

# First Presbyterian Church Covington, GA



  
the good news is..  
rooted in justice, mercy,  
& faithfulness

**FIFTH SUNDAY  
IN LENT**

**March 22, 2026**



✠ *You are invited to stand in body OR in spirit*



# *Gathering As God's Beloved People*

## **Gathering Music**

*Amazing Grace*  
*My Heart Ever Faithful*  
*Adagio*

Trey Clegg  
J.S. Bach  
John James

## **Invitation to Worship**

## **Chiming of the Hour**

## **Prelude**

*God Will Make a Way*

Don Moen

## **Welcome & Announcements**

## ✠ **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!**

## ✠ **Hymn of Praise 22**

*God of the Sparrow*

ROEDER

*Verses 1, 2, 6*

## ✠ **Call to Confession**

Chuck Williams

## ✠ **Community Confession**

Chuck Williams

**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.**

## ✠ Assurance of God's Love & Forgiveness

Chuck Williams

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.**

Church, we are forgiven!

**We are free to try again.**

## ✠ Hymn 582 *Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me* GLORY TO GOD (Vasile)

*We invite our children to come forward and to play shakers during this song!*

***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.***

## ✠ Passing of the Peace

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you!**



# Proclaiming the Word

## Wondering with God's Children

### Baptism of Nova Grace Puckett

Elder Pam Stillerman

Child of Starr and Taryn Puckett

### ✦ Baptismal Response 188

*Jesus Loves Me!*

JESUS LOVES ME

***Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.***

***Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong.***

***Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!***

***Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.***

***Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago,***

***taking children on his knee, saying, "Let them come to me."***

***Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!***

***Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.***

### Anthem

*The Holy City*

arr. by James Nathaniel Holland

Mark Fiddie, solo

## Prayer for God's Wisdom & Understanding

### Scripture Reading

*John 8:2-11*

Pew Bible page 100

### Message

*The Good News is... God's Mercy!*

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane



# Responding to the Word

### ✦ Response 435

*There's A Wideness in God's Mercy*

IN BABILONE

### ✦ Affirmation of Faith

*excerpt from PCUSA's A Brief Statement of Faith*

Luke Usry

**We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.**

**Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:**

**preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,**

**teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick**

and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,  
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,

Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain  
and giving his life for the sins of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life,  
breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

## Prayers of the People & 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.

## Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

You are invited to "Text to Give" your offering! Text\* FPCCOV to: 73256 and  
follow the link to give online, or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page!  
Select "**2026 Pledge**" if you made a pledge during stewardship season.  
Select "Non-Pledge" for a general offering.



## Offertory

*Evening Prayer*  
Alice Walker, organ

Engelbert Humperdinck  
from the opera *Hänsel und Gretel*

## ✠ Response 606

*Doxology*

OLD HUNDRETH

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

## Prayer of Dedication & Gratitude



*Being the Church in the World*

## ✠ Sending Hymn 765

*May the God of Hope Go with Us*

ARGENTINA

## ✦ Charge & Benediction

## ✦ Postlude

*Suite from the Music for the Royal Fireworks*

G.F. Handel



# Worship Notes

**Baptism**—Baptism is one of two sacraments practiced by Presbyterians; Communion is the other. The act of baptism is deceptively simple—but in a handful of water, there is a deep well of mystery and meaning.

In baptism, we are called to a new way of life as Christ's disciples, sharing the good news of the gospel with all the world. Presbyterians describe baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace made by God through Jesus and extended to us. In baptism, God claims us as beloved children and members of Christ's body, the church, washing us clean from sin as we renounce the power of evil and seek the will and way of God.

All four Gospels report the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River. When we are baptized with water in the name of the Trinity, we share in Christ's own baptism.

Presbyterians celebrate baptism as a communal act of public worship! Today we, as the body of Christ, will say "YES" to walking alongside Nova Puckett as we seek to nurture and love her as her family of faith!

