

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Stockton, California
August 17, 2025 - 11:00 a.m.**

“Choose Life”



***Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours, Victory is ours
Through God who loves us.***



~GATHERING THE FAMILY OF GOD~

PRELUDE

Gottfried Stölzel: Bist du bei mir

DIEGO BUSTAMANTE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Adapted from James 1:19-25

Doug and Cheryl Hunt

One: Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to anger.

All: For anger does not produce God's righteousness.

One: But be doers of the word and not merely hearers.

All: So we might be blessed in our doing.

One: Let us worship God.

Opening Hymn

There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place

#408 Verse 1

(All are invited to stand in body or spirit)

There 's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place,
And I know that it 's the spirit of the Lord;
There are sweet expressions on each face,
And I know they feel the presence of the Lord.

Refrain:

Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet heavenly Dove,
Stay right here with us, filling us with Your love.
And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise;
Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived,
When we shall leave this place.

Welcome/Announcements

Hymn

God of the Sparrow

#22 Verses 1,2,3,

1. God of the sparrow
God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise
2. God of the earthquake
God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save
3. God of the rainbow
God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin. Gracious and Loving God,
You welcome us with open arms,

All: yet we often turn away and follow our own direction.

One: We let distractions pull us away,

and allow fear to shape our choices.

We speak out of turn,

and stay silent when our voices are needed.

We cling to old hurts, hesitate to forgive,

and lose sight of the depth of Your love for us.

Have mercy on us.

Wash away what keeps us distant from You and from each other.

Renew our hearts.

Restore our courage,

our compassion,

and our hope.

Lead us again in the way of Christ

With open hands, listening hearts, and a spirit of grace.

Music for Contemplation: Goodness Is Stronger than Evil

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Friends, believe the good news.

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

PASSING OF PEACE

We are on this journey together, so let us turn to greet each other with Christ's peace.

~ ~HEARING THE GOOD NEWS~ ~

Children's Message

Children are invited to come forward for a special message before going to Sunday School with Miss Melanie.

Prayer for Understanding God's Word:

Message: God's Goodness Is Stronger Than Evil

Reading from the Gospel of Luke 12:49-56

Hymn of Response: Goodness Is Stronger Than Evil #750

Reading from Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Hymn of Response

God of the Sparrow # 22

Verses 4,5,6

4. God of the hungry
God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life

5. God of the neighbor
God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace

6. God of the ages
God near at hand
God of the loving heart
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

How does the creature say “Care”?

Hospitality is responding to the cries of people seeking safe homes, people seeking asylum, the people of Gaza, the churches of Urabá.

Joys and Concerns

God of Mercy,
Hear our Prayer

Prayers of the People

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. **Amen.**

Invitation to the Offering

As we prepare to receive the offering, we thank you for your gifts and pledges. By God's grace you are making possible the witness and ministry of this church. This is an important act of our faith and our commitment as Christians. Let us be joyful givers.

Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessing flow #607

Praise Christ, All people here below:

Praise Holy Spirit evermore

Praise Triune God, whom we adore

Offertory

Prayer of Dedication

Sending Hymn: There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in this Place #408 Verse 2

There are blessings you cannot receive
Till you know Him in His fullness and believe;
You're the one to profit when you say,
"I am going to walk with Jesus all the way."

Refrain:

Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet heavenly Dove,
Stay right here with us, filling us with Your love.
And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise;
Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived,
When we shall leave this place.

BENEDICTION: Hear the words of the apostle Paul to the Church in Corinth:

**KEEP ALERT
STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH
BE COURAGEOUS
BE STRONG
LET ALL THAT YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE**

POSTLUDE

Claude Debussy: Arabesque #1

DIEGO BUSTAMANTE

(All are invited to enjoy the Postlude as part of our worship service. If you choose to leave during the Postlude, please do so silently.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be No Zoom Coffee Hour today.

This Week:

- ◆ Weekly Prayer Zoom Meeting - Monday, August 18 at 7pm
- ◆ Hospitality Meeting - Tuesday, Aug. 19 at 10am
- ◆ UOP Service Day - Thursday, Aug. 21 from 9am-1pm
- ◆ Bible Study Meeting - Thursday, Aug. 21 at 10am

Next Week:

- ◆ Session Meeting - Sunday, August 24 after church service
- ◆ Food Pantry Distribution - Every 2nd & 4th Wednesday, from 2-3pm inside the gym
- ◆ Family Promise - August 31-September 7

The Smithsonian Institute called “**There is a Sweet, Sweet Spirit**” by Doris Akers a "national treasure."

