



Welcome to
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

September 21, 2025

**ENCOURAGING THE ISRAELITES IN EXILE
TO PLANT GARDENS & BUILD HOMES**



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—John Brooke

MUSICIANS—Alejandro Alumbremos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Chancel Choir

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

John Brooke

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

PRELUDE

Moderato | *Oresto Ravanello*
Alejandro Alumbros

CALL TO WORSHIP

Sometimes life takes us where we don't expect.

Sometimes, God takes us where we don't expect.

In worship, we gather to get in touch with God's bigger narrative.

In worship, we gather to expand our hearts.

So let us worship the God of unending surprises.

Let us worship the God of love.

*OPENING HYMN

God of Grace and God of Glory

[GtG Hymn #307]

Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Alejandro Alumbros

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/THE LORD'S PRAYER

[GtG p. 35]

*ACT OF PRAISE

Arise, Your Light Is Come!

[GtG Hymn #744, v. 2]

***Arise, your light has come!
Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captives' liberty,
Good tidings to the poor.***

*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.

CHORAL ANTHEM

Let the Praise Go ‘Round | *W. Boyce, arr. H. H. Hopson*
Chancel Choir, directed by Alejandro Alumbros

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 29:1-7
[OT 731]

SERMON

Encouraging the Israelites in Exile to Plant Gardens & Build Houses
Rev. Darren Utley

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

O Morning Star, How Fair How Bright (*Wie Schön Leuchtet*)

*SONG OF RESPONSE

All Who Love and Serve Your City
[GtG Hymn #351]

*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

Give Us Light

*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***

GOING FORTH TO MINISTER

*CLOSING HYMN

For the Healing of the Nations
[GtG Hymn #346]

*BENEDICTION

*SUNG BLESSING

Weave Us Together | Rosemary Crow
[Refrain, v. 1, refrain]

***Weave, weave, weave us together,
Weave us together in unity and love,
Weave, weave, weave us together,
Weave us together, together in love.
We are many textures, we are many colors,
Each one different from the others.
But we are entwined with one another
In one great tapestry....
Weave, weave, weave us together,
Weave us together in unity and love,
Weave, weave, weave us together,
Weave us together, together in love.***

POSTLUDE

Postlude | Ch. H. Rinck

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



New Roots | *Lauren Wright Pittnam*



UNRAVELED

ENCOURAGING THE ISRAELITES IN EXILE
TO PLANT GARDENS & BUILD HOUSES

When Dreams Unravel

READ // JEREMIAH 29:1-7

FROM THE ARTIST // LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

I moved to a new state. As I write, I'm living out of boxes, the trunk of my car, and a storage unit. It's a jarring experience to move, even when it's a conscious choice. I've found myself in a place that resembles almost nothing like what I'd envisioned for my life. I left a city burgeoning with opportunities and culture; now I'm in a small town where I'd be thrilled to find one decent, local coffee shop. I'm beginning to realize visions about the future I wasn't even aware of. These unrealized dreams took root in my being in a way that feels defining to who I am.

Something happens deep in our core when we feel out of place. The day I moved my immune system failed and I became sick and disoriented. The Israelites were forced into exile, ripped from their homes, places of worship, and way of life. They find themselves in Babylon where they dream of the day they'd return to where they belong. Jeremiah's words are comforting, yet painful. They are told to stay, plant gardens, and allow their families to flourish in this strange land. I'm sure this was disappointing, but when you hold onto the past, you miss the richness of the present. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you" (Jer. 29:7). Maybe when our lives unravel in transition, the loose ends of our dreams, the friends we leave behind, and the paths untraveled can become the roots that stabilize us in the new place where we find ourselves. These threads can create grounding that nourishes and transforms us into something new. This new place can be a gift—a place of flourishing and a conduit for deep, authentic connection with self and community.



RESPOND

ENCOURAGING THE ISRAELITES IN EXILE
TO PLANT GARDENS & BUILD HOUSES

When Dreams Unravel



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. What story do you imagine for each of the figures?



REFLECT

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story?
- What kinds of dreams need to die in order for your community to prosper?
- Where do you see social exile occurring in your own city? What communities have been uprooted, disempowered, and marginalized? What does it look like to garden—literally and metaphorically—in these spaces?



