

First Presbyterian Church of Athens, Georgia  
 Sunday, February 1, 2026  
 Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

*Even though we are once again unable to gather in the sanctuary today, we remain one church, held together by God's Spirit. Perhaps it's providential that at the center of our story from John's gospel is a conversation about the location and focus of our worship. This simple order of worship is offered for use at home—alone or with others.*

*You do not need to do this perfectly. Take your time. Share leadership as you are comfortable. If you are gathered with others, one person may read aloud while others listen. Silence, questions, and even interruptions are part of worship, too.*

*May the light of Christ be present with you as you worship.*

*Grace and peace to you on this Lord's Day.*

#### GATHERING

*Gather around a source of light. It could be a candle, a flashlight, or even a mirror.*

*Before you begin, while looking at the light, take a deep breath in, hold it for three counts, and let it out for three counts. Repeat three times, and with each cycle, try to release the anxiety and tension in your body, mind, and spirit.*

#### Call to Worship

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

#### Gathering Prayer

Let us pray.

God of all glory, on this first day you began creation, bringing light out of darkness.

On this first day you began your new creation, raising Jesus Christ from the darkness of death.

On this Lord's Day grant that we, the people you create by water and the Spirit, may be joined with all your works in praising you for your great glory.

Through Jesus Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit, we praise you now and forever.  
 Amen.

#### Confession and Pardon

The proof of God's amazing love is this: while we were sinners Christ died for us. Because we have faith in him, we dare to approach God with confidence.

Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Alleluia!

Hymn, Song, or Spiritual Song

*Sing or hum a favorite hymn or spiritual song of your choice.*

WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray.

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and we proclaim your Word, we may hear with joy what you say to us today.

First Reading – Psalm 42:1-3

A reading from Psalm 42, verses 1 through 3. Listen for a Word from God.

As a deer longs for flowing streams,

so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God,

for the living God.

When shall I come and behold

the face of God?

My tears have been my food

day and night,

while people say to me continually,

‘Where is your God?’

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

Second Reading – John 4:1-42

A reading from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. Once again, listen for a Word from God.

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, ‘Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John’— 2 although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— 3 he left Judea and started back to Galilee. 4 But he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink”, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’ 11 The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’ 13 Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’ 15 The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’

16 Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come back.’ 17 The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!’ 19 The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.’ 21 Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ 25 The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he

comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ 26 Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking with her?’ 28 Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29 ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ 30 They left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ 32 But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ 33 So the disciples said to one another, ‘Surely no one has brought him something to eat?’ 34 Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35 Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. 36 The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37 For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.’

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’

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

### Questions for Reflection

- What details caught your attention in the story?
- Verse 9 reminds readers that Jews and Samaritans were two groups who “did not share things in common”. As you think about modern groups who fit a similar description, how does that cultural tension inform the events of the story?
- Jesus shows the Samaritan woman that he knows who she is. How does “being known” help her to know and believe in Jesus?
- Reflect personally on the “wells” we visit in our own lives and the “water” we seek out to satisfy our needs. Now, think and pray about the “living water” that Jesus offers us instead – how do they differ? How might we help each other to find “living water”?
- In John’s gospel, “belief” is not used as a noun, but is always an action verb (“believe”). How do you see that shift from belief (as an idea) to actively

believing in this story? And how might you enliven and activate your own sense of belief this week?

### Hymn, Song, or Spiritual Song

*Sing or hum another favorite hymn, song, or spiritual song. Jesus Loves Me is particularly appropriate.*

### Affirmation of Faith

With the whole church, let us confess the faith in which we baptize.

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 Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day he arose 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.

### Prayers of Intercession

For the church, the world, and all in need, let us pray to the Lord.

For your Church in every place, that we may worship and serve you faithfully...  
God of grace, hear our prayer.

For leaders and people in every land, that they may know your way and do your will...  
God of grace, hear our prayer.

For justice throughout the world, that there may be peace and plenty for all...  
God of grace, hear our prayer.

For the earth you have made, that it may flourish in beauty and show your glory...  
God of grace, hear our prayer.

For all those who hunger and thirst, that they may be filled with good things...  
God of grace, hear our prayer.

For those who are ill or close to death, that they may know your loving care...  
God of grace hear our prayer.

Receive all these prayers, O God, in the tenderness of your mighty hand, and strengthen our hands to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray together, 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.

### Offering

In gratitude for God's light and love, we offer back to God a portion of what we have received.

*You may wish to center yourself by listening to this piece that the Chancel Choir was prepared to sing this morning:*

*Bread of the World* by Richard Shephard

Bread of the world in mercy broken, wine of the soul in mercy shed,  
by whom the words of life were spoken, and in whose death our sins are dead.  
Look on the heart by sorrows broken, look on the tears by sinners shed,  
and be thy feast to us the token that by thy grace our souls are fed.

*As part of your worship today, you may wish to talk together about how your household practices generosity. You might offer a prayer of thanks, set aside a gift for the church or for a neighbor in need, or commit to an act of kindness in the coming week.*

*If you are able, you may make your offering online, mail it to the church, or simply set aside a gift to bring when we next gather.*

Let us pray.

Generous God, all that we have comes from you. Receive these gifts, and receive also the offering of our lives, that your light may shine through us for the sake of the world you love. Amen.

### SENDING

#### Hymn, Psalm, or Spiritual Song

*Sing or hum another favorite hymn, psalm, or spiritual song.*

#### Blessing and Charge

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.