

## Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, November 1st, 2015

*The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist will enter followed by the pastor. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....*

*The preacher will then ask...*

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

*The preacher will take a seat.*

PRELUDE "For All the Saints" - Douglas E Wagner Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Let Us Go Unto the House of the Lord" The Choir

*After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 25 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Isaiah 25)

The Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,

**There will be rich food filled with marrow, and well-aged wines strained clear.**

And he will destroy the shroud that is cast over all people,

**He will swallow up death forever.**

Then the Lord God will wipe away our tears and remove our disgrace

**It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.**

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

**Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Lord, whose holy saints and martyrs in every time and place have endured affliction, suffering and tribulation, by the power of the Cross; so likewise, we pray that you would send your Holy Spirit to sustain this church in her witness and mission-- and when necessary, her martyrdom. The world needs no provocation to hate your Church, but you have taught us not to despair. Therefore, grant us the power to lift up our hands, our eyes and our hearts to continue our living witness with the church universal, to the glory of your most holy name. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “The Church’s One Foundation”, number 442 in our *Hymnals*.

*The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.*

\*HYMN OF PRAISE “The Church’s One Foundation” *The Hymnal #442*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...*

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

We may have hidden our soiled hands and impure hearts from others, but we cannot hide them from ourselves-- or from God. If we would confess our sins, Christ would reach beyond the filth and stain and cleanse us and make us whole that we may take our place in His kingdom with all the saints that have gone before us. Let us confess our sins before God and one another, praying together the prayer of confession as it’s found within our bulletins., Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, we confess that in our desire to be contemporary, we tend to discount the contribution of our spiritual ancestors. The good news of the gospel is ours because of the word and witness passed down through the ages. But we confess how inadequately we appreciate the faith, the dedication, the sacrifice of those who laid the foundations of the faith. Forgive us the independence that becomes pride, the modernity that denies the worth of tradition, and the structures we attempt to build on sand rather than rock. Forgive us & grant us new hearts. Amen

\*SILENT CONFESSION

*(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)*

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

It is the sacrifice of Jesus that has set us, and all the saints gone before us, free from the guilt and sin, given us clean white robes of righteousness in exchange for our filthy rags, and made us royalty in the sight of God. Friends believe the Good News!

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

\*GLORIA PATRI

*The Hymnal #579*

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;***

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

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Having been reconciled to God through the grace of His Son, let us also be reconciled to one another and share Christ's peace. The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.*

*After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...*

"At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen."

*The preacher will take a seat.*

CHILDREN'S SERMON

*(All Singing)*

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;***

***Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;***

***Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.***

*As the children leave, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...*

Four members of this congregation have moved from the church militant to the church triumphant this year. Also, Del Bourdier passed on last year only a month or so before All Saints Day and she was the only one in her class for 2014, so we have included her with this year's class. In addition, the church worldwide has lost some leading figures and they are included. Let us remember each of them and when the video con-cludes, let us give God thanks for their lives and for the lessons and gifts they imparted to each of us.

*After the video, the preacher will return to the pulpit and say...*

A THANKSGIVING FOR THE SAINTS

A Video & Prayer

Let us pray... Lord of all worlds, we lift up our humble thanks to You for Del, Barbara, Scott, Kenneth, Buddy, and all those we have known and loved who have at last entered into their rest, and reached the Promised Land, where now they gaze upon Your countenance with unveiled faces and know even as they have been fully known. Give us grace to follow them, as they followed in the footsteps of Your Holy Son. Encourage our wavering hearts by their example, and help us to see in them the pledges of Your might by which the weak are made strong. Keep alive in us the memory of our loved ones, whom You have called out of this world, and make that recollection powerful enough to subdue every unworthy thought and wish. Grant that every remembrance that turns our hearts to those unseen may lead us closer to You, until we also come to the eternal rest which You have prepared for Your people, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. *Amen.*

Would all of you who are able, stand and join in singing our hymn of thanksgiving, "For All the Saints", number 526 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

"For All the Saints"

*The Hymnal #526*

*After the hymn, the liturgist will step to the pulpit and say,*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We have all been comforted and strengthened through the faith and witness of the saints who have gone before us in Christ's service. The torch of Christ's compassion has been passed to us. We are those who are to wipe away tears, offer hope's embrace, and share our faith in Christ with the world. We

do this through the offering of ourselves through our tithes and offerings. Let us give generously and gladly as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

*The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.*

THE OFFERTORY

\*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

Dr. Elizabeth Davis  
*The Hymnal #592*

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

*After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of all ages, we make this offering in gratitude for those who, in the name of Christ, have washed our feet, tended our wounds, broken our chains, fed and clothed us in spirit. And we dedicate ourselves to the continuing of Christ's work in this world, in grateful memory of these saints, and in loving response to the needs of friend and stranger. Amen.