PRAY

When my life unravels in transition, root me in a community of support and flourishing. Amen.

MISSION INITIATIVE | FIRST PRES FOOD PANTRY

As stated in this month's newsletter, "it is such a blessing that we can provide emergency food to so many people in our community each month."

The Session asked the Mission Committee to bring the food pantry under their umbrella, and a committee of church members and community volunteers has assembled to help manage operations. We have divided up the tasks of ordering and reporting, inventory, hospitality, and distribution among this team and people are continuing to get much needed food.

We are so grateful for wonderful community volunteers who show up every Wednesday like John Corcoran, Van Carson, and the gentlemen that Van brings to volunteer. We thank Nancy Kelly who has used her engineer's brain to help manage the inventory as well as all of the other box-packers and food-sorters who work tirelessly in the basement pantry area.

Huge thanks are due to the Buildings & Grounds crew, who are a Godsend helping with the deliveries on the first and fourth Tuesdays of month. As the saying goes "It takes a village" and we are so grateful for our First Pres village who come together in the spirit of Christ's love and commitment to care for those whom society often deems "the least of us". Thank you to ALL who continue to provide donations of time, money, muscles, food, prayers and compassion.

Below are some of the items that we have a hard time keeping in stock:

- ♦ Boxed dinners that include pasta (e.g., macaroni & cheese)
- ♦ Shelf-stable proteins—including canned or foil pouches of tuna, chicken or ham.
- ♦ Cans of hearty soups & stews

We invite any vegetable gardeners with over-abundance to bring fresh produce on Wednesdays by 3:30^{PM}. This is a wonderful seasonal extra which is so appreciated by food pantry guests.

Please email Meg - megprefersthephone@icloud.com or Jenny - jenniferleastman6@gmail.com, if you would like to be involved or have questions. There are many ways in which folks of all abilities can participate!



The **Mission Initiative** is sponsoring their apple fundraiser on Sunday, October 5th, following the World Communion Sunday service. Enjoy freshly picked apples from Ela Orchard in Rochester, WI.

There will be a free-will offering to benefit the food banks at First Presbyterian Church.

To make a secure, online donation, please visit our website at <https://firstpresracine.org/donate>. Click on "Secure Giving Through PayPal" and select *Apple Fundraiser* from the dropdown menu.

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, Leah Fisher, Barb Stevenson, Evelyn Vanderheyden, Louise Shapley.

As they deal with physical, emotional and/or spiritual issues, please pray for the family of Ruby Seeton, 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 Utle; 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!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Sunday, September 21st

9:30^{AM}—Sunday Worship

10:40^{AM}—Fellowship

Tuesday, September 23rd

4:00^{PM}—Delivery for Food Pantry

6:30^{PM}—Session Meeting

Wednesday, September 24th

4:00^{PM}—Food Pantry

Sunday, September 28th

9:30^{AM}—Sunday Worship

10:40^{AM}—Fellowship

Choral ARTS Society

Gospel Fusion

Saturday, October 18, 2025 • 7:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church
716 College Avenue, Racine, WI 53403

Pre-Concert Event Included with Admission:
5:45-6:30PM "Harmonious Reunion" with *Gospel Fusion* Guest Artists



Greater Mount Eagle Praise Ensemble



D'AYCH & The Next Level Band

TICKET PRICES

Adult \$25 • Senior \$25 • Student \$15



Advance tickets available at:

Personal Touch by Julie Florist in Racine – 5445 Spring Street – with cash or check,
online at www.choralartsonline.org, or by calling (262) 634-3250.

This season is supported in part by a grant from the Racine Community Foundation, a grant from the Racine Arts Council's ArtSeed Grant Program funded by the Racine Arts Council and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin, and a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.





JOIN US FOR
Homecoming
SUNDAY

WELCOME HOME!

Reconnect with your church family as we celebrate together. Join us for inspiring music, meaningful message, and a chance to support our mission projects.

We look forward to seeing you!

Sunday, Oct 5th
9:30 AM

Family, Fun, and Fall Favorites

- Music you don't want to miss!
- Mission fundraiser: Orchard fresh apple sale after service.
- Fall favorites: Apple cider, cider donuts, and more.

