



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

April 26, 2026
8:45 and 11:00 a.m.
Fourth Sunday of Easter

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, please silence your cell phone.

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad, making note of new and old friends, check in on Facebook, and follow us on Instagram (firstpresathensga).

Greeting

Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; **let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

Prelude

Be Thou My Vision

Dale Wood

Words of Welcome

Moment for Mission

Matthew 25 Resource Pantry

Pat Waldrip

Song of Gathering

AZMON

**This is the day the Lord hath made;
the hours are all God's own.**

**Let heaven rejoice; let earth be glad,
and praise surround the throne.**

Call to Worship

All are welcome in this holy house.

We come together in Jesus' name.

Blessed are you who have faith even through challenges.

Jesus is here, bringing us healing and wholeness.

*Hymn 464

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

HYMN TO JOY

*Call to Confession

*Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, give us the willingness to be honest with ourselves, with one another, and with you about the ways in which we have caused harm in this world. Give us the openness to see where our actions or failures to act have led to pain in those closest to us and in those far away. Do not let us sink further into self-harm through self-blame and hatred, but give us the courage to set right our wrongs, and to return to you again and again for forgiveness.

*Silent Prayer

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

**Those who are able may stand.*

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee pairs Beethoven's tune, which was first a choral setting for Schiller's poem, "an die Freude" (To Joy) with a text by a prominent Presbyterian pastor and author.

At “The Peace,” worshipers are invited to greet each other by saying, “The peace of Christ be with you,” and responding, “And also with you.”

After the Passing of the Peace at the 11:00 a.m. service, children, ages Pre-K - grade 2, are invited to Children’s Church held in the Children’s Ministry Suite on the first floor.

The anthem was written by English composer Martin Shaw for the 1923 Annual Festival of the Rochester Diocesan Church Choirs Association.

Be Thou My Vision uses selected stanzas from a poetic version of an Irish monastic prayer dating from the 10th century or earlier. The tune is an Irish folk melody that has remained popular despite its lack of repetition and wide range.

Scholars debate whether this powerfully poetic text is an early Christian hymn which Paul is quoting or his own composition. It is one of the best-known and most influential passages in the Pauline corpus.

*Assurance of Pardon

*Congregational Response

Jacques Berthier



*The Peace

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
And also with you.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Congregational Prayer for Illumination Hymn 454, stanza 1

**Blessed Jesus, at your word
we are gathered all to hear you;
let our hearts and souls be stirred
now to seek and love and fear you;
by your teachings true and holy,
drawn from earth to love you solely.**

First Lesson John 10:1-10, page 979

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

11:00 a.m. Anthem With A Voice of Singing Martin Shaw

With a voice of singing declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia.
Utter it even unto the ends of the earth.
The Lord hath delivered his people, Alleluia.
O be joyful in God, all ye lands,
O sing praises to the honor of his name, make his praise to be glorious.

Second Lesson Ezekiel 34:7-15, page 788

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon Scattered and Sought: The Church’s Call to Gather, Equip, and Heal Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

*Hymn 339 Be Thou My Vision SLANE

*Affirmation of Faith Philippians 2:5-11

**Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form, he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.**

**Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name
that is above every name, so that at the name of 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.**

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 and the
power and the glory, forever. Amen.



*You may mail your check,
set up an automatic gift
through your bank, or
donate online using this
QR code or at
firstpresathens.org/
giving. Thank you for
your generosity.*

Offertory *Adagio* Felix Mendelssohn

***Doxology** Hymn 592

**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.**

*Prayer of Dedication

***Hymn 538** *Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing* SICILIAN MARINERS

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing

SICILIAN MARINERS

*Charge and Benediction

***Congregational Response** Hymn 68, stanza 4

Hymn 68, stanza 4

**To God the Father, God the Son,
and Holy Spirit, three in one,
may every tongue and nation raise
an endless song of thankful praise.**

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing is a corporate benediction written by a Baptist pastor who dedicated his entire ministry to a small church in rural Yorkshire. The tune was first transcribed from Sicilian sailors in the late 18th century.

Postlude *Improvisation on Sicilian Mariners* John Coble

Improvisation on Sicilian Mariners

John Coble

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Nurseries for children 4 years old and younger, available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., are located next to the Children's Ministry Suite and are accessible down the stairs in the Atrium and through the glass door.

A special word of welcome to our guests: thank you for joining us for worship this morning. Please fill out the Fellowship Pad so that we may be in touch. We are delighted you are here and look forward to seeing you again.

