

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Benton Harbor



The Interests of Others
Philippians 2:1-13 + Matthew 21:23-32
September 27, 2026 • 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

We Are Welcomed

Welcome

Opening Prayer

"I Go By a Field" by Wendell Berry

I go by a field where once
I cultivated a few poor crops.
It is now covered with young trees,
for the forest that belongs here
has come back and reclaimed its own.
And I think of all the effort
I have wasted and all the time,
and of how much joy I took
in that failed work and how much
it taught me. For in so failing
I learned something of my place,
something of myself, and now
I welcome back the trees.

Prelude + Setting the Table for Worship

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it." John 1:5

We light the Christ Candle each week as a reminder that Christ – the One who shines brightly in the darkness – is ever-present with us, not only here in worship, but in our every day life.

"...we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

We pour water into the font each week as a reminder of our own baptism – that moment when we connected with God's creative purpose, cleansing power, and redemptive promise.

We Are Gathered

The Call to Worship

Praise the Lord who is our provider.

The Lord is our hope.

Our trust is in God.

God brought us out of bondage and has made us free.

The Lord is our hope.

Our trust is in God.

Glorious are the deeds of our God, and mighty are his acts.

The Lord is our hope.

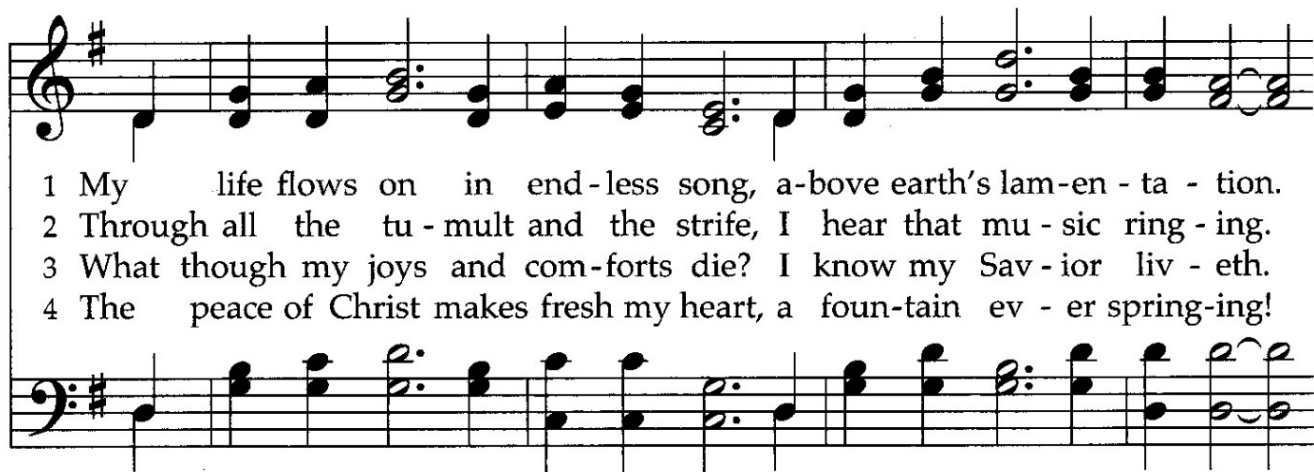
Our trust is in God.

Song of Praise *Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit*

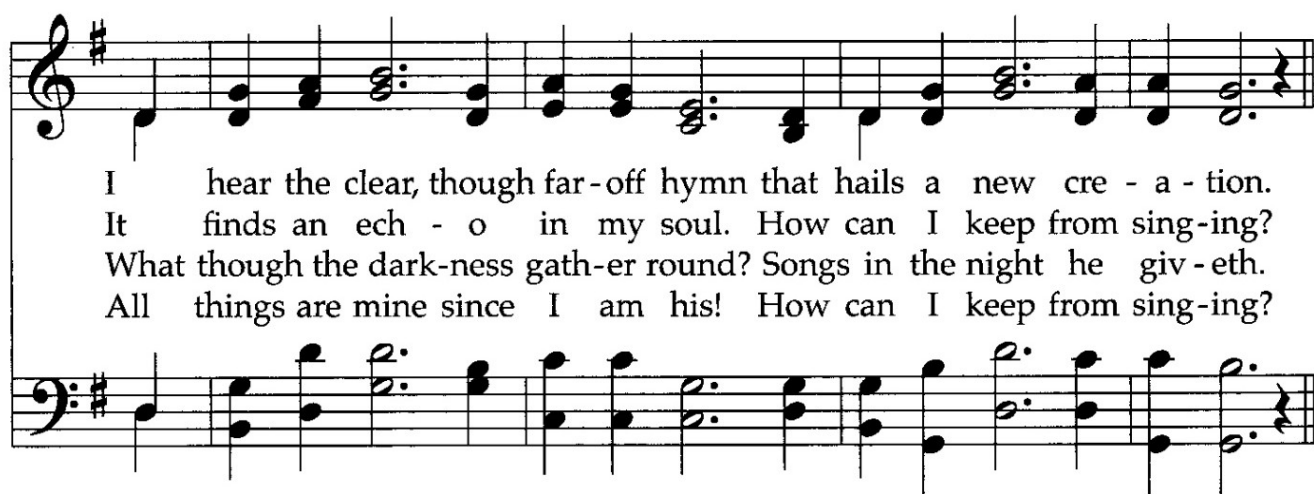
My Life Flows On

Glory to God #821

[see next page]

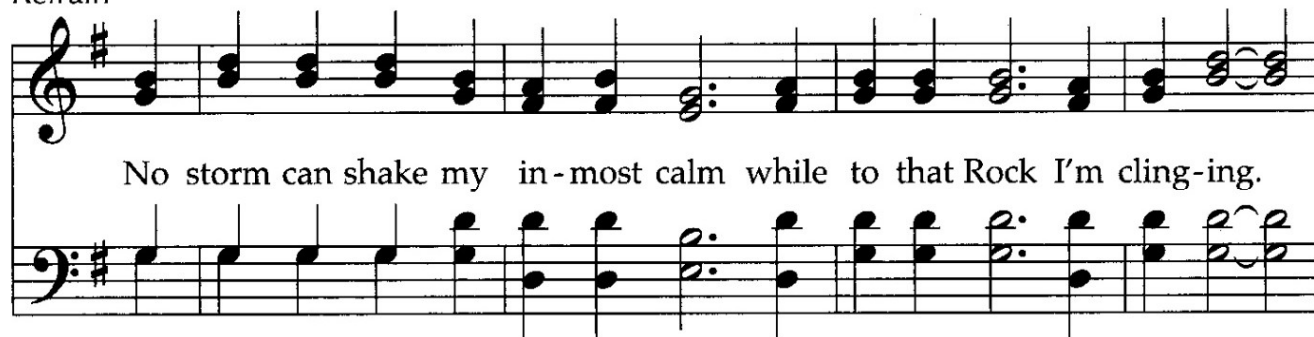


1 My life flows on in end-less song, a-bove earth's lam-en - ta - tion.
2 Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing.
3 What though my joys and com-forts die? I know my Sav - ior liv - eth.
4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a foun-tain ev - er spring-ing!



I hear the clear, though far-off hymn that hails a new cre - a - tion.
It finds an ech - o in my soul. How can I keep from sing-ing?
What though the dark-ness gath-er round? Songs in the night he giv - eth.
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from sing-ing?

Refrain



No storm can shake my in-most calm while to that Rock I'm cling-ing.



Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from sing-ing?

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty God,
we have been wandering in the wilderness of sin.
We have complained in the face of your mercy.
We have been selfish and conceited
in the face of your sacrifice.
We have not done your will.
Teach us humility.
Teach us gratitude.
Infuse your spirit into our beings
so that we might be reconciled to you.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

Song of Gratitude

"Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me" Glory to God #582

Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, amen.

World without end, without end. Amen.
World without end, without end. Amen.
World without end, without end. Amen.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, amen.

Passing of the Peace

We Hear God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading Philippians 2:1-13 *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped, but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a human,
he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God exalted him even more highly
and gave him the name that is above every other name,
so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God!

Scripture Reading

Matthew 21:23-32

The Message

Then he was back in the Temple, teaching. The high priests and leaders of the people came up and demanded, “Show us your credentials. Who authorized you to teach here?” Jesus responded, “First let me ask you a question. You answer my question and I’ll answer yours. About the baptism of John—who authorized it: heaven or humans?”

They were on the spot and knew it. They pulled back into a huddle and whispered, “If we say ‘heaven,’ he’ll ask us why we didn’t believe him; if we say ‘humans,’ we’re up against it with the people because they all hold John up as a prophet.” They decided to concede that round to Jesus. “We don’t know,” they answered.

Jesus said, “Then neither will I answer your question. Tell me what you think of this story: A man had two sons. He went up to the first and said, ‘Son, go out for the day and work in the vineyard.’ “The son answered, ‘I don’t want to.’ Later on he thought better of it and went. “The father gave the same command to the second son. He answered, ‘Sure, glad to.’ But he never went. Which of the two sons did what the father asked?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said, “Yes, and I tell you that crooks and whores are going to precede you into God’s kingdom. John came to you showing you the right road. You turned up your noses at him, but the crooks and whores believed him. Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn’t care enough to change and believe him.

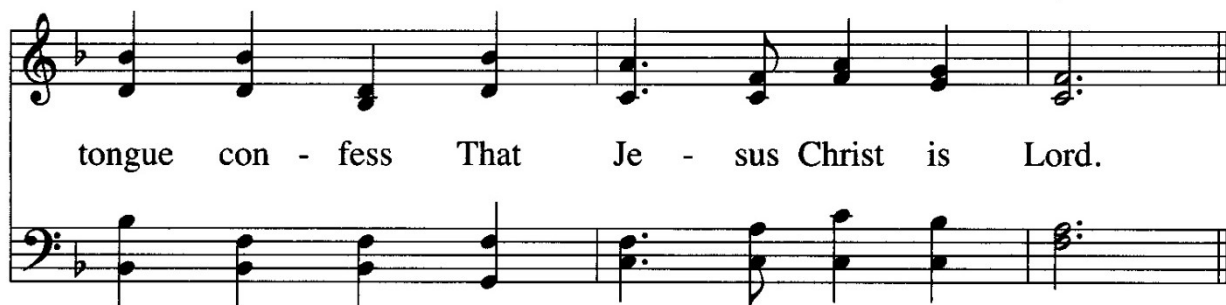
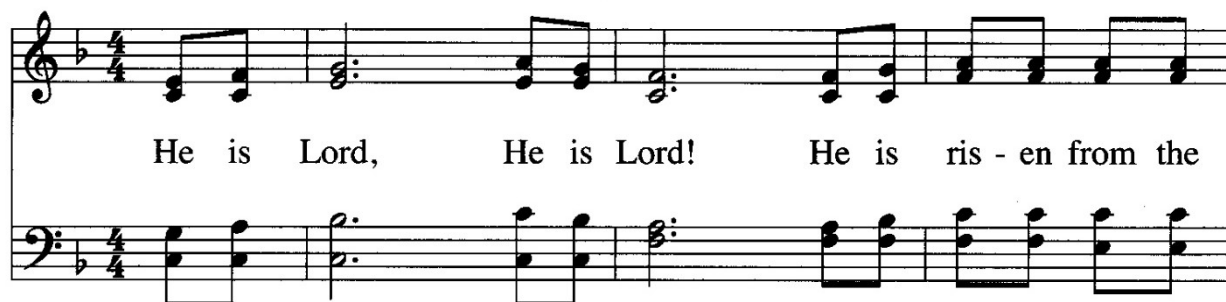
For the Holy Word: written and read, proclaimed and lived:

Thanks be to God!

A Time for Young People

Song of Preparation

He Is Lord *African American Heritage Hymnal 285*



Proclamation of the Word

Moment of Meditation

We Respond to God's Word

The Offertory

Quarter Donations Recipient: Interfaith Action of Southwest Michigan

Doxology

Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise Christ all creatures here below

Praise Holy Spirit evermore

Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayer of Dedication

Joys + Concerns

Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the needs of the world, saying,
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The 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.

