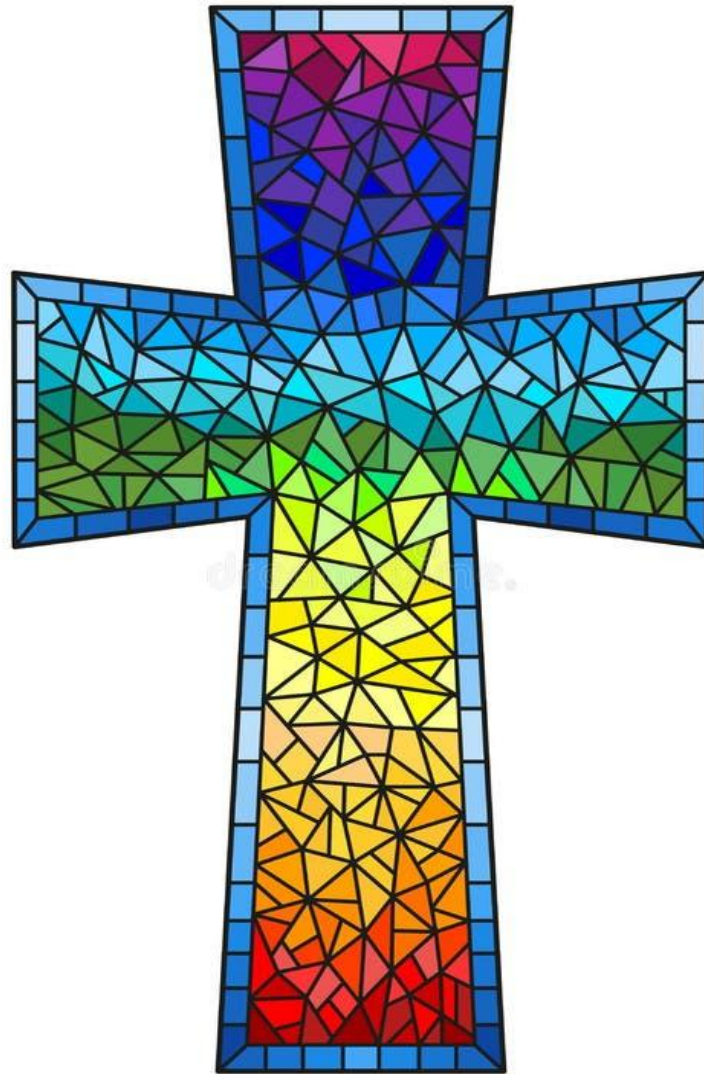


*First Presbyterian Church  
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
August 23, 2026*



SHARE

the amazing love  
of God

REFLECT

the light of Jesus  
Christ

LIVE

and serve joyfully  
in the Spirit's  
power

757-397-3622    515 Court St. Portsmouth, VA 23704    [www.fpcPorts.org](http://www.fpcPorts.org)

# Order of Worship

*Welcome and Announcements-Thank you for joining us for this morning's worship service. We are glad to have you here! If this is your first time visiting us, please fill out a visitor form, found in the back of most pews. We would be pleased to add you to our email list. Welcome! Today we welcome our friend Skip Baker-Smith to our pulpit. Thank you!*

Prelude

"Meditation"

Benoit

Choral Call to Worship

Call to Worship

Come, people of God, not merely with clean hands, but with hearts open to the transforming grace of God.

**Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew the right spirit within us.**

Christ calls us beyond the boundaries we construct and the divisions we defend.

**Teach us to see our neighbors as you see them and to love as you love.**

There is room in the mercy of God for the stranger, the outsider, the wounded, and the searching.

**There is room even for us. Thanks be to God!**

Let us worship the God whose grace is wider than our boundaries  
and whose love will not stay behind the lines we draw.

**Let us worship God!**

Hymn 638

"O Come and Sing Unto the Lord"

Prayer of Confession—first in a time of silent confession and then together

Jesus teaches that what defiles us is not primarily what comes to us from outside, but what takes root within the human heart and then emerges through our words, choices, relationships, and actions. Therefore, trusting in the mercy of the One who knows us completely and loves us still, let us confess our sin.