*The liturgist will take a seat until after the Anthem.*

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.*

THE ANTHEM

"Make My Life an Alleluia" - Ruth Elaine Schram

The Choir

*After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the Revelation of John, the twenty-first chapter beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1085 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son."

*The liturgist will take his seat or return to the congregation to sit with your family or friends.*

*The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...*

Our Epistle Reading this morning is taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, the second chapter, beginning with the nineteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1018 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

"Built Upon the Bones"

A number of years ago, I did a fair amount of research on the funeral and burial practices of American churches. One of the things I uncovered was that early churches in this country, continued the practice of churches in England of burying their notable dead, their own saints, beneath the floors of their churches. In one such church, there was ultimately an inscription placed in a prominent location above the entrance that read,

"By order of the Vestry,  
No one is to bring any more bodies  
into the basement of this church.  
The foundations of the church have been disrupted  
by the interment of so many bodies.  
The stability of the building is being curiously impaired.  
There will be no further burials here  
without the express approval of the Vestry."

Isn't that curious? The church was built upon the bones of its departed saints, it can still be disrupted by them as well.

You've probably never thought about it, but all of us that are a part of the church, are surrounded by the dead.

If it seems strange, it may be because of a phenomenon described by anthropologist Margaret Mead. She describes Americans as "Neophiles"-- lovers of the new. We worship the new and improved model of everything, and have an exaggerated faith in what is new.

In traditional agrarian societies, elders had something to teach the young. They were repositories of wisdom about seed time and harvest, interpreting changes in the weather, understanding the ways of the world.

Today it seems though as if the old have nothing to teach the young. I overheard one of you say once that your grandson at six knows more about computers than you at sixty. And you are right. So who cares about tradition, the lessons of yesterday, in a world that is lurching, always lurching, toward tomorrow?

You see it in churches too. The modern church, the one that seems to be growing and drawing in young seekers, don't sing the old hymns anymore. Contemporary Christian Music is all the rage. They don't seem to give much place to the bible. You won't find them in the pews. If you see a bible at all, it is only in the form of a few verses projected on a wall. In churches, including those within our own denomination, you will find Scripture attacked as being racist, sexist, and culturally conditioned.

As a result, Our culture is most often superficial. Problem is, when a society believes that it has nothing to learn from the past, it must constantly re-invent the wheel-- morally, spiritually, and physically. As G.K. Chesterton noted, those who have freed themselves from the past, have not really freed themselves at all. Rather, they have become victims of the few arrogant ruling elite, that are composed of those who just happened to be walking around at the moment.

But that is not true here, Here we are surrounded by the dead. Their bodies may not be interred beneath our feet, but these walls, and floors and ceilings and everything you see was built by their gifts and sacrifice. The faith which brings you here did not become yours until they had first made it theirs and then shared it with you at no small cost to themselves.

In the Cloisters Museum in New York, there is a beautifully carved Romanesque lintel, from some ancient French church. It has a beautifully carved Palm Sunday procession. This was a sculpture that welcomed people into that church. You can tell it is Palm Sunday, because everyone is holding branches.

At the head of the procession is, of course, Jesus, riding a donkey. Behind and around him, you can see the little children waving their palm branches, followed by a few adults. All of them are dressed in the Near Eastern dress of Jesus' day.

Surprisingly, just behind these adults, blending in with the procession, is another group of adults. They are not dressed in first-century Near Eastern garb. Rather, they are wearing twelfth-century European clothing! There is someone who looks like a shopkeeper, also a butcher, a bishop, a priest, and a number of women.

The point of the sculpture dawns upon me. Here is a picture of what it is like to enter the church. To come into church is to take your place in a centuries-long procession. First comes Jesus and those who first encountered him, then our grandmothers and grandfathers in the faith, and then there we are, blending in with the procession.

