunday, September 7th

9:30^{AM}—Sunday Worship

10:40^{AM}—Fellowship

Monday, September 8th

9:00^{AM}—Staff Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday, September 9th

6:30^{PM}—Deacons Meeting

Wednesday, September 10th

4:00^{PM}—Food Pantry

6:00^{PM}—Candlelight Vigil

Thursday, September 11th

6:00^{PM}—Non-violence Event

Friday, September 12th

7:00^{PM}—Music & More Concert -
Zachary Scot Johnson & Friends

Sunday, September 14th

9:30^{AM}—Sunday Worship

10:40^{AM}—Fellowship

PRAYERS ARE POWERFUL

Heartfelt thoughts & prayers for Ko Kryger & family for the recent passing of Myrna, and all who have recently experienced the loss of a friend or family member. May they know peace and comfort during these difficult times.

Prayers of comfort & healing for Ed Lehmann, Carter Nitz, Sandra Hopkins, Kay Mahl, Peggy Taylor, Kathy Wortley, Ellen Easley, Mac & Marilyn MacCaughey, Mary Johnson, Barb Stevenson, Evelyn Vanderheyden, Louise Shapley, Leah Fisher.

As they deal with physical, emotional and/or spiritual issues, please pray for the family of Ruby Seeton; Robyn—friend of Lisa Campbell; Autumn Eifert's paternal grandmother; Carol—sister of Ginny Holle; Bob—friend of Sharon Campbell; Dan & Joyce—parents and Jeff—husband of Shelley Maurer; Richard—brother of Steve Comeau; Elena & Ezequiel Romero—parents of Deb Utey; Masako—mother of Fumi Nakayama; John—husband of Sandy Hawley; Mary Ann—mother of Cheryl Nitz; John—son of Mac & Marilyn MacCaughey; Laurel - niece of the Vollmans; Rudy—Nancy Lechner's brother; the Moes' family and Scott Mohn—friends of the Paffrath family; Steve, Susan, Sandra, John, Liz and Gabby—friends & family of the Galles; Chuck Pehlivanian—Sue's husband; Nancy—mother of Gloria Zember; Meyer Schaal; Linda—daughter of Louise Shapley; Tim—family member of Sheila Lawrence; and friends & family of the Lehmanns.

Prayers for those in the service — Col. Jay Brooke, Evan Humphreys, Jared Smith, Jordan Smith, Nicholas Hansen.

Thank you for your continued prayers for everyone. They are powerful!

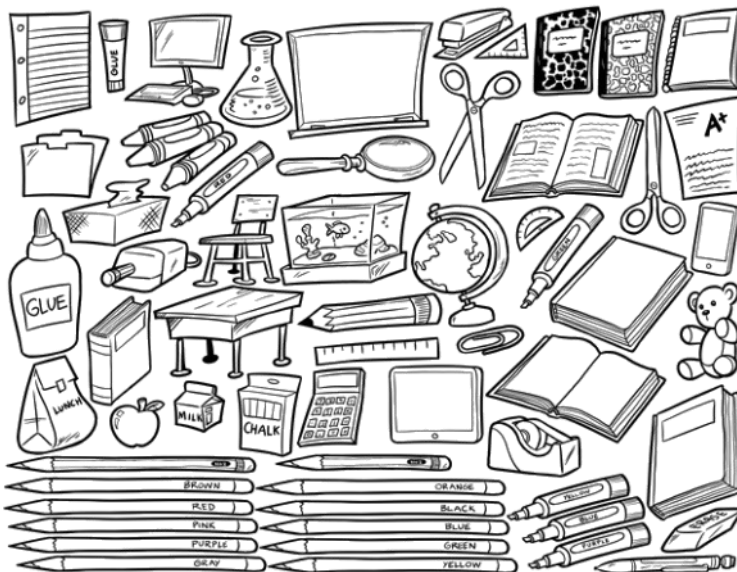
MISSION INITIATIVE'S SCHOOL SUPPLY LIST FOR JULIAN THOMAS ELEMENTARY

We will be collecting school supplies through Sunday, September 21st. Following is a generic list of items that the children from Julian Thomas:

- 3-prong, 2-pocket folders (blue, yellow, red, green, etc.)
- Wide-ruled spiral notebooks (blue, yellow, red, green, etc.)
- Supply boxes
- Facial tissue
- Disinfecting wipes (tubs)
- Boxes of plastic storage bags (gallon, quart and sandwich size)

If you would prefer to make a monetary donation, checks can be sent to the church. Please denote **School Supplies** on the memo line. Or, online payments can be made by visiting <https://firstpresracine.org/donate>, then click on *Secure Giving thru PayPal*.

As always, thank you for your continued support!



CELEBRATING 32 YEARS!

Music & MORE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BONUS CONCERT

Zachary Scot Johnson & Friends

Friday, September 12
7 PM

Doors Open at 6:15 p.m.



Tickets \$15 at the door
Purchase online at www.firstpresracine.org/donate

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:

(262) 632-1686 | 716 College Avenue – Racine, WI | www.firstpresracine.org