**Holy and merciful God, we confess that we are often more concerned with appearing righteous than becoming righteous. We have learned how to observe the rules while sometimes missing Your will.**

**We have drawn lines between insiders and outsiders, deserving and undeserving, people like us and people unlike us. We confess the prejudices we inherited but never examined, the assumptions we absorbed without questioning, and the privileges we defend without recognizing their cost to others.**

**We have sometimes confused familiarity with faithfulness and comfort with holiness.**

**Forgive us, Lord, and cleanse our hearts. Where fear has taken root, plant courage.**

**Where prejudice has taken root, plant understanding. Where resentment has taken root, plant grace.**

**Where superiority has taken root, plant humility. Where indifference has taken root, plant compassion.**

**Give us hearts large enough for the wideness of your mercy and lives courageous enough to follow Jesus across the boundaries that separate Your children. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

Assurance of God's Grace

Hear the good news: God's grace reaches farther than our failures, deeper than our prejudices, and beyond every boundary we have established. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, restored, and invited into a new way of living.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! **And also with you.**

*Bibles can be found in the back of the pew in front of you. Words in **bold** print are spoken aloud or sung in unison.*

**Open your ears, O faithful people; open your ears and hear God's word.  
Open your hearts, O royal priesthood; God has come to you.  
God has spoken to the people, hallelujah! God has spoken words of wisdom, hallelujah!  
God has spoken to the people, hallelujah! God has spoken words of wisdom, hallelujah!**

Time with the Children – Skip Baker-Smith

Hymn 451

"Open My Eyes, That I May See"

Presentation of Tithes and Offerings – Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

"I Will Arise and Go to Jesus"

arr A. Parker

Doxology

**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.**

First Lesson

Matthew 13: 10-17

Second Lesson

Matthew 25: 14-30

Sermon

"Making Sense out of the Parables"  
Credits to Diana Butler Bass and her Substack: "The Cottage"

Our Friend Skip Baker-Smith

Affirmation of Faith (adapted from the Confession of Belhar)

**We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.**

**We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another. We believe that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain; • that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted. Thanks be to God.**

Prayers of the People and the 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 and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn 716

"God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending"

Benediction

Postlude

"Preludium in G Major"

J.S. Bach

**Prayers of the People**

|                                      |                                            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| David Stuart, Mary's brother         | Kevin and Lynda Lee Lunday                 |
| Lane Pittman                         | Kathy Goolsby                              |
| Robert and Peggy Norfleet            | Everest Goodrich                           |
| Monica Manley                        | Pat Sparks                                 |
| Joseph Cain, Ann's uncle             | Cecilia Fry and children Alfred and Teresa |
| Gus and Clara Spanos                 | Mary Ann Taylor                            |
| Jeff Baker, Norma's brother-in-law   | Matthew Goodrich                           |
| Bobbie Stegall                       | Joan Plaatsman                             |
| Rose Layman                          | Kathy Goodrich                             |
| Karen Hoy, Ann's mother              | Jennifer Patgorski                         |
| Evie Goodrich, Matt's uncle          | Carol Conklin-Collins, Mary Ann's sister   |
| Nancy Grant                          | Kristin Finnerman                          |
| Sherry Bunch, friend of Alice Butler | Skip Parker                                |
| Skip and Betsey Baker-Smith          | Carrie Norfleet and family                 |

**Church Staff**

Edna Broadhurst – Director of Music  
Gabrielle Goodrich – Secretary

**SESSION**

Norma Halterman (2026)  
Cameron McCormick (2026)  
Todd Taylor (2026)  
Sue Fay (2027)  
Mary Leming (2027)  
Pat Sparks (2027)  
Michael Broadhurst (2028)  
Diane Griffin (2028)  
Dan Swanson (2028)

**TRUSTEES**

Kim McCormick (2026)  
Gail Pittman (2027)  
Earl Griffin (2028)

**AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 10 Skip Baker-Smith | 22 Emily Fay          |
| 12 Nancy Mayo       | 23 Benjamin Kenrick   |
| 16 Wayne Rutsch     | 23 Richard Griffin    |
| 17 Carrie Griffin   | 26 Kim McCormick      |
| 19 Grady Fitzwater  | 28 Linda Hackworth    |
| 19 Linda Rodrigues  | 29 Alice Simpson      |
| 20 Art Kennis       | 29 Logan Aliff        |
| 20 Mason Furman     | 31 Benjamin McCormick |

**First Pres. Presbyterian Women Circle: Come Grow with Us! New Faces Welcome!**

Looking for a wonderful time of fellowship, study, and connection? Our circle is looking for new faces to join us! We meet the first Tuesday of the month (September through June) starting at 11:00 a.m. We begin with a brief business meeting, move into an uplifting Bible study, and wrap up with lunch together. Just bring your own lunch—we will take care of the drinks and dessert! If you'd like to join us, please contact our Circle Leader, Toni Rutsch, at 757-483-8329 or 757-618-4380 (cell).

**Sunday, August 16:** Total Offering \$ 3,101.42