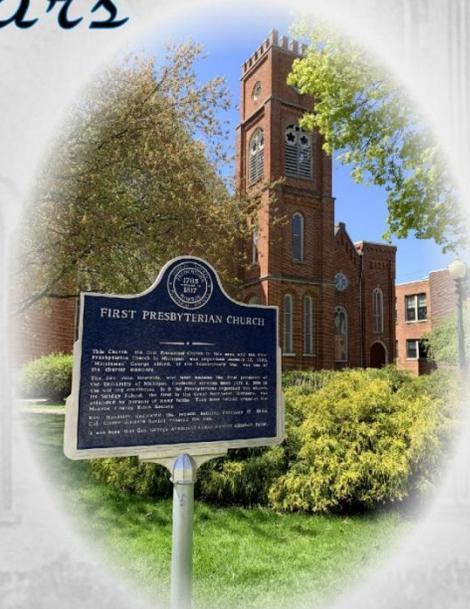




First
Presbyterian
Church of Monroe

1820 to 2020

Celebrating
200 Years
of Faith
&
Service



September 20, 2020

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The mission of the First Presbyterian Church is to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ and to proclaim his salvation in worship, education, and outreach.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OPENING WORDS

Friends, welcome! Come and rest in the arms of the Lord.

We are thankful to be together to share in God's love.

Set aside your struggles and worries and rest together in peaceful community.

Together we are a family of faith, here to worship and celebrate our Lord.

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

God calls us to be his faithful people, created in God's image.

We are astonished by the care and grace offered to us daily by God.

God calls us to work together, sharing God's love and grace with all of God's creation.

We offer ourselves as servants, with joy and humility, renewed by our community of faith in worship.

Let us join together to celebrate the Triune God in our midst.

OPENING HYMN #24 "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens" vss. 1, 2, 4

- 1 God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place, flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space, we, your children in your likeness, share inventive powers with you. Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.
- 2 Proudly rise our modern cities, stately buildings row on row. Yet their windows, blank, unfeeling, stare on canyoned streets below, where the lonely drift unnoticed in the city's ebb and flow, lost to purpose and to meaning, scarcely caring where they go.
- 4 As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew, children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you. May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor well begun. Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.

CALL TO CONFESSION

We are God's beloved people. As we rest in God's love, let us confess our sins.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of Grace and Truth, we are confounded by the ways in which you nurture and care for us out of your bountiful love. Indeed, we are often overwhelmed by your care and convince ourselves that we are not worthy of your grace. Sometimes we are so focused on the challenges of life that we fail to notice the ways in which you are present all around us: a beautiful sunrise, a cool breeze, the song of a bird, the rustle of branches as you whisper to us. Forgive us for our self-centeredness, our need to control things and have our own way, our desires to be important, and our one-upmanship. Help us to see your world and your people in all their diverse glory. Encourage us to find see things in new ways and create new ways to being in the world that honor and glorify You.

Hear now the silent confessions on our hearts.

SILENT CONFESSION

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ lived for us, died for us, was raised and intercedes for us. Nothing can separate us from the love and grace of God. Friends, believe the Good News. In the name of Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

SONG OF AFFIRMATION #581 “Glory Be to the Father”

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.

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Creator God, open our hearts and minds to hear your word for our lives. May it light anew the Spirit of Wisdom within each of us. **Amen.**

FIRST READING — Jonah 3:10-41

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING — Matthew 20:1-16

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON:

“Expect the Unexpected”

Debra Davies

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH – from “The Brief Statement of Faith”

We trust in God,

whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God’s image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.

But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.

Ignoring God’s commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth,

exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.

We deserve God’s condemnation.

Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.

In everlasting love, the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people to bless all families of the earth.

Hearing their cry, God delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage.

Loving us still,

God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.

Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,

like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,

God is faithful still.

HYMN #754

“Help Us Accept Each Other”

vss. 1-4

- 1 Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us; teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace. Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe we are ourselves accepted, and meant to love and live.
- 2 Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life we struggle to be human and search for hope and faith. Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some, to love them as we find them, or as they may become.
- 3 Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved in living situations to do the truth in love; to practice your acceptance until we know by heart the table of forgiveness, and laughter’s healing art.
- 4 Lord, for today’s encounters with all who are in need, who hunger for acceptance, for justice and for bread, we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on: renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us; make us one!

CALL TO OFFERING

Please reflect on the blessings God has given you and how you might reach out.

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God, we experience your bountiful love in so many ways. We pledge these tokens of our love and gratitude to your service and ask that they be multiplied in your ministry throughout the world to bring justice and peace. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *(Pray for those who are ill and all health care workers and those in essential jobs serving us. Pray for our congregation now separated. Pray for our country’s leaders as they make tough decisions. Pray for our world.)*

LORD'S PRAYER

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

HYMN #679

“Let Whole Creation Cry”

vss. 1-2

- 1 Let the whole creation cry, “Glory to the Lord on high.” Heaven and earth, awake and sing, “Praise to our almighty King.” Praise God, angel hosts above, ever bright and fair in love; sun and moon, uplift your voice; night and stars, in God rejoice!
- 2 Men and women, young and old, raise the anthem loud and bold; join with children’s songs and praise; worship God through length of days. From the north to southern pole let the mighty chorus roll: “Holy, holy, holy One, glory be to God alone!”

CHARGE AND BLESSING

Friends,

God is still speaking:

Love deeply, compassionately, with your whole self;

Listen more, speak less, and when you speak, speak the truth in love, following Christ's example;

Forgive yourself and others, releasing the bonds of hatred;

Respect all persons and welcome them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, believers or not;

The road to transformation is crowded with unexpected people and events, know the Spirit travels with you;

Find quiet in yourselves, listening for the rush of wind over the water and the rustling of the trees, for these are the voice of God;

Find humor where you can, laugh often and with abandon;

Follow the rhythm of life; and

Choose joy, always.

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May the grace of our Lord, Jesus the Christ,

The love of God,

And the love and comfort of the Holy Spirit go with each of us as we leave this service. AMEN.

Ushers: Helyn Schroeder and Jim Crammond

About our Guest Speaker this Sunday!

Debra Davies, M.Div., is a graduate of San Francisco Theological Seminary (1998). She is a Ruling Elder of 40 years, having served four different congregations in that role as well as Clerk of Session in two congregations. She has long been involved in ecumenical activities, visited churches on three continents, and values the diversity of people of faith across Christian and non-Christian denominations and traditions.