

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2025

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FIRST SUNDAY after CHRISTMAS

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(from Psalm 136)*

One: Come, to stand in the presence of the Lord.
All: “God’s steadfast love endures forever.”
One: Come, to worship the Holy One.
All: “God’s steadfast love endures forever.”
One: Come, to sing of God's faithfulness.
All: “for God’s steadfast love endures forever.”
Unison: **We come, to worship the Lord our God.**

***OPENING HYMN** “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” GtG 39

1. **Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not; thy compassions they fail not.
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.**

Refrain:

**Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning, new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!**

2. **Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.**

(Refrain)

(continued...)

3. **Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**
(Refrain)

Words: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923
Music: FAITHFULNESS, William Marion Runyan, 1923
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Loving God, we worship and adore you,
yet still stumble in our attempts to follow you.
We do not love others with the same love we know from you.
We go off in our own directions instead of yours.
We try to secure our futures with our own resources instead of trusting in yours.
Have mercy upon us, gracious Lord.
Strengthen us in our faith in you.
Bolster us in our hope in you.
Nurture us in our love for you and others.
For it is in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,
that we pray. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: In the strength of the Lord Almighty we confide.
All: In the mercy of God we trust.
One: By the power of God we are restored.
All: By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we are renewed.
One: So rejoice and celebrate this day!
**All: For in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, we are loved,
we are given new life. Alleluia! Amen!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.
All: And also with you.
(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 136

PSALM 136 (New Revised Standard Version)

- ¹ *O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ² *O give thanks to the God of gods,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ³ *O give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁴ *who alone does great wonders,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁵ *who by understanding made the heavens,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁶ *who spread out the earth on the waters,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁷ *who made the great lights,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁸ *the sun to rule over the day,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ⁹ *the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁰ *who struck Egypt through their firstborn,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹¹ *and brought Israel out from among them,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹² *with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹³ *who divided the Red Sea in two,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁴ *and made Israel pass through the midst of it,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁵ *but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁶ *who led the people through the wilderness,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁷ *who struck down great kings,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁸ *and killed famous kings,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*
- ¹⁹ *Sihon, king of the Amorites,
for God's steadfast love endures forever.*

20 *and Og, king of Bashan,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 21 *and gave their land as a heritage,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 22 *a heritage to God's servant Israel,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 23 *It is the Lord who remembered us in our low estate,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 24 *and rescued us from our foes,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 25 *who gives food to all flesh,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.
 26 *O give thanks to the God of heaven,*
 for God's steadfast love endures forever.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “The Beat Goes On” by Pastor Bill Vincent

--[metronome on]--

The beat...goes...on. We may not hear it as clearly as this metronome here, but it is always there: steady, constant, continuous, faithful.

The beat goes on.

--[metronome off]--

And that is a challenge. Something to be reckoned with. For sometimes we are not ready, sometimes we want to hold onto things that can't be held onto. Yet the beat goes on ... whether we like it or not. We can try to fight it and resist it and deny it. Or we can accept it and live with it and be a part of it.

But the beat will go on – with, or without, us.

The beat goes on. And that is a comfort. Something to assure us in the midst of the uncertainties and shifts, changes and turmoil of life. The beat goes on ... and it will not die. The empty tomb assures us of that. We can ignore it and choose not to believe it. Or we can cling to it and claim it and put our faith in the God who says it is true.

For the beat will go on.

The beat goes on with the thrill of the Hebrews' crossing the Red Sea. It can be heard in the thundering hooves of Pharaoh's chariot horses. It can be heard in the shouts of praise from the people delivered.

And the beat goes on with the drudgery of wandering in the wilderness. It can be heard with the soft thud of each person's tired, sandaled feet. It can be heard in the wind blowing in the people's faces. It can be heard in the cry of quails offered as meat for the people. It can be heard in water gushing forth from a rock.

The beat goes on during the agony of the crucifixion. It can be heard in the wailing of the women at the foot of the cross. It can be heard in Christ's cry for mercy, even for those who hammered in the nails.