Children, Pre K – 2nd Grade, are invited to Children’s Church during the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Children’s Church will be held downstairs in the Children’s Ministry Suite. We will depart for Children’s Church following the Passing of the Peace. To pick up your child after the service, please go to the church courtyard entrance of the Children’s Ministry Suite.

This Sunday, the Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo will supply our pulpit on worship service. Dr. Aloyo began his tenure as the 11th President of Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur in 2022. Originally from Puerto Rico, Dr. Aloyo came to Georgia after many years of service in New Jersey as both Associate Dean at Princeton Theological Seminary and as the organizing pastor of La Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras. FPC and Columbia Seminary have a relationship that stretches back over two centuries; the seminary was organized in the manse of the church in Lexington in 1828, before moving to Columbia, South Carolina in 1830. In the late 1920s, the seminary relocated to its present campus in Decatur where it continues to train church leaders from all over the nation and the world.

NOTES ON THE SERVICE

WORSHIP LEADERS

Dr. Ryan Baer, *Senior Pastor*
The Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, *President, Columbia Theological Seminary*
Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist*

USHERS

8:45 a.m. John Simpson (head), Mary Peace
11:00 a.m. Jimbo Laboon III (head),
Ethelyn Simpson, Emily LaBoon

SUNDAY MORNING MANAGER

Justin Winstanley

FLOWERS

The Sanctuary flowers are given to the glory of God and in honor of our three grandsons, Nathan, Daniel and Joshua Baer by Jamie and Larry Baer.

We have a rosebud in honor of the birth of Lucas Byron Toney on April 17, 2026. Parents are John and Kelly Toney. Grandparents are Chuck and Laura Toney.

APRIL FLOWER TEAM

Greta Covington (Chair), Tootsie Adams,
Judy Burch, Lauren Cook, Andrea Doornbos,
Jennifer Trapnell, Sydney Jackson

AUDIOVISUAL TECHNICIAN

Bryan Owens

TO AID IN WORSHIP

If you need to leave the sanctuary during the service, a live video feed is available in the Atrium, on Facebook, and YouTube.

Available in the Narthex or from an usher:

- **Personal hearing receivers** usable anywhere in the sanctuary
- **Large-print** hymnals, Bibles, bulletins, and hymnsheets
- **Sermons** from the previous six weeks

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Prayer requests can be submitted to the church office, 706-543-4338, by the Prayer Request link on our church website (firstpresathens.org) or on the prayer cards in the Fellowship Pads.

Scottish Reformation Sunday

May 3, 8:45 & 11:00 a.m., Reception at 12:00 p.m.

Join our annual celebration of our Scottish heritage at both worship services, along with recognition of local and state dignitaries at 11:00 a.m. All are welcome to join the processional and recessional. If you need to borrow a kilt, please call Smith Wilson (706-338-4646) or Lee Epting (706-353-1913).

Food Sunday, May 3

You may bring donations of **spaghetti sauce, canned tuna, and dried pasta** to church on **Sunday, May 3**. You may also bring items to the church office until **Friday, May 1**. Our neighbors in need are very grateful for your donations! Many thanks for your thoughtfulness and generosity!

Matthew 25 Pantry Volunteers Needed

The Matthew 25 (M25) Commission will hold spring 2026 pantry distributions of such items as toilet paper, paper towels, batteries, lotion, cleaning products, aluminum foil, laundry soap etc., from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on eight consecutive Thursdays from May 7 to June 25. The M25 Commission seeks three volunteers for each of those Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. to help with set up, clean up, and to assist with the distribution of the pantry items. Please access the sign up at tinyurl.com/FPCResourcePantry2026 if you would like to volunteer.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, April 26

- 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Services, Columbia Seminary preaching
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
- 1:00 p.m. Joey Hokayem Recital, Sanctuary
- 3:00 p.m. Joey Hokayem Reception, Atrium
- 4:00 p.m. Cherub Choir Rehearsal, Room 203
- 4:00 p.m. St. Andrews Choir Rehearsal, Room 202
- 4:45 p.m. Youth Choir Rehearsal, Room 202
- 5:30 p.m. Youth Group, The PIT

Monday, April 27

- 10:00 a.m. Lay Caller Meeting, Staff Conference Room
- 5:30 p.m. Campus Kitchen, Main Kitchen
- 5:30 p.m. Handbell Choir Rehearsal, Handbell Choir Room

