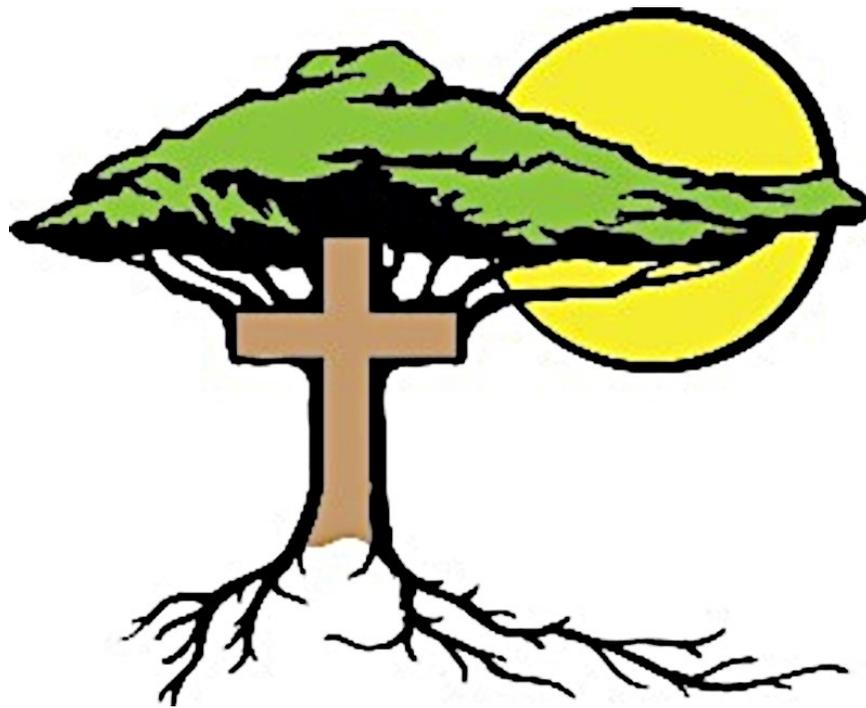


**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
*Benton Harbor*



**The FPC Tree: Bearing Fruit**

Psalm 1:1-3 · Galatians 3:23-29 and 5:1,13-23

Standing Tall on Morton Hill for 130 Years

September 18, 2022

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

## God Welcomes Us

Announcements, Birthdays, and Recognition of Visitors

Safe-Distance Passing of the Peace of Christ

*(please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit)*

Ruling Elder Prayer Blessing

Prelude and Setting the Table for Worship

## God Gathers Us

### **The Call to Worship**

One: Blessed are those who trust God, whose trust is the Lord.

They are like trees planted by water, sending out roots by the stream.

**All: May we be your trees, God, planted here in Benton Harbor.**

One: They have no fear of summer's heat, nor do they wither in the sun.

In the year of drought they are not anxious, for their lives bear the fruit of righteousness.

**All: May we trust that you will sustain us, God, here in Benton Harbor.**

One: Come to the waters of life, all you who trust in the Lord.

**All: We have come to worship and to send forth our roots  
into streams of God's living water!**

**Song of Praise** "I've Got Peace Like a River" Glory to God #623

*(please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit)*

### **Call to Confession and Prayer of Confession**

*(please remain standing)*

*(As we praise the holiness and majesty of God, we are confronted with the sinful state of the world and of our lives and we confess our unworthiness to enter into God's presence. Recognizing our sins are not merely personal, we confess together as one community of all our sins. We approach God with confidence, trusting in the mercy of Jesus Christ and the promise of God's grace and forgiveness)*

**All: Almighty God, in you we find freedom.**

**Freedom from the old ways of living,**

**of dealing with one another,**

**of being in covenant with you.**

**In your son we have been given freedom**

**and a new commandment: to love one another.**

**Yet in our freedom we find opportunity for self-indulgence,  
for self-preservation, self-before-neighbor.**

**We bite and devour one another, seeking power over one another.**

**We desire little gods we can touch and hold.**

**We desire to be right at any cost.**

**In your great mercy, forgive us for misusing our new-found freedom.**

**Bring us to understand freedom's true use and open our eyes to see one another  
as your beloved creation.**

## **Declaration of Forgiveness**

**One:** Hear the good news! Hope does not disappoint us, for God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us in baptism. Believe the good news and give thanks: in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

**All: Thanks be to God!**

## **Song of Gratitude** "Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me" (*remain standing*)

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.

## *We Hear God's Word*

### **A Time for Young People**

*(Kindergarteners and older children may get clipboards from the front pew)*

### **Scripture Reading**

Galatians 3:23-29; 5:1 (*The Message Version*)

<sup>3:23-24</sup> Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law. The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.

<sup>25-27</sup> But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise. <sup>28-29</sup> In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises.

<sup>5:1</sup> Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

**One:** The Word of God for the people of God.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

**Song of Preparation** “Trees” (Words: Michael Morgan, Music: Conrad Kocher & William H. Monk)  
(please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit)

Tree of Wisdom, fruitful, green, flourishing beside the stream  
spread your knowledge day and night;  
make your law my true delight.  
Fashion me, O Lord, to be strong and splendid as a tree.

