



# THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CLEVELAND

MARCH 15, 2026  
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT  
**10AM Sanctuary Worship**

## WE GATHER IN THE GRACE OF GOD

PRELUDE

*Prelude in G minor BWV 558*

J.S. Bach

WELCOME

Pastor Stephen C. Blonder Adams

INTROIT

*Let The Words Of My Mouth*

Eric Thiman

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart,  
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength,  
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

\* Those who are able are requested to stand

Please silence all electronic devices.





heart through all thy ways, God will give strength, what - e'er be -  
 hope, with heart con - tent to take what - e'er thy Keep - er's  
 own part faith - ful - ly. Trust the rich prom - is - es of  
 tide thee, to bear thee through the e - vil days. Who trusts in  
 plea - sure and all - dis - cern - ing love hath sent. No doubt our  
 grace; so shall they be ful - filled in thee. God nev - er  
 God's un - chang - ing love builds on the rock that nought can move.  
 in - most wants are clear to One who holds us al - ways dear.  
 yet for - sook at need the soul se - cured by trust in - deed.

\* CALL TO CONFESSION

Valorie Hempstead

Once again we have gathered to support one another  
 in our common approach to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.  
 We who have succumbed to the subtle temptations to "play God"  
 during another week are confronted today by the One True God,  
 who sees through our pretenses.  
 We who are impressed by appearances  
 and regulated by the predictable  
 are challenged during this Lenten season  
 to be alert to God's action in our midst.  
 God's activity breaks through our stereotypes,  
 our interpretations and our preferences to create new situations.  
 The ways of God are not limited to our narrow understandings.  
 How have we violated God's intention for us during the past week?  
 Let us come to God as we are,  
 recognizing how unworthy we are to approach the One  
 who embraces the universe yet believing  
 that we are known and welcomed in this Awesome Presence.  
 Let us confess our sin.  
 Let us join our voices in the corporate prayer of confession,  
 followed by time for silent personal confession.  
 Thus, we pray:

\* PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Great God, above all gods,  
we confess that we have made idols of our rules and ways,  
our possessions and activities, our nation and loved ones.  
We have tried to capture you in a tame and predictable religious system  
in which we come out on top and others are put down.  
We resist your Saving Presence as you break into our usual patterns  
to heal our brokenness and set us on new paths.  
We turn our backs on your love  
and refuse to take the risks of caring  
and trusting the way Christ taught us to relate to others.  
Help us, O God, to recognize our sin and want to turn away from it.  
Give us the courage to change.  
We pray in Jesus' name.**

*(moment of silent confession)*

\* KYRIE

*Return to God*

*(Cantor)*

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;  
come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

*(Congregation)*

**Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;  
come seek the tender faithfulness of God.**

\* ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Christ has come among us,  
opening the eyes of the blind,  
bringing light to those who have walked in darkness.  
The miracle of Christ's transforming presence is offered to you this day.  
Receive the gift.

Walk in the light. Let the brightness of God's love shine through you.

**Thanks be to God.**

\* PASSING OF THE PEACE

May the peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us offer a sign of peace to one another.

\* GLORIA #204

*Stay with Me*

STAY WITH ME

*(Cantor)*

Stay with me; remain here with me; watch and pray. Watch and pray.

*(Congregation)*

**Stay with me; remain here with me; watch and pray. Watch and pray.**

## OFFERTORY INVITATION

Please be seated.  
God has given us all that is good and right and true.  
What a joy to share these gifts with one another  
in the life of this community and far beyond our own reach.  
In this offering,  
we return to God with eager response to all we have received.  
The offering will now be received.

## OFFERING

### OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*Thee We Adore*

Dale Warland

Thee we adore, Lord Jesus Christ, and praise thy holy name.  
Who by the precious cross most holy hast redeemed thy people.

\* DOXOLOGY #215                      *What Wondrous Love Is This*                      WONDROUS LOVE  
**To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to God and to the Lamb, I will sing.  
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I am, while millions join the theme,  
I will sing, I will sing; while millions join the theme, I will sing!**

### \* OFFERTORY PRAYER

Valorie Hempstead

Let us join our voices in prayer:

**O God, we do not pretend  
that these gifts are more than small tokens  
of what a real offering would be.  
You ask for the commitment of our lives,  
we bring a few leftovers from the abundance of your generosity to us.  
Yet for some, there is sacrifice here,  
for some a deep sense of appreciation and thanksgiving,  
for some a conviction that all we claim as our own,  
even life itself, belongs to you  
and is only loaned to us to manage for a while.  
Take these beginning understandings  
and help us to grow toward faithful stewardship of all you entrust to us.  
Amen.**

### \* OFFERTORY RESPONSE

*We Give Thee But Thine Own*

J.S. Bach

We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be.  
All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord from Thee. Amen.

# WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

**Gracious God,**  
illumine our hearts and minds  
as the Scriptures are read and proclaimed,  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may see what is good and right and true.  
And seeing, help us to do what is pleasing to you,  
so that your glory becomes visible  
in our words and deeds.  
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

## THE READINGS

Psalm 23 (*Congregation sings the refrain*)

*Refrain* Fm D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

Shep-herd me, O God, be - yond my wants, be -  
yond my fears, from death in - to life.



Epistle

Ephesians 5:8-14 (Inclusive Bible)

There was a time when you were darkness, but now you are light in Christ.

Live as children of the light.

Light produces every kind of goodness, justice and truth.

Be correct in your judgment of what pleases our Savior. Take no part in deeds done in darkness, which bear no fruit; rather, expose them. It's shameful even to mention the things these people do in secret; but when such deeds are exposed and seen in the light of day, everything that becomes visible is light.

That's why we read, "Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

The Holy Spirit has a word for each of us today.

**With God's help we are listening.**

Gospel

John 9:1-41 (Inclusive Bible)

As Jesus walked along, he saw someone who had been blind from birth.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Rabbi, was it this individual's sin that caused the blindness, or that of the parents?"

"Neither," answered Jesus, "It wasn't because of anyone's sin—not this person's, nor the parent's. Rather, it was to let God's works shine forth in this person. We must do the deeds of the One who sent me while it is still day—for night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

With that, Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with his saliva and smeared the blind one's eyes with the mud. Then Jesus said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"—"Siloam" means "sent". So the person went off to wash, and came back able to see.

Neighbors and those who had been accustomed to seeing the blind beggar began to ask, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said yes; others said no—the one who had been healed simply looked like the beggar. But the individual in question said, "No—it was me."

The people then asked, "Then how were your eyes opened?" The answer came, "The one they call Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes, and told me to go to Siloam and wash. When I went and washed, I was able to see." "Where is Jesus?" they asked. The person replied, "I have no idea."

They took the one who had been born blind to the Pharisees. It had been on a Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud paste and opened this one's eyes.

The Pharisees asked how the individual could see. They were told, "Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed it off, and now I can see."

This prompted some Pharisees to say, "This Jesus cannot be from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." Others argued, "But how could a sinner perform signs like these?" They were sharply divided.

Then they addressed the blind person again: "Since it was your eyes he opened, what do you have to say about this Jesus?" "He's a prophet," came the reply.

The Temple authorities refused to believe that this one had been blind and had begun to see, until they summoned the parents. “Is this your child?” they asked, “and if so, do you attest that your child was blind at birth? How do you account for the fact that now your child can see?”

The parents answered, “We know that this is our child, blind from birth. But how our child came to see now, or who opened those blind eyes, we have no idea. But don’t ask us—our child is old enough to speak without us!” The parents answered this way because they were afraid of the Temple authorities, who had already agreed among themselves that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why they said, “Our child is of age and should be asked directly.”

A second time they summoned the one who had been born blind and said, “Give God the glory instead; we know that this Jesus is a sinner.”

“I don’t know whether he is a sinner or not,” the individual answered. “All I know is that I used to be blind, and now I can see.”

They persisted, “Just what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

“I already told you, but you won’t listen to me,” came the answer. “Why do you want to hear it all over again? Don’t tell me you want to become disciples of Jesus too!”

They retorted scornfully, “You’re the one who is Jesus’ disciple. We’re disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this Jesus comes from.”

The other retorted: “Well, this is news! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes! We know that God doesn’t hear sinners, but if people are devout and obey God’s will, God listens to them. It is unheard of that anyone ever gave sight to a person blind from birth.

If this one were not from God, he could never have done such a thing!”

“What!” they exclaimed. “You’re steeped in sin from birth, and you’re giving us lectures?” With that they threw the person out.

When Jesus heard of the expulsion, he sought out the healed one and asked, “Do you believe in the Chosen One?” The other answered, “Who is this One, that I may believe?” “You’re looking at him,” Jesus replied. “The Chosen One is speaking to you now.”

The healed one said, “Yes, I believe,” and worshiped Jesus.

And Jesus said, “I came into this world to execute justice—to make the sightless see and the seeing blind.” Some of the Pharisees who were nearby heard this and said, “You’re not calling us blind, are you?”

To which Jesus replied, “If you were blind, there would be no sin in that. But since you say, ‘We see’, your sin remains.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

PASTOR’S MESSAGE

Pastor Stephen C. Blonder Adams  
“Questionable Judgement”

\* THE NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

LIGHTING OF CANDLES, PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray...