Tuesday, April 28

- 7:00 a.m. Our Daily Bread Breakfast, First Baptist Church
- 1:00 p.m. Staff Meeting, Staff Conference Room
- 5:30 p.m. Campus Kitchen, Main Kitchen

Wednesday, April 29

- 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Room 202

Sunday, May 3 - Communion Sunday, Food Sunday, Scottish Reformation Sunday

- 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Services, Dr. Ryan Baer preaching
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
- 12:00 p.m. Scottish Reformation Reception, Fellowship Hall
- 4:00 p.m. Cherub Choir Rehearsal, Room 203
- 4:00 p.m. St. Andrews Choir Rehearsal, Room 202
- 4:45 p.m. Youth Choir Rehearsal, Room 202
- 5:30 p.m. Youth Group, Upper Parking Lot

Books for Keeps

Help make sure no child in our community goes a summer without great books to read. Please bring your used books to the bins in the Atrium or church office between Sunday, April 19, and Sunday, May 24. Books for Keeps can accept books of all kinds except textbooks and encyclopedias. To learn more about the organization, please go to booksforkeeps.org. Thank you!

Wed@First + LIFT - May 6 - Taziki's Mediterranean Grill

Join us for Wednesdays@First where we will participate in our intergenerational LIFT (Living in Faith Together) by breaking bread, studying God's word, playing, and praying — all together as a family of faith on **May 6 from 5:30-6:30 p.m.** All are invited to participate!

Please RSVP for dinner in the Atrium, online, or by contacting the church office (e-mail frontdesk@firstpresathens.org or call 706-543-4338) by **Monday, May 4** at 12:00 p.m. Price is \$12/person and a \$45/family max (complimentary for children 5 and under).

Save the Date: VBS 2026

Mark your calendars for July 12-15, 2026, for our second annual intergenerational VBS! We will meet from 5:00-7:30 P.M. for a time of food, fellowship, and activities for all ages. We had a blast last year and are looking forward to another amazing week together! All are welcome and we would love to have you join us! Stay tuned for registration and more information.

EDUCATION – FAITH FORMATION

SUNDAYS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Director of Children and Youth Ministries: Hannah Knight

Interns: Morgan Cassidy, Devon Smith

Nursery Coordinator: Rita Raines

Children and Worship, 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

All children are welcome to remain in worship with their families every Sunday. Children's bulletins, Bibles, Busy Bags, and books are available at the children's tables located in the Narthex and on both sides of the choir loft.

Nursery Play, 8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Children's Playroom • Infants – 4 Year Olds

Little ones are invited to Nursery Play during worship and Sunday school. Children will enjoy playtime, Bible stories, and a light snack with church friends.

Children's Church, 11:00 a.m. Worship Service

Children, Pre-K – 2nd Grade are invited to Children's Church after the passing of The Peace. We will continue worshipping together in the Children's Ministry Suite by listening to God's Word, praying to God, and responding through art and worship.

**No Children's Church on the first Sunday of the month, Communion Sunday. All children are invited to remain in the sanctuary on this special Sunday to take part in worship and Communion with family.*

**For any questions, please contact Hannah Knight
at hannah@firstpresathens.org.**

**Children and Youth Ministries – Sunday School
Godly Play (4 years–2nd grade)
Explorers (3rd–5th grade)
Youth (6th–12th grade)**

Children's Sunday School meets in the Children's Ministry Suite each Sunday starting at 9:45am. Our younger kiddos will be participating in **Godly Play**– an interactive, hands-on, reflective method of learning about God by modeling Bible stories and responding. Our **Explorers Class** is for our 3rd–5th graders and is new this year! This group will spend time learning more about Bible basics and hear the stories of God's people, following the Narrative Lectionary text.

Youth Sunday School meets in the PIT and kicks off each Sunday with donuts & fellowship at 9:45am! We use the Living the Word curriculum from Spirit & Truth Publishing– it directly follows the Narrative Lectionary Text each week. There is time for games, intentional discussion, and hearing the sacred stories of old!

Youth Group (5:30–7:00 p.m.)

Sunday night youth group is a safe space for youth to come as they are! We will split into middle and high school groups, eat a yummy meal, and finish the evening as a large group. There will be games, Bible study, creative response time, and lots of laughs as we spend intentional time together. The theme for this year is “Back to Basics”– we will spend time learning more about key Biblical figures, hearing the stories of old, and diving deeper into prayer. As Jesus reminds us– He is the vine and we are the branches (John 15)! There is value in abiding in the One who knows and loves us fully. Come join us– all are welcome!

