

Sunday Worship - August 23, 2026
Back to School Blessing



scene from *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss (1961)

The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss: Week 2

Mark 9:38-41 - Galatians 3:25-28

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa

*"Striving to live as Jesus lived –
confronting injustice with love, compassion, service."*

Welcome to Worship

**Please stand if you are able*

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Open our eyes today, O Lord, and let us see what you see.

P: Open our eyes today, O Lord, and teach us to see the way you see.

L: Open our minds today, O Lord, and let us know the truth as you know truth.

P: Open our minds today, O Lord, and teach us to think the way you think.

L: Open our hearts today, O Lord, and allow us to love as you love.

P: Open our hearts today, O Lord, and teach us to love.

*HYMN #19 God of Great and God of Small

1. God of great and God of small, God of one and God of all,
God of weak and God of strong, God to whom all things belong, REFRAIN

REFRAIN: Alleluia, Alleluia, praise be to your name.

2. God of land and sky and sea, God of life and destiny,
God of never ending power, yet beside me every hour, REFRAIN
3. God of silence, God of sound, God by whom the lost are found,
God of day and darkest night, God whose love turns wrong to right, REFRAIN
4. God of heaven and God of earth, God of death and God of birth,
God of now and days before, God who reigns forevermore, REFRAIN

*PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

L: Let us pray.

Because God is good, and has intended us to share that goodness, we open ourselves to nothing less than transformation as together we say:

P: Holy God, have mercy on us.

L: You are the Word behind all words, the calm at the core of the storm, the energy that sustains creation.

You are present in the pain behind the tears, the laughter in the eyes, the yearning in the heart. All these you share, yet your gift to us is much more.

**P: So open us up, Lord, we whose lives are locked,
whose thoughts are well rehearsed,
whose prayer is predictable.**

**Open us up to depths we have not explored,
truths we have avoided,
paths we have not followed,
beauty we have yet to admire.**

**And open us up to Jesus, in whom all things are held together
for God and for our good. Amen.**

~ A Wee Worship Book, Fifth Incarnation, p. 27

Time of Silence

***WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

L: Friends, believe this good news!

God does not love us **if** we change; God loves us **so that** we can change.

All: Thanks be to God for this gift of love and grace! Amen.

***RESPONSE #796 You Are Holy**

You are holy, you are whole. You are always ever more
than we ever understand. You are always at hand.

Blessed are you coming near. Blessed are you coming here
to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.

You are holy, you are wholeness; you are present.

Let the cosmos praise you, Lord!

Sing hosanna in the highest!

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna to our God

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

SCRIPTURE

L: In the beginning was the Word.

P: And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

L: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Mark 9:38-41(The Message)– Recognizing Allies

Reader 1: John spoke up,

Congregation: “Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we stopped him because he wasn’t in our group.”

Reader 1: Jesus wasn’t pleased. “Don’t stop him. No one can use my name to do something good and powerful, and in the next breath cut me down. If he’s not an enemy, he’s an ally. Why, anyone by just giving you a cup of water in my name is on our side. Count on it that God will notice.”

Galatians 3:25-28 (The Message) - In Christ’s Family

Reader 2: But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ’s life, the fulfillment of God’s original promise.

Congregation: In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

L: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us,

P: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Lori Wunder

HYMN #692 Spirit, Open My Heart

REFRAIN: Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving. Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender. REFRAIN
2. Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory. REFRAIN
3. May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of friend and neighbor.
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another. REFRAIN

SHARING OF JOYS & CONCERNS AND 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.**

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Leader: There are many ways to offer ourselves, our resources, our lives to God and the way of God. We do so in response to God's abundant love and provision.

**ALL: We offer ourselves with our gifts, Giver and Sustainer of Life,
confident that you have a purpose for them and for us.**

Expand our limited vision to embrace new possibilities.

We rededicate ourselves to you with our giving.

**May our offerings reach beyond the barriers of our former thinking and doing.
In the Spirit of Christ, we would pray and live. Amen.**

*HYMN #157 I Danced in the Morning

REFRAIN: Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

1. I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.
At Bethlehem I had my birth. REFRAIN
2. I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
but they would not dance and they would not follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John.
They came with me and the dance went on. REFRAIN
3. I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame.
The holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,
and left me there on a cross to die. REFRAIN

4. I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black.
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
but I am the dance and I still go on. REFRAIN
5. They cut me down and I leap up high;
I am the life that will never, never die;
I'll live in you if you live in me:
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he. REFRAIN

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE**

Thank you to the following people for helping with our service this morning:

Ann Cannon, Liturgist
Scott Larson & Gerald Gerber, AV system
Linda Nost, Coffee Hour Host

First Pres Mount Vernon Staff:

Lori Wunder, Pastor
Cristina Galán, Office Manager
Rebecca Nickles, Music Director
Nona Hutchinson, Treasurer
María Seda, Nursery