**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.**

(Verses 1,2 and 5)

Em Am7 Bm7 Esus Em

1 Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for  
 2 Long-ing for peace, our world is trou-bled. Long-ing for  
 3 Long-ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long-ing for  
 4 Long-ing for shel - ter, man - y are home-less. Long-ing for  
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the

Am7 Bm7 Esus Em Am7

truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,  
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone  
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,  
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,  
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants

D G C Am Dsus D

your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
 has power to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
 to one an - oth - er, mak - ing your king - dom come.

Refrain G C G Em Bm Em

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the

Am7 D G Dsus D Em Em7

dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your

C Am7 D G Am7 G

church gath - ered to - day.

By blending biblical images and current vignettes in the present tense, this hymn connects Christ's promise that he is the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5) and his charge to his followers to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). This is part of the church's servant calling.

## COMMISSION AND BLESSING

God has acted to open our eyes and ears,  
to release us from the prisons of our limited perceptions.

**Christ shines as a light amid our darkness,  
opening our lives to new possibilities.**

The One who lived fully God's intentions for humanity  
summons us to live as authentic human beings.

**We have been chosen as servants of the most high God,  
as bearers of the Spirit and mission of Christ.**

Let us go forth from this place  
to do the work of Christ among all we meet.

**We will serve as witnesses to the Light,  
as human beacons through whom Christ is revealed.**

God's saving love goes with us to bless and empower;  
Christ sends us out as friends and representatives.

**We accept Christ's commission and blessing:  
we will think and act according to God's will for us.**

\* CHORAL RESPONSE

*Polyphonic Amen*

Russell Wichmann

POSTLUDE

*Fugue in G minor BWV 558*

J.S. Bach

*“My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”  
Psalm 73:26*



**We continue to keep in our prayers:**

Balavaju, Victor Georgiev, Clarence Niles, Linda Marsh, Rosa Buccino,  
Doris and Gus Ellis, Bruce Arnoff, Todd St. Clair, George, Tralaina, Patricia Gerard,  
Dorland, Barbara Maloney, Gail Harris, Fletcher Hattis, Addie Singleton,  
Sandy Colombo, Jayne Zborowsky, Charles Rabb, Tony and Annie Carlos,  
Courtney Knapp, Bruce Baunach, JoAnn Hood,  
Gwen and Bob Baus, Judy and Frank Macuga, the Welton family

We pray for the repose of the soul of Thelma Olmsby,  
may her memory be a blessing.

We pray for those struggling with illness, convalescing, homebound or in need.

*Names are generally removed after four weeks unless there is a continuing need.*

There are many ways to support The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland

Online Giving:

[firstprescle.org/giving](http://firstprescle.org/giving)

Mail to:

The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland  
Attn: Financial Office  
1380 Ontario Street  
Cleveland, OH 44113

Scan the QR Code with your phone.



Checks should be made payable to "The First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland."

All contributions are tax-deductible and will be appropriately acknowledged at year-end.

## THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CLEVELAND

LOVING CHRIST, SERVING CITY—SPIRITUALLY, SOCIALLY, CULTURALLY—SINCE 1820

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**Senior Pastor:** Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams

**Parish Associate:** Rev. Denise Clark-Jones

**Minister of Music:** Evan M. Collins

### Choir

Leah Jennings Brown, *soprano*

Kaya Sparks, *soprano*

Val Sibila, *soprano*

Christian Bush, *tenor*

Anthony Steward, *tenor*

Noah Whitaker, *tenor*

Rayna Brooks, *alto*

Reese Henrick, *alto*

Morgan Potts, *alto*

R. Dominic Aragon, *bass*

Christopher Clark, *bass*

Albert Donze, *bass*

### Church Elders:

Clerk of Session: Beth Buchanan

#### Class of 2026

Beth Buchanan

Judy Macuga

Melissa Maffia

Harriet Niles

Marty Vassel

#### Class of 2027

Michelle Baron

Bernard Medie

Bob Reid

#### Class of 2028

Dave Finley

Don Urban

### Church Deacons:

#### Class of 2026

Mark Corey

Forrest Diehl

Pam Daly

Ruth Finley

Alyssa Niepokny

Charlene Thornton

#### Class of 2027

Anand Bandari

Eric Grattan

Sunny Kunche

Amy Wheeler

John Wheeler

#### Class of 2028

Valorie Hempstead

JoAnn Hood

Elie Medie

Brad Oglesby

Mark Pichler

Lori Montero

### Church Trustees:

#### Class of 2027

Dave Eifert

#### Class of 2027

Bruce Kranicz

#### Class of 2027

Mike Musson

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