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

9:45–10:40 a.m.

IN PERSON

Bible Basics • Moses Waddel Room
(class will resume on January 18)

Bible Basics is an intergenerational class that, as the name suggests, focuses on the Bible. In the Spring semester, the class is studying the book of Acts. If you are interested in studying how the early Christian movement began and laid the foundation for the emergence of the church, please join us at 9:50 a.m. in the Moses Waddel Room. *Contacts: David Dantzler (jdaviddantzler@gmail.com) and Elaine Johnson (elaine@firstpresathens.org)*

Builders • Room 301

This class is a space for anyone navigating the complexities of family life, relationships with children and youth, or careers. Our time together will offer a blend of fellowship, mutual support, Bible study, and service.

Contacts: Dr. Ryan Baer (ryan@firstpresathens.org) or Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard (whitney@firstpresathens.org)

HYBRID (in person and over Zoom)

Del Dunn Sunday School Class • Room 308

An in–depth study and discussion of scripture, offering a collegial environment and welcoming all who seek to

enrich their understanding of the Bible and its application to our daily lives. Currently we are studying *John's Letters* which focuses on the core values of living a Christian life. *Coordinator: Jerry Rogers (jrogersutw@aol.com)*
Zoom ID: 380 330 5940, PW: 245449

New Voices • Room 310

The New Voices class is a discussion based class. Our goal is to create joy through art– come visit our New Voices Art Studio– music, prayer, scripture, class led discussion and community. We're currently reading and discussing “The Tears Of Things– Prophetic Wisdom For An Age of Outrage.” By Richard Rohr. Our discussions are open minded, respectful, topical and fun.

Contact: Lewis Hudgins (lewisahudgins@gmail.com)

Zoom ID: 674 533 8902

Wayne F. Middendorf Men's Bible Class
Bride's Room, Tinsley Stern

The class features open and honest discussion in a nonjudgmental atmosphere about various aspects of Christianity. This year Rev. Will Norman is leading us in a study of the New Testament books.

Contact: Ian Hardin (ianhardin1@gmail.com)

Zoom ID: 883 5159 0923

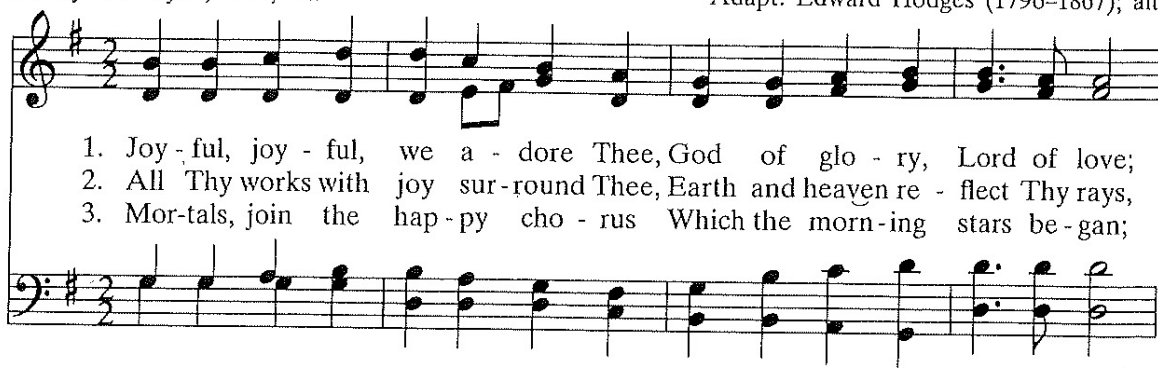
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

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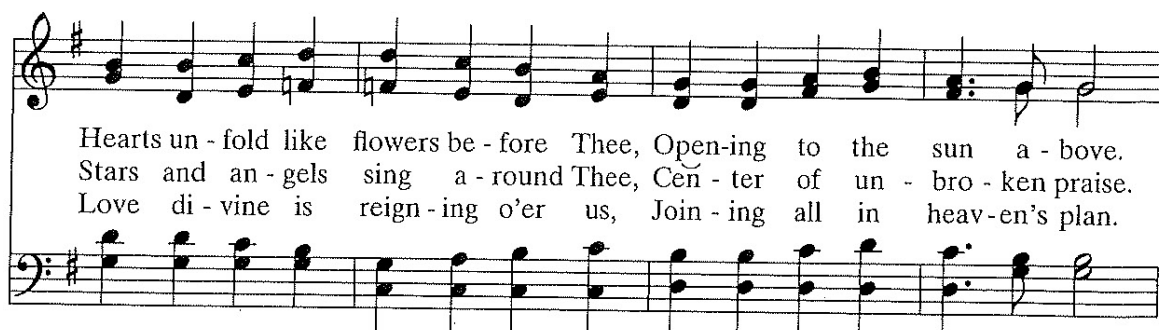
HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7 D

Henry van Dyke, 1907; alt.

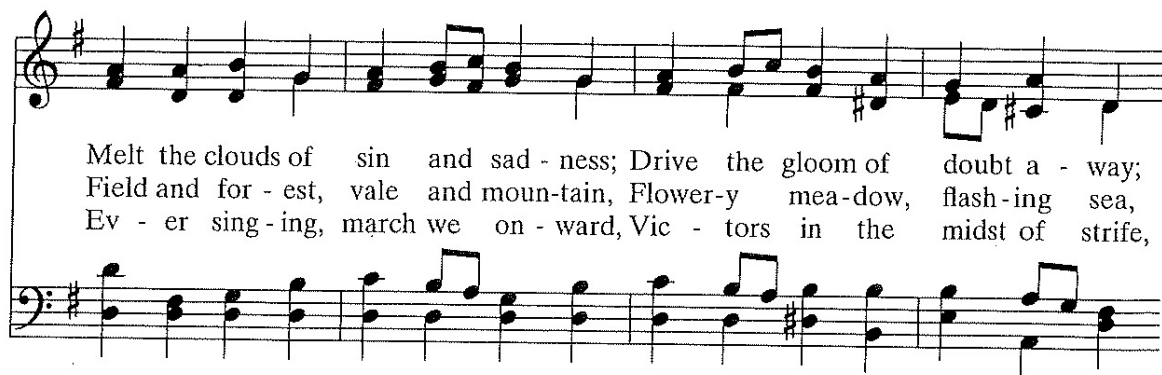
Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824
Adapt. Edward Hodges (1796-1867); alt.



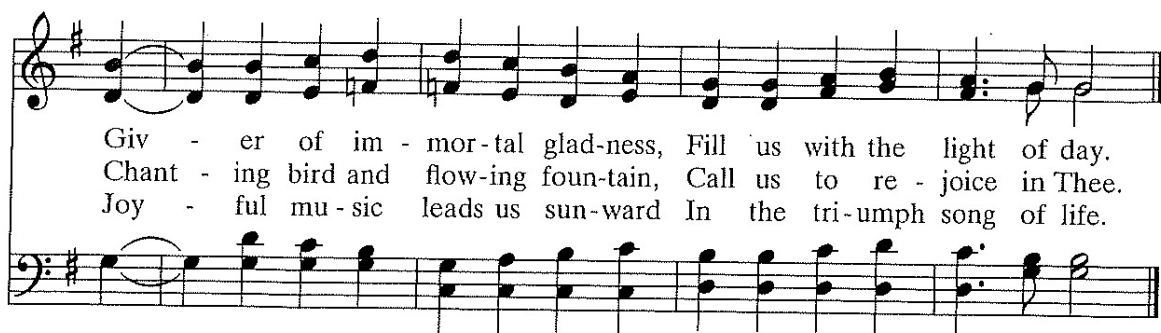
1. Joy - ful, joy - ful, we a - dore Thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love;
2. All Thy works with joy sur-round Thee, Earth and heaven re - flect Thy rays,
3. Mor-tals, join the hap-py cho - rus Which the morn-ing stars be-gan;



Hearts un - fold like flowers be - fore Thee, Open-ing to the sun a - bove.
Stars and an - gels sing a - round Thee, Cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.
Love di - vine is reign - ing o'er us, Join - ing all in heav-en's plan.



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness; Drive the gloom of doubt a - way;
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, Flower-y mea-dow, flash-ing sea,
Ev - er sing - ing, march we on - ward, Vic - tors in the midst of strife,



Giv - er of im - mor-tal glad-ness, Fill us with the light of day.
Chant - ing bird and flow-ing foun-tain, Call us to re - joice in Thee.
Joy - ful mu - sic leads us sun-ward In the tri-umph song of life.

Ancient Irish poem
Trans. Mary E. Byrne, 1905
Vers. Eleanor Hull, 1912; alt.