Akers, born into an African-American family in Brookfield, Missouri in 1923, was one of 10 children. She started writing songs at age 10 and has written more than 300.

In a phone conversation, before her death, she told her story. One Sunday morning, in 1962, she said to her choir, "You are not ready to go in." She didn't believe they had prayed enough! They were accustomed to spending time with her in prayer before going into the church service. She had once said, "I feel that prayer is more important than great voices." They had already prayed, but this particular morning she asked them to pray again, and they did so with renewed fervor.

As they continued to pray, Doris began to wonder how she could stop this wonderful prayer meeting. She even sent word to the pastor about what was happening. Finally, she was compelled to say to the choir, "We have to go. I hate to leave this room, and I know you hate to leave, but you know we do have to go to the service. But there is such a sweet, sweet spirit in this place."

During the interview, she told me, "We songwriters always have our ears open to the possibilities of a song. The song started 'singing' to me. I wanted to write it down, but couldn't. I thought the song would be gone after the service. Following the dismissal of the service I went home. The next morning, to my surprise, I heard the song again, so I went to the piano and began to write, 'There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place.'"

"Goodness is Stronger than Evil" was written by Desmond Tutu who having experienced firsthand the immense suffering and injustice of apartheid in South Africa, Tutu courageously spoke out against the system, emphasizing nonviolent resistance and advocating for reconciliation over retribution.

REQUESTED PRAYERS

The Church Office and members of the church receive several prayer requests each week.

Please pray for:

- Prayers of comfort for Pastor Ashley at the Going Home to Heaven of her grandmother.
- Charleen Muller, Cecilia's daughter-in-law, request prayer for Cecilia as she had a small stroke and was admitted in the hospital for observation. She may be release in a few days.
- Mary Lou Hover request prayer as she deals with rough moments due to her pain of arthritis. Prayering for healing and comfort.
- Cheryl Hunt request prayers for the following:
 - For our friends in Wadi Foquin who live with constant anxiety, fear, ongoing trauma, and feelings of hopelessness. For their mental health, their stamina, their safety, and their well-being. For the young people of Wadi Foquin (and across Palestine) who see no hope or future possibilities before them, and desperately desire a better life. For the continued uptick in settler and military violence across the West Bank. For a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the flow of aid to reach the people.
- Bud was thankful that he and Atlas have been able to stay in St. Mary's housing. He asked for prayers that all will go well with his meeting Monday with the Veteran's Housing Affair to obtain permanent housing for them. He also announced that Atlas has started walking, and that Bud has given up smoking! Prayers for success for both.
- Shalise asked for prayers that she would find a place of her own. She also asked God to watch over her son and daughter.
- Sheryl thanked God for her and her family's health and asked for prayers that it continue
- Kim asked for prayers for her daughter-in-law, (a surrogate mother) who is due to give birth next week, that she has a smooth and easy birth and that God's blesses this new baby and the excited new parents
- Mara had the joy that her son was coming for a visit. She also asked for prayers for her friend Sophia who was very distraught because someone hit and destroyed her parked car and she had no insurance to cover it.
- Rosalie reported the joy that her renter who had been missing for 2 weeks was found safe and returned home, but asked for continued prayers that he can get the help that he needs.
- Pastor Ashley asked for prayers for all those affected by the terrible flooding in Texas.
- Pastor Ashley requests prayer for all asylum-seekers and immigrants who are living in fear and for all who have been detained or deported without due process.

To keep the list of prayer requested current, would you please update your requests as the subject of your request improves or transitions. Of the requests that remain static they will be moved off the list after a month until further information on them is available. Please contact the Church Office or Pastor Ashley, if you have any questions or concerns.

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Board of Elders (Session) - Committee Chair

Charlie Briggs -	Spiritual Growth Co-Chair
Carol Dietrich -	Finance, Buildings & Grounds
Cheryl Hunt -	Hospitality Co-Chair
Jane Knoop -	Nominating and Support & Endowment Co-Chair
Gretchen Loudon -	Hospitality Co-Chair
Kim Roider -	Spiritual Growth Co-Chair
Janet Sepiol -	Personnel and Support & Endowment Co-Chair
Clerk of Session -	Janet Sepiol
Pastor -	Rev. Ashley Love Skrabec

Ministers—all the members of the church

First Presbyterian Church is committed to loving and serving all people, including those from diverse generations, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, gender identities, sexual orientations, and life experiences. Whatever your story, you are welcomed by Jesus Christ and by this church family.

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