We have our little lives and projects caught up in a two-thousand- year procession. God has been dealing with us, speaking to us, intruding among us, leading us for centuries. We don't have to "reinvent the wheel" so far as our relationship to God is concerned. We can learn from the saints.

Heaven is not only about the future, but it is also about the past and the present. It is a means of connecting Christians now alive with all who went before them. Whatever else eternal life is, it is "the communion of saints"-- the bond of grace between all Christians living and dead.

I remembered a Sunday school teacher who welcomed me to her first-grade Sunday school class. I can still taste her animal crackers and cherry Kool-Aid. I can remember the way she stuck pictures of Jesus on a flannel board. She let me know that the church was a place where I was loved.

I remember a retired preacher who sat on the center aisle of the second pew in my home church. When we came into the sanctuary, we'd find him already sitting there, his head bowed down on the pew in front of him in prayer. I can still see him there.

I am who I am today-- and I believe that you are as well-- because of the communion of saints, because of ordinary folks through whom we experienced the love of God. I believe in this affirmation, which hurls us out into the infinity of eternal life, because I have experienced it right here on earth.

And I've experienced it here, with you. Every time I look out at this congregation I feel like the person who was lucky enough to be playing the tuba when it started raining silver dollars. Right here, right now, this is the communion of saints.

You are here, because you have been blessed not just by the blood of Christ, but in a lesser, but no less real sense by the bones of the saints. Someone shared the good news with you. Someone loved you because Christ loved them.

I heard a friend tell about a young single mother with a crying baby. She had come from a good Presbyterian family, been abandoned by her husband, and fallen on hard times. But every few days a neighbor lady would come by and keep her baby for her for a few hours so she could shop, do her laundry, or just take a much needed nap... After a few weeks, the woman shared her faith with the young mother... And she visited her church with her. When she called her mother to tell her that she had joined the church, her mother exclaimed, "But they're holy rollers, do you know what they believe?"

"Here is what I know, mama. She held my baby. They held my baby. They held me."

I think Jesus likes that kind of answer.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

We thank you, God, for the steadfast love you pour out upon us: for those who have blessed our lives in small, but significant ways; for all the saints in heaven and on earth whose sacrificial service has moved closer your reign in this world.

Keep before us the knowledge that the smallest act of kindness and mercy toward anyone in need is highly esteemed in heaven, and counted as done unto Jesus, himself. Put within us a spirit of sincerity, generosity, and love in our giving and serving.

For those who in fear clutch their lives, their love, & their possessions unto themselves, free them by your grace to surrender themselves and their possessions to your cause that they may know your joy. Bless each of those present-day saints who exemplify your self-giving love, and may the memory of those who have gone before us, inspire us and direct us in our witness and service so that we, our children, and our children's children may take our rightful place in the communion of all the saints in light.

As we come to your table Lord, we ask that you would pour out your Spirit upon these gifts of wine and bread that they may truly be for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. May they so remind us of the enormity of His sacrifice for us, that we may be made just as reckless, extravagant, and effusive in our own giving. May Christ become and remain always the one true love of our lives. Devoted only to him, may we follow in the steps of him and the saints who have led us thus far. Nurtured by the holy manna set before us, may we release our hold on the things of earth and grasp forever the gift of eternal, abundant life through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

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.

#### THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

The Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

Let us pray... You have given yourself to us, Lord, now go with us that we may joyfully give ourselves to others in your name. May we be true to the best traditions of righteousness and love of those saints who, like our Lord Jesus, shared their faith by word and deed. Having received so much from you, may we be bold enough to ask for yet a little more--- grant us gracious, giving spirits that we may be willing to let go of the temporal things we have, to meet the needs of others and gain for ourselves those things which are eternal. Amen.

Let all who are able, stand and join together in singing our closing hymn, "A Charge to Keep I Have" which is printed in your bulletins.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"A Charge to Keep I Have"

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify! A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky;

From youth to hoary age, my calling to fulfil; O may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will. Arm me with jealous care, as in Thy sight to live; And, O Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give.

Help me to watch and pray, and on Thyself rely; Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall for ever die.

#### THE BLESSING

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight. Amen.

\*THE CHORAL RESPONSE

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;

The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis