

Make A Joyful Noise – Psalm 100

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“It is God who made us, and we are God’s; we are God’s people and the sheep of God’s pasture.”

This is a statement from the psalm about who we belong to.

All of us would agree that it’s good to belong. And to find a sense of belonging with another person or a group of people requires a certain level of intimacy.

The word intimacy has been hijacked by our culture to refer strictly to physical and sexual relations. But intimacy, though, is primarily about a sense of belonging and love created through transparency, dialogue and sharing.

And when the psalmist reminds that “we are God’s,” he’s reminding us that we belong to God in a way reflective of this intimate bond where transparency, dialogue, and sharing occur.

“We are God’s people, the sheep of God’s pasture.” To be sheep of God’s pasture intimates that God, of course, is our shepherd—our good shepherd. We belong to that pasture that is the shepherd’s and to that shepherd. And that shepherd protects, defends, seeks us out, and keeps us viable.

And, says the psalmist, this shepherd’s steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness extends to all generations.

God created us in God’s image and loves us decisively. When nobody else perhaps does, God does—brilliantly, devotedly, and exhaustively.

For the writer of the psalm, these words of assurance follow actions he implores his readers to undertake.

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord; worship the Lord with gladness!” Why, because it is God who made us and we are God’s.

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name!” Why, because the Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever.

Our theme for stewardship this year is this phrase that leads off the psalm, “Make a Joyful Noise.” And our joyful noises encompass a whole host of actions. There’s singing, of course, if you’re a singer. And our ensemble and choir do great jobs at that!

But that joyful noise comes in whatever way we feel called to give to God of what we have. Our talents and the amount of time we have to devote to those talents in God’s name are a key part of that. And they are important and worthy of our giving them.

Today, here, though, we dedicate the treasure we have. Our “making a joyful noise” comes in the form of the dollars we commit to the church, so that the kingdom of God can be realized in 2026.

Here at FPC, your dollars do many, many good things, create many, many joyful noises. And I think it’s good for you to hear again about the joyful noises you are making with your dollars in Jesus’ name.

Let’s start with our Sunday mornings here, the primary day in which we gather as a community. Your gifts allow for the meaningful ways we worship together, namely the employing of a pastor and skilled musicians who lead in worship. But Sundays are also about faith formation—growing our faith together. And because of Horizon 2035—our roadmap for our church’s future over the next decade—we’ve committed more time and resources to providing programming options that further our connection

with each other and deeper faith formation on Sunday mornings and other days of the week. John Sharp, Mason Warren, and I are committed to initiating and leading many of these opportunities in the year ahead for people of all ages in the congregation. And we've seen the impact these initiatives have already had in 2025.

Your treasure, beyond Sunday morning, is making a joyful noise in so many other ways. There's the rather costly upkeep to this church campus. We'll spend nearly \$32,000 by year's end on utilities this year. We invested \$25,000 to re-seal and re-stripe our parking lot this year. We just installed two new furnaces for our sanctuary at a cost of \$44,000.

This is our hub for ministry. It's where we gather to be the church every day of the week, and its maintenance is important to our vitality and to being a good neighbor in our community.

And then, of course, as important as those areas are (worship, faith, developments, and our property), the commitments we make to serving others—namely, the dollars we give to local, national, and international mission causes—are part of our commitment to loving our neighbors. It'll be close to six figures again this year that we give away—with the \$75,000 in budgeted money, plus all the extra giving that individual groups give away or that is collected through special offerings. Your generosity allows the church to be generous.

The Session will soon be crafting and approving an operating budget for 2026, which will guide us in the new year and be a reflection of our priorities for ministry. And it will take into account the commitments you make today as a major indicator of the level of expenses we will incur.

And we commit ourselves to being good stewards of the church's resources. Our capable team of bookkeeper Lori Corbett,

treasurer John Begovich, and financial secretary Tom Koch, are detailed and exact about tracking where our funds go when they come in and where they go to.

Once upon a time, a couple little girls were holding a lemonade stand. And a guy came along and purchased a cup. And as he stood there and drank his lemonade, one of the girls asked him, "Are you done with that?"

"No," said the man, "why?"

"Because that's our only cup."

We're not that stingy here. You can each have your own coffee cup after worship. But, our team and our elders do take good care of tracking the funds they are charged in overseeing.

The Session will provide a summary of the budget at the annual meeting in January. And if there's something you're curious about (how much do we spend on janitorial supplies, or how much will we give to KARM, or how much does so-and-so make in salary, or how much do we spend on curriculum), ask us. We'll be happy to tell you.

Collectively, that document will reflect the joyful noise we will make in 2026.

But, making a joyful noise isn't just about the destination your dollars will go to. It's about what we talked about at the beginning: the joyful reality that God made us and we are God's. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. It's the firm belief we have that God's steadfast love endures forever and that he's faithful to all generations.

It's something for which we don't have to keep our voices down. We can make a ruckus over it. We can turn up the volume.

A church was broken into and robbed, but when the robbers opened the bank bag, they were no doubt disappointed: it contained only \$70,000 in pledge cards from the stewardship campaign.

Had they found cash in the bag, the situation would have been very different: the criminals would have made out like, well, bandits, and the church's ministries would have been severely affected. As it was, \$70,000 worth of commitment offered them nothing they could take to the bank.

To the church, though, \$70,000 worth of commitment was worth infinitely more than the cash. It's a promise of faith, a treasure that cannot be stolen.

Your commitment is a treasure that cannot be stolen either. It's your joyful noise, in response to the God who is good, who has made us, and who loves us forever.