FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

Traditional Worship Service
The Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 22, 2026

The Service for the Lord's Day

WE GATHER

PRELUDE Aria — Jacques Ibert

Dr. Aaron Patterson, Saxophone

WELCOME AND COMMUNITY LIFE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome to the weary and the worn.
Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.
Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.
Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.
Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.
Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.
Welcome to the sinners and the saints.
This is God's house.
You can make yourself at home here.
Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

*GATHERING HYMN — #298
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy — IN BABILONE

WE CONFESS

CALL TO CONFESSON AND PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, we love to live our lives by the rules. We love clear answers. We love right and wrong. We love swift justice. We love to pick up stones, but you show us another way. You welcome shades of gray and nuanced conversation. You prioritize mercy over legality. You prioritize people over tradition. You prioritize love over everything. Forgive us for losing sight of what truly matters. Forgive us for clinging tighter to laws than to each other or to you. Forgive us. Soften our hearts. Root us in mercy, justice, and love. With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray. Amen.

*Please stand if you are able.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Church family, Jesus saw a crowd ready to throw stones and invited them to choose another way. Jesus offered them grace, mercy, and compassion, and the same can be said for us.

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: **Our God is a God of mercy. Our God is a God of compassion. Our God is a God of grace. We are forgiven, loved, and invited to choose another way. Thanks be to God for yet another second chance. Amen.**

WE LISTEN

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE — Jean Hunsicker

Gospel: Matthew 23:23, John 8:2-11

Leader: The word of the Lord;
People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON — Rev. Karen Kinney

"When Mercy Disrupts the Plan"

WE RESPOND

MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION

What are the particular elements of this story that make it so powerful for Christians? Why do you think the church keeps telling this story? What can we continue to learn from it?

*SERMON HYMN

Let Us Remember (from *A Sanctified Art* – see insert) — ADELAIDE

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. It sounds like welcome and feels like home. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. It sounds like love and feels like a seat at the table,so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. I have seen it alive in the world. And even when my heart aches, even when wars rage, even when mercy feels out of reach, I remember the one who welcomed the children and led with nonviolence. I remember the one who cared for the vulnerable and inspired those around him. I remember that the good news really is good news, for I have seen it alive in the world. Thanks be to God! Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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.

MINUTE FOR MISSION AND OFFERING

Call to Give

Offertory The Father's Love — Simon Lole

Chancel Choir

*Doxology — #592

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow — OLD HUNDREDTH

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*SENDING HYMN

The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound (from *Glory to God* – see insert) — MCKEE

*BENEDICTION

As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love. When you meet fear, speak with hope. When you meet pain, speak with gentleness. But no matter what, speak this good news. For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all. It is joy that surprises, and nonviolence that transforms. The good news of the gospel is alive in the world, so go forth speaking. For if you won't, then who will? Thanks be to God for this good, good news. Amen.

POSTLUDE Aria — Eugene Bozza

Dr. Aaron Patterson, Saxophone

EXTENDED POSTLUDE Suite for Solo Saxophone — Remy Le Boeuf

Dr. Aaron Patterson, Saxophone

I. Prelude
II. Allemande
III. Courante
IV. Sarabande
V. Bourrée I and II
VI. Gigu

766 The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound



This text was the winning entry in a hymnwriting competition seeking new texts dealing with poverty and homelessness, but as the stanza sung at the beginning and end of the hymn makes clear, such specific ministries grow out of an understanding of the church as love in action.

TEXT: Adam M. L. Tice, 2005 — MC KEE
MUSIC: African American spiritual; *Jubilee Songs*, 1884; adapt. Harry T. Burleigh, 1940 — CM
Text © 2005 GIA Publications, Inc.

Let Us Remember

ADELAIDE 5.4.5.4 D

Words: Anna Strickland (2025)

Music: George C. Stebbins (1907)