Tree of Justice, ever bless; shade me with your righteousness.  
Teach me how to live your ways,  
and my lips shall sing your praise.  
Fashion me, O Lord, to be ever branching as a tree.

Tree of Plenty, feed my soul; nurture me and make me whole.  
Give me strength, cast fear aside; let me in your love abide.  
Fashion me, O Lord, to be firmly planted as a tree.

Tree of Promise, keep your vow:  
with me then, and with me now.  
Springtime blossoms, winter tears,  
mark the season of my years.  
Fashion me, O Lord, to be always changing as a tree.

Like a forest all around, so the gifts of grace abound:  
flowing waters, fertile sod, sunlit dawn, the Word of God.  
Fashion me, O Lord, to be living, giving as a tree.

**Scripture Reading** Galatians 5:13-23 (*The Message* Version)

<sup>13-15</sup> It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

<sup>16-18</sup> My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are contrary to each other, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

<sup>19-21</sup> It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.

<sup>22-23</sup> But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

One: These words are trustworthy and true.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

### **Prayer for Illumination**

**Proclamation of the Word**    "Bearing Fruit"    Rev. Sheth LaRue

*We Respond To God's Word*

### **The Offering**

*(Tithes and offerings may be placed in either of the offering plates located at the front or back of the sanctuary)*

### **Stewardship Stories**

**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** *(please remain standing as you are able)*

### **Joys and Concerns**

### **Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer**

All: **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"

# God Sends Us

**Song of Sending** “Koinonia” (Words and music: V. Michael McKay)  
(please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit)

How can I say that I love the Lord  
whom I’ve never, ever seen before;  
and forget to say that I love the one  
whom I walk beside each and every day?  
How can I look upon your face and ignore God’s love?  
You I must embrace!  
You’re my brother; you’re my sister;  
and I love you with the love of my Lord.

How can I say that I love the Lord  
whom I’ve never, ever seen before;  
and forget to say that I love the one  
whom I walk beside each and every day?  
How can I look upon your face and ignore God’s love?  
You I must embrace!  
You’re my brother; you’re my sister;  
and I love you with the love of my Lord.  
Love of my Lord!

## Charge and Benediction

## Postlude

## Questions for Reflection

Are there some things you do that just come naturally to you? And not just naturally, but when you do them you feel fulfilled...you feel like you’re being you...like you have no other purpose than doing *that* thing in *that* place for *that* person? What comes out of your spirit that points to the reign of Christ in your life? How do you love in your unique way? When do you spread your joy? Are there spaces where you make peace? Do you give impatient people patience? How do you share your fruits with the world? How can you make Christ known this week where you live, work, and play?

## Participants in Today’s Service

Worship Leader: Rev. Sheth LaRue  
Musician: Cheryl Schadler  
Children’s Sermon: Jeannette Holton  
Worship Assistant: Libby Globensky  
Vocalist: Jackie Baker  
Audio/Video: Bob Ziebart and Gordon Helm  
Greeters: Allene Smith

## Church Staff Members

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

## Session (Church Elders)

Kathryn Loveless-Durant	Charase Dorsey
Shirley Hagelberg-Hancock	John Kittredge
Libby Globensky	Michelle Stone
Liz Allen	Terry Allen
Gloria Winn	

## *Announcements!*

**COVID Precautions** After much deliberation the Session of FPC Benton Harbor has chosen to migrate to pre-COVID activities in worship. Passing of the Peace will remain physically-distanced and communion will continue to be served in individual containers, but we will be standing for the singing of hymns and we will have refreshments following worship in Goff Hall. Please note: the wearing of masks will never be discouraged, ridiculed, nor questioned. The Session reserves the right to reinstate COVID precautions if/when necessary. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Pastor Sheth or any one of our church's elders.

**Celebration of the Harvest and the Harvesters** is happening October 9th from 3-4 pm at the Tabor Hill Vineyards Tent (33 Mount Tabor Rd. Buchanan, MI). Leading up to this event, FPC will be partnering with Interfaith Action by collecting non-perishable food items, personal hygiene products, and clothing for distribution to migrant workers living and working in our area. For a detailed list of what to bring, please see the insert in the bulletin or speak with Libby Globensky. Donated items may be placed on the table in the Gathering Space through the end of September.

**FPC Benton Harbor** is a proud member of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians (<https://covnetpres.org>). This affiliation of churches across the United States works to bear a unified witness to generous hospitality and faithful justice as called for throughout scripture. FPC Benton Harbor remains committed to welcoming, affirming, and fully including each and every person we meet. All faiths, all gender identities, all sexual orientations, all ethnicities, all socioeconomic statuses are invited into this space and welcomed with open arms. Be your full and complete self with us!

**If you or someone you know** is experiencing a mental health-related crisis, is talking about suicide or self-harm, or you need resources for your loved ones experiencing these crises we encourage you to contact the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988. Similar to dialing 911, this lifeline will place you in contact with a trained professional who can assist you in your mental health need. If you would like to speak with Pastor Sheth about this, please don't hesitate!

### **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).

475 Green Avenue · PO Box 186 · Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Phone: 269-925-7075 · Email: [firstpresbh@gmail.com](mailto:firstpresbh@gmail.com)

Website: [FIRSTPRESBH.ORG](http://FIRSTPRESBH.ORG)

Facebook: First Presbyterian in Benton Harbor