

The First Presbyterian Church *in the City of New York*

ASCENSION SUNDAY

Service for the Lord's Day

May 16, 2021 | 11:00 a.m.

The Session and members of First Church extend a sincere welcome to all persons regardless of race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation. This includes an open invitation to membership, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, marriage, funerals, memorial services, and service as an officer of the church.

GATHERING

The peace candle represents our prayers for peace in a broken world. The congregation is asked to offer prayers of intercession for one another and for those who lead in these times of remote worship.

PRELUDE "All Glory Be to God on High, BWV 716" Johann Sebastian Bach

PEALING OF THE CARILLON

INTROIT "Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord!" Cameroon song
Louez le Seigneur! Louez son saint nom. Alleluia!
Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!
-Cameroon melody; arr. Ralph M. Johnson

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

**Christ has come;
Christ has risen;
Christ will come again.
The Holy Spirit is among us now.
In our baptism, we have already died and risen with Christ.
In Christ, we have the promise of new life now.
Let us worship God!**

HYMN 267 "Come, Christians, Join to Sing" MADRID

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Lord of life,
we do not know the future
any more than your disciples did.
Like them, we have many questions:
how to live;**

how to bear witness.

**Like them, we thirst for the spring waters of the Spirit,
to inspire us in our living;
to give us a heart language in our testimony.**

We know we often fall short of the lives you call us to live.

We let doubt and fear rule over us.

Forgive us. Cleanse us once more.

**You have been raised in glory
that we might rise with dignity.**

You live in power that we might live in peace.

You are present everywhere

that we might be fully present in our own lives.

This we believe. Have mercy on us. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

CHORAL ACCLAMATION

GELOBT SEI GOTT, arr. Michael Shake

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.

-Traditional liturgical text

SHARING SIGNS OF PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

CHILDREN'S PRAYER AND 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HEARING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of

their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

SERMON

"Dealing with Distancing"

Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

HYMN 297

"In Christ Called to Baptize"

ST. DENIO

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

from A Brief Statement of Faith

**The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.
In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
Amen.**

MOMENT FOR MISSION

OFFERTORY

Harold Friedell

King of glory, king of peace, I will love thee; and that love may never cease, I will move thee. Thou hast granted my request, thou hast heard me; thou didst note my working breast, thou hast spared me.

Wherefore with my utmost art I will sing thee, and the cream of all my heart I will bring thee. Though my sins against me cried, thou didst clear me; and alone, when they replied, thou didst hear me.

Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee; in my heart, though not in heaven, I can raise thee. Small it is, in this poor sort to enroll thee: even eternity's too short to extol thee.
-George Herbert

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SENDING

HYMN 296

"Go in Grace and Make Disciples"

WONDROUS LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "BRYN CALFARIA, from *Three Preludes founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes*"

R. Vaughan Williams

*The congregation is invited to continue worshiping through the postlude,
which is offered as a thanksgiving to God.*

Receiving the Sacrament of Baptism this morning is Theodora Louise Ferrin,
daughter of Nicole Pappas Ferrin and Brent Cecil Ferrin.

LEADING THIS MORNING

Hannah Faye Allred, M.Div., *Staff Associate for Congregational Care*
Rev. Dr. Barbara Davis, *Executive Minister*
Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell, *Pastor/Head of Staff*

The First Church Choir
Michael Shake, *Director of Music*

MUSIC NOTES The German chorale “All Glory Be to God on High” (*Allein Gott in der Höh sei Her*) is a vernacular setting of the *Gloria*, a Reformation carry over from the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic mass. First published in 1525, the chorale is the basis for ten different organ settings by Bach (1685-1750). The setting heard this morning, with the melody in longer note values over a meandering, imitative accompaniment, may have served as an extended introduction prior to congregational singing of the chorale.

Like last Sunday’s offertory anthem text, “Love Bade me Welcome,” “King of Glory, King of Peace” is another poem from *The Temple* by George Herbert (1599-1633). Entitled “Praise (II),” it has inspired several choral settings, as well as hymn tunes for congregational singing. Today’s choral setting is by Harold Friedell (1905-1958), who served as organist and choirmaster of Calvary Church, Park Avenue, and later St. Bartholomew’s Church, Park Avenue.

From an early age, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) declared he wanted to be a professional musician. His family supported this with the requirement that he take up the organ. He began study as a teenager, continued at Cambridge, and then spent four years in a rather unhappy position as organist for a parish church in South Lambeth, London. For his advanced training, scholar David Herman writes that accounts of Vaughan Williams organ playing were not particularly glowing. Herman suggests that though Vaughan Williams may have liked the organ as an instrument, he disliked playing it. This might explain the limited amount of original music Vaughan Williams wrote for organ. Composed following Vaughan Williams’ military service in the First World War, the *Three Preludes founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes* opens with a setting of BRYN CALFARIA (Calvary’s Hill), a tune often paired with the Ascension hymn text, “Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor.”
–Michael Shake

STAFF CONTACTS

The Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell, Pastor/Head of Staff - gstovell@fpcnyc.org
The Rev. Dr. Barbara E. Davis, Executive Minister - bdavis@fpcnyc.org
The Rev. Dr. Mark D. Hostetter, Associate Pastor - fpcnyc@fpcnyc.org
Michael Shake, Director of Music - mshake@fpcnyc.org

The Rev. Dr. Jon Walton, Pastor Emeritus
The Rev. Dr. J. Barrie Shepherd, Pastor Emeritus

Hannah Faye Allred, Staff Associate for Congregational Care - hallred@fpcnyc.org
Sophia Canfield, Online Streaming Coordinator - scanfield@fpcnyc.org
Kathleen Cook, Nursery School Director - kcook@fpcnyc.org
Tony Feliciano, Sexton - frontdesk@fpcnyc.org
Jon Harris, Family Music Ministries Coordinator - jharris@fpcnyc.org
Lisa Polite, Administrative Assistant - lpolite@fpcnyc.org
Paul Schnabel, Director of Finance and Facilities - pschnabel@fpcnyc.org
Nicole Stansifer, Director of Engagement - nstansifer@fpcnyc.org
Babs Smith, Assistant Director of Finance and Facilities - bsmith@fpcnyc.org
Audrey Webber, Associate for Hospitality and Visual Arts - awebber@fpcnyc.org

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