We invite you to speak to Pastor Neeley if you are interested in baptism for yourself or your child.

**Tell Me Something Good Lenten Series**—Our 2026 Lenten series, *"Tell Me Something Good: grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent"* was created by the creative team at Sanctified Art. The following is their message on the series:

*Lent was originally a season for new converts to learn and prepare for their baptism on Easter. During that time, they would study what was central to Christianity. As we crafted this Lenten series, we studied what was central to Jesus' life and ministry: radical welcome, love for neighbor, care for the vulnerable, nourishment for the hungry, nonviolence in the face of injustice. At the heart of Jesus' teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all.*

*This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume*

*poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world. This Lent, let the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. May the good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.*

**Worship Art**—Look at the art on the cover of this worship guide. Contemplate the woman in the image. What do you imagine is her backstory? What do you dream for her future?

Today's worship guide cover art is an acrylic painting on canvas by Rev. T. Denise Anderson titled "Epilogue" inspired by John 8:2-11. The following is an excerpt from the artist's statement on the piece.

*I often wonder about the backstory of the woman from John 8:2-11. ... Whatever her story, the Pharisees bring her to Jesus expecting him to uphold the law's punitive prescription. Jesus knows it's a trap. If he concurs with the law, he initiates and must bear witness to an act of extreme brutality that would traumatize anyone who had to watch. If he counters the law, he's a heretic and should probably be stoned himself. But he outsmarts them and turns their self-righteousness and rage back onto them.*

*In what should have been the end of her life's story, this woman now finds herself standing. Whole. Alive. Freed to a new future.*

**Offering Cards**—The offering is an act of worship! We encourage you to place something in the offering plate as it comes to you. Throughout the pews you will find a selection of "offering cards" which we invite you to use to share how you intend to be a good steward this week. *Visit* with us as a newcomer by sharing about yourself or your family. *Pray* with us by offering a prayer which will be shared with the pastor. *Serve* with us by telling us how you will use your time and talent this week. Or *Give* with us by placing either a card to represent your online gift or physical cash or check offering. These offering cards are an invitation to generosity!

**Accessibility**—A limited supply of large print worship guides are available in the narthex. If you'd like to learn about connecting your Bluetooth hearing aids to our Sanctuary sound system we invite you to talk to our Tech Team.

**Use**—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. \*Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel. Lenten Series: "Tell Me Something Good" | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | Art: "Epilogue" by Rev. T. Denise Anderson | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

**First time visiting? We're so glad you're here!**—Please take a moment to fill out the Visitor Card in the pew pocket in front of you. After worship, let us know it's your first time—we have a gift for you with info about our church and a free treat from The Little Rabbit Bake Shop!

Want to learn more about our church family, baptism, communion, or Bible study? Just mark it on the card—we'd love to connect with you!



## Serving Today

**Usher Chair** | Angie Woodham

**Tech Team** | Kraig Howell, Laramy Wells

**Acolytes** | MaryRentz Lane, Elizabeth Fraser Browning, Lorene Atkins



**1169 Clark Street SW Covington, GA 30014**  
**fpccov.org 770.786.7321**

### First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rentz Lane	<i>Senior Pastor &amp; Head of Staff</i>
Alisa Castilla	<i>Interim Dir. of Children &amp; Youth</i>
Mark Fiddie	<i>Dir. of Music &amp; Worship Arts</i>
Denise Gabriel	<i>Dir. of Community Preschool</i>
Peni Kehoe	<i>Finance Administrator</i>
Catherine Laseter	<i>Dir. of Communications &amp; Operations</i>
Alice Walker	<i>Organist CAGO, AAGO</i>

*Nursery Staff*  
 Hattie Bellinger  
 Catrina Crowe  
 Akeelah Fletcher  
 Jahniyah Greene  
 Jordyn Williams  
 Sylvia Woods