Irish ballad
Harm. David Evans, 1927

1. Be Thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2. Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
3. Be Thou my wis - dom, and Thou my true word;

Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art—
Thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
I ev - er with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;

Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Thou and Thou on - ly, first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

Wak - ing or sleep - ing, Thy pres - ence my light.
Great God of heav - en, my trea - sure Thou art.
Still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing

SICILIAN MARINERS 8.7.8.7.8.7

Attr. John Fawcett, 1773

Stanza 1, line 6, alt. 1774, Conyer's *Collection of Psalms*

Stanza 3 alt. Godfrey Thring (1823–1903)

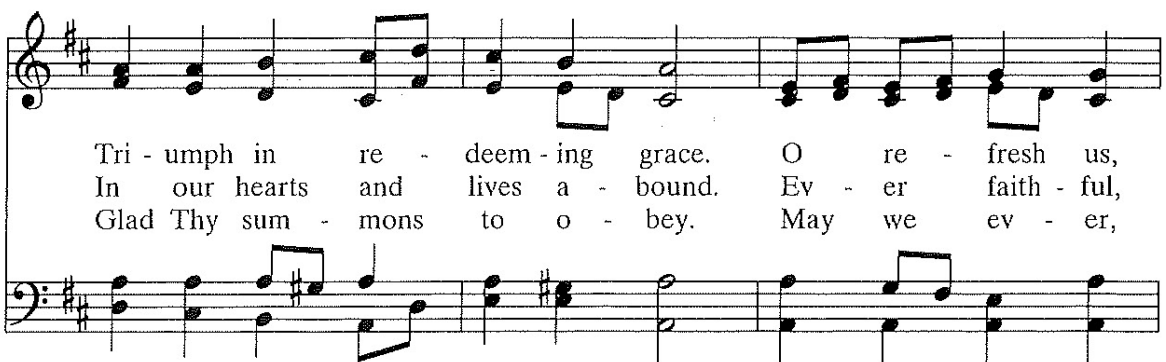
Sicilian melody



1. Lord, dis - miss us with Thy bless - ing; Fill our hearts with
 2. Thanks we give and ad - o - ra - tion For Thy gos - pel's
 3. So that when Thy love shall call us, Sav - ior, from the



joy and peace; Let us each, Thy love pos - sess - ing,
 joy - ful sound; May the fruits of Thy sal - va - tion
 world a - way, Let no fear of death ap - pall us,



Tri - umph in re - deem - ing grace. O re - fresh us,
 In our hearts and lives a - bound. Ev - er faith - ful,
 Glad Thy sum - mons to o - bey. May we ev - er,



O re - fresh us, Trav - eling through this wil - der - ness.
 Ev - er faith - ful To the truth may we be found;
 May we ev - er Reign with Thee in end - less day.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION

Ryan Baer, Senior Pastor Pat Waldrip, Clerk of Session
Whitney Booth Lockard, Associate Pastor

CLASS OF 2027

Susan Baldwin
Bill Bushnell
Amy Cowsert
Matt Crim
Jay Holloway
Tom Lane
Joan Pinson
Paige Simmons

CLASS OF 2028

Steven Brooks
Courtney Dantzler
Shannon Ferguson
Edward W. (Ned) Phares
Holly Sheats
Lawton Stephens
Madeline Van Dyck
John Webster

CLASS OF 2029

Meghan Bawcum
Stephen Covington
Andrew Griffeth
Anne Marie Miller
Mike Morris
Leslye Queen
Laura Toney
Gail Wilfong

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Ryan Baer, *Senior Pastor* (ryan@firstpresathens.org)
The Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard, *Associate Pastor* (whitney@firstpresathens.org)
The Rev. Margaret Davis, *Parish Associate* (margaret@firstpresathens.org)
Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist* (jcoble@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Hannah Knight, *Director of Children and Youth Ministries* (hannah@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Elaine Johnson, *Director of Weekday School* (elaine@firstpresathens.org)
Mr. Paulo Santos, *Office Administrator* (paulo@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Jennifer Adams, *Church Accountant* (jadams@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Joli Winstanley, *Administrative & Communications Assistant* (frontdesk@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Deanna Rollins, *Weekday School Administrative Assistant* (wds@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Charlotte Chromiak, *Children's Music Assistant* (charlotte@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Rita Raines, *Nursery Coordinator*
Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*
Mr. Wayne Brock, *Sexton*
Mr. Justin Winstanley, *Sunday Morning Manager*
Ms. Morgan Cassidy, *Children and Youth Ministries Intern*
Mr. Devon Smith, *Children and Youth Ministries Intern*