And the beat goes on with the resurrection. It can be heard in the echo of the empty tomb. It can be heard with the news of the angels, "He is not here!" It can be heard with the stunned silence of disciples who dare not believe yet want to believe and do not know what to believe.

"The beat goes on."

Life goes on.

But even deeper. Love goes on. And God goes on. And God goes with us, every step of the way as life goes on and on and on. For

God's steadfast love endures forever.

Raise your hand if you can remember the birth of your first child, or the birth of a sister or brother.

Raise your hand if you can remember the first day of school, whether the very first in your life or even the first of this past year.

Raise your hand if you can remember moving from one house to another.

Raise your hand if you can remember the death of someone you love.

They are all transitions. Times of shifting and change.

And whether good or bad, exciting or terrifying, desired or not, life went on, the beat went on. And it still does. And it still will.

Yes, we are affected, and even changed, by these transitions. But not destroyed by them. And if we learn to embrace them, even in sorrow, we can grow because of them, and become better people.

They may frighten us because of their uncertainty and the unknowns.

But as someone once said,

we do not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

(letter from The Session, Aledo First Presbyterian Church, Illinois)

The beat goes on

-when we see it

-and even when we do not.

The beat goes on

-with a Book Club here and a band there

-from a community garden to a community food pantry

-with an anniversary – or two – and a retirement

-as the old year comes to an end; as a new year is about to begin.

The beat goes on
-with new names and new faces
-and with old names and old faces in new places.

The beat goes on.
So we gather in worship and share in prayer and share something of our many and varied
– yet ultimately singular – journeys.
And we hear the word and share the promise and remind each other of the beat.

For the beat goes on.
Let us listen for it – when it is loud and hurts our ears ... and when it is loud and a source
of strength and confidence.

Let us listen for it – when it is soft and disappointing ... and when it is soft and soothing.
Let us listen for it – when it grates on our ears and tears at our hearts and numbs our
minds ... and when it calms our nerves and heals our hearts and fills us with joy.

The beat goes on.
Let us listen for it, and know that it is an echo of the heart-beat of God – the God who is
with us and who loves us always ... for that's what it means that...

--[metronome on]--

...the beat...goes...on.

--[metronome off]--

***HYMN “God of Our Life” GtG 686**

- 1. God of our life, through all the circling years,
we trust in thee.
In all the past, through all our hopes and fears,
thy hand we see.
With each new day, when morning lifts the veil,
we own thy mercies, Lord, which never fail.**
- 2. God of the past, our times are in thy hand.
With us abide.
Lead us by faith to hope's true promised land.
Be thou our guide.
With thee to bless, the darkness shines as light,
and faith's fair vision changes into sight.**

(continued...)

**3. God of the coming years, through paths unknown
we follow thee.
When we are strong, Lord, leave us not alone.
Our refuge be.
Be thou for us in life our daily bread,
our heart's true home when all our years have sped.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from *A Brief Statement of Faith*)

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Lord, in your mercy...
All: ...hear our prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Traditional)

(next page...)

**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.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Dear God, we give you thanks
for your guiding presence and your sustaining peace.
In gratitude for all that you do for us
and all that you mean to us,
we bring these gifts.
Use them and us
to embody your presence and share your peace with the world.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Wherever I May Wander"

**1. Wherever I may wander,
wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love;
God's care is over me.
God made the great high mountains,
and made the wide blue sea;
God made the sky where airplanes fly;
God made the world, and me.**

(continued...)

2. Throughout the whole creation

**I see God's loving care
for everyone in every land,
God's children everywhere.
Wherever I may wander,
wherever I may be,
I'm certain of my Maker's love;
God's care is over me.**

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A SERVICE OF ENDINGS (See insert)

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

***RESPONSE** “Go with Us, Lord” GtG 748

**Go with us, Lord, and guide the way
through this and every coming day,
that in your Spirit strong and true
our lives may be our gift to you.**

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POSTLUDE

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