Song of Trust

Amen *Glory to God #600*

Announcements

We Are Sent by God

Song of Sending

Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Glory to God #700

[see next page]

Charge + Benediction

Postlude

Questions for Reflection

The tax collectors and prostitutes, who were commonly known to be sinners, recognized God's righteousness in John the Baptist and Jesus, while the authorities (the elders, Pharisees, and Scribes) did not. Do you know of any comparable examples today?

700 I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

1 I'm gon-na live so (live so)
 2 I'm gon-na work so (work so)
 3 I'm gon-na pray so (pray so)
 4 I'm gon-na sing so (sing so)

God can use me an - y -

where, Lord, an - y - time! (an - y - time!)

I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na

live so (live so)
 work so (work so)
 pray so (pray so)
 sing so (sing so)

God can use me an - y -

where, Lord, (my Lord,) an - y - time! (an - y - time!)

I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na
 I'm gon-na

This African American spiritual has more depth than may at first appear: for people who are bound in slavery to sing about dedicating themselves to God's use shows a profound awareness of God-given self-worth despite circumstances that would deny their human or spiritual value.

Announcements

- Each year, Interfaith Action of Southwest Michigan celebrates the **Celebration of the Harvest and Harvesters**—an annual event honoring the invaluable contributions of migrant workers. This year's celebrations will be held on Sunday, October 4 at 3 pm at the Tabor hill Estate Tent in Buchanan, Mic. In the lead-up to this event, we invite you to join in collecting much-needed items for our migrant neighbors. This year's requested items include: Dry pinto beans, dry black beans, bar soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sunglasses, reusable water bottles, shampoo (no conditioner), Beanie Babies, sunscreen, men's t-shirts (size: S, M, L), socks, jeans (waist size: 30, 32, 34), athletic shoes (size: 8 and 9), men's long-sleeve shirts, hoodies, towels, blankets, baseball caps. Our collection table will be in the Gathering Space until October 4th. Questions? Contact Libby.
- On October 11, 18, and 25, Pastor Sheth will do a sermon series on three aspects of prayer, based partially on the book *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* by Anne Lamott. There are free copies of this book available for you outside the sanctuary – one for each household. This is not related to the church's book club- it's just for you to read on your own as a complement to the sermon series. There will be a brief time for discussion after the worship service on each of those Sundays for those who want to dig deeper.
- Book Club! Your reading selection this month is *Mercy Creek* by Matt Matthews. In this quietly suspenseful story with splashes of manic humor, the eccentrics, the outcasts, the bigots, and the bores join the small-town human parade. *Mercy Creek*, winner of the 2011 South Carolina First Novel Prize, is a memorable work by a new voice in fiction. This author is a friend of the Paul-Bonhams, and will join us in person for our discussion. Please join us on October 20 after a light lunch at 1130 am. If you need a copy of this book, see Scott or Donna.

Our Mission

We of First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor are a small family of believers committed to bridging the gulf of racial and class separation. As a part of the body of Christ in Benton Harbor and acknowledging Christ's claim on our lives, our congregation is called to proclaim the Gospel and witness to Christ's love, both within the faith community and in our larger community. In doing this we will share our faith with openness, love, warmth, and respect for the dignity and individuality of all people; we will welcome and value diversity; we will strive to meet the needs of people in our community for sustenance and nurturing, and we will seek to deepen and broaden our own faith as we journey. We will do these through the doctrine and structures of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Our Vision

To be as Christ calls us: Love Centered, Community Oriented,
Servant Hearted, Fully Inclusive and Integrated

Participants in Today's Service

Worship Leader: Rev. Sheth LaRue
Musician: Evan Closser
Children's Sermon: Rev. Sheth LaRue
Worship Assistant:
Audio/Video: Bob Ziebart, Gordon Helm,
Jeremy Ealy
Greeters:

Church Staff Members

Pastor: Rev. Sheth LaRue
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Doug Petersen
Music Minister: Evan Closser
Custodians: Lee Hamilton and Charase
Dorsey
Ministers: All the Church Members

The Session

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Church Office Hours

Tuesday 9a - 12p + Thursday 12p - 4p

Pastor Sheth's Office Hours

Monday - Sabbath
Tuesday 9a - 12p
Wednesday 9a - 12p and by appt
Thursday 1p - 4p and by appt
Friday by appt