### Emergency Response Team

*In the event of an emergency including tornado, fire, intruder, and medical emergencies, the Emergency Response Team will lead the church's response and may be identified by wearing yellow visibility vests. If these people are not present for an emergency secondary responders will wear ERT vests. Please follow any directions given by the following people in the event of an emergency:*

Primary Point Person—Neeley Rentz Lane  
 Facility/Security Response—Kenny Compton, Stan Hall, John McCarthy  
 Medical Response—Nichole Howell, Pam Stillerman

### Officers

#### Reaching Out

Sara Chini	<i>Witness (2026)</i>
Yvonne Hill-Davenport	<i>Witness (2028)</i>
Stephanie Scarborough	<i>Witness (2027)</i>
Bob Tabb	<i>Thriving Congregations (2028)</i>

#### Engaging

Krista Firkus	<i>Faith Formation (2027)</i>
Hardy Fortson Sideris	<i>Worship (2027)</i>
Chuck Williams	<i>Faith Formation (2028)</i>
Angie Woodham	<i>Worship (2028)</i>

#### Belonging

Gary Boteler	<i>Finance (2027)</i>
Pam Stillerman	<i>Welcome (2026)</i>
Bethany Wells	<i>Welcome (2028)</i>

#### Connecting (Deacons)

Cathy Dobbs	<i>Pastoral Care (2027)</i>
Denny Dobbs	<i>Pastoral Care (2027)</i>
Beverly Kratz	<i>Faith &amp; Fellowship (2028)</i>
Darcel Tabb	<i>Faith &amp; Fellowship (2027)</i>

#### More

Jodi Atkins	<i>Preschool (2026)</i>
Kenny Compton	<i>Facilities (2026)</i>
Jo Anna Fish	<i>Personnel (2027)</i>
John McCarthy	<i>Clerk of Session</i>

## In Our Thoughts & Prayers

### Most recent prayer requests

*Requests will be moved to "ongoing" after three weeks unless the office is notified.*

- ✦ Calvin, son of FPCP teacher Kelly Bertleson
- ✦ Olaava MacKenzie, daughter of Julie & Jeff MacKenzie - praying for safe travels in Dubai
- ✦ Pat MacLean
- ✦ Douglas Hatfield, husband of Mary Hatfield
- ✦ Kelly Folden, friend of Jennifer Buckelew - father diagnosed with cancer
- ✦ Anne Cranford - cancer
- ✦ Tom Crews - recovering from a fall

### Ongoing prayer requests

*Requests will be removed after six weeks unless the office is notified.*

- ✦ Norma C. Couch, friend of Starr & Taryn Puckett - recovering from heart transplant
- ✦ Brad Phillips, son-in-law of Tricia & Harry Hinton - recovering from knee surgery
- ✦ Ken Walker - pneumonia
- ✦ Jill Chandler, sister of Brad Hawley - cancer
- ✦ Jonathan Paschal, father of Jon Paschal

- ✦ Katelyn Jackson, niece of Kim McSwain - stage 3 breast cancer
- ✦ Beth Vining - knee & back pain
- ✦ Joann Usry, grandmother of Luke Usry - surgery & pacemaker
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael
- ✦ Julia MacKenzie - recovering from eye surgery
- ✦ Kevin Gabriel, husband of Denise Gabriel - kidney surgery & testing
- ✦ Ed Perkerson - early Parkinson's
- ✦ Seth, nephew of FPCP teacher Jannie Smith - surgery
- ✦ Greg Brickell, friend of Sam & Loucy Hay
- ✦ Aviya Castilla, sister of Alisa Castilla
- ✦ Ariana Donaldson, friend of Hannah Freeman
- ✦ Donald Vining, brother of Danny Vining
- ✦ Virginia, mother of Tammi Welch

### Celebrations

- ✦ Sarah Davis is turning 90 on March 25!
  - ✦ If you feel called to send her a birthday card her mailing address is:  
11980 Hwy 142, Rm 57  
Oxford, GA 30054

### Condolences

- ✦ Our thoughts and prayers are with the loved ones of Dale Evans as they mourn his passing on March 17, 2026. A service was held on March 21.
- ✦ Our thoughts and prayers are with Luke Usry and his loved ones as they mourn the loss of his grandmother, Sybil Carter.

### Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Reid Buckelew - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Sarah Davis - Merryvale Assisted Living
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter
- ✦ Dot Fincher - Madison, GA
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens
- ✦ Carol McGiboney - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jon Paschal - Annandale Village
- ✦ Louise White - Prema at Ashton Hills

### Military Service

- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy
- ✦ Benjamin Iannucci, III - Air Force

**Prayer requests and updates** may be given the pastor, put in the offering plate, or emailed to [catherine@fpccov.org](mailto:catherine@fpccov.org)

# MISSION MANIA

join FPC for local missions this Summer! *July 20-23* stay tuned for more info!



On Easter Sunday, we will collect for **One Great Hour of Sharing**, a PCUSA special offering.

Join Presbyterians worldwide in sharing God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by providing relief from natural disasters, food for the hungry, and support for the poor and oppressed.

### Sunday School

Sunday School classes are held at 9:45am.  
Children's Class (PreK-4th) | Youth Class (5th+)  
Foundations Adult Class | The Wired WORD

# EASTER LILIES



Dedicate an Easter Lily for the Sanctuary to a loved one  
**Deadline to donate and submit names is March 29th**

Find the form in the narthex, in the e-news or at [fpccov.org/lent](http://fpccov.org/lent)

The suggested minimum donation is \$14.

Donations over the cost of flowers will be contributed to the Newton County Community Food Pantry and to our work with our Partner in Education Fairview Elementary School.

# EASTER EGGHUNT



Saturday, April 4 at 10:00am

ALL are welcome to join us in the FPC Fellowship Hall for an Easter egg hunt, refreshments, story time, and a special visit from the Easter bunny!

Want to donate for a great Easter Egg Hunt? Bring in plastic eggs and/or candy and place them in the colorful laundry basket by March 29!  
no nuts please!

## Holy Week at FPC

### Palm-Passion Sunday

March 29 | 11:00am

Featuring the Children's Palm Parade & a Lenten Cantata from our Chancel Choir

### Maundy Thursday

April 2 | 6:00pm

Experience communion with us around The Lord's Table

### Good Friday

April 3 | 12:00pm

Join us for Noontime Worship in our FPC Sanctuary

### Easter Sunday April 5

Traditional Service at 11:00am in the Sanctuary  
Sunrise Service at 6:45am in the Garden

#### Sunday, March 22 Fifth Sunday in Lent

- 9:45am Sunday School
- 11:00am Worship—Baptism
- 12:15pm Session Meeting
- 5:00pm Youth Shindig Sunday

#### Tuesday, March 24

- 12:00pm Lectio Divina - Pastor's Bible Study
- 5:30pm Nominating Committee Meeting

#### Wednesday, March 25

- 10:00am Coffee Club
- 10:00am FPCP Chapel
- 3:30pm Staff Meeting
- 5:45pm Handbell Choir
- 6:30pm Chancel Choir

#### Thursday, March 26

- 10:00am FPCP Chapel

#### Saturday, March 28

- 9:00am Meals on Wheels

#### Sunday, March 29 Palm—Passion Sunday

Easter Lily Dedication Deadline

- 9:45am Sunday School
- 11:00am Worship—with a Children's Palm Parade and a Chancel Choir Cantata

**CHANGEMAKERS  
LAB VBS at FPC**

**JUNE 15-18**  
**9:00AM-12:00PM**

**3 y/o - 5th grade**

Register by May 14  
to guarantee a t-shirt in your size!

To register, visit  
[fpcov.org/vbs](http://fpcov.org/vbs)

ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN THE FUN!

## CLASSIC HYMN SING

Sunday, April 19th  
During 11:00am Worship