

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
June 7, 2020 Trinity Sunday

207 South Brodie St. Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Words of Welcome

Another week that has rocked our world. Shaken our foundations. Given us all reason to pause and consider our own thoughts, words, and actions. And yet, here we are to worship. Let us see where God leads us in this moment knowing that the love of Christ and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit go ahead of us. Come, now is the time to listen, to learn. We begin with the call to worship.

Call to Worship

Let us remember what our God has done!
God created the world out of a formless void.
God made every animal and plant, bird and fish.
God created people in the image of God.
God has made us caretakers of the earth.
Let us complete our task in faithfulness

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/5102/worship-elements-june-7-2020>

In the Christian Church today is know as Trinity Sunday. Meaning the three-fold nature of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a mystery to us that God can be one and three at the same time, but God does not fit neatly into our understanding. Our God is bigger than our imaginations. The hymn we are about to sing tells a story of God and creation.

Hymn

When long before time

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1. When long before time and the worlds were begun,
when there was no earth and no sky and no sun,
and all was deep silence and night reigned supreme,
and even our Maker had only a dream...
2. ...the silence was broken when God sang the Song,
and light pierced the darkness and rhythm began,
and with its first birth-cries creation was born,
and creaturely voices sang praise to the morn.
3. The sounds of the creatures were one with their Lord's,
their harmonies sweet and befitting the Word;
the Singer was pleased as the earth sang the song;
the choir of the creatures re-echoed it long.

4. Though, down through the ages, the Song disappeared,
its harmonies broken and almost unheard,
the Singer comes to us to sing it again:
our God-is-with-us in the world now as then.
5. The Light has returned as it came once before;
the Song of the Lord is our own song once more;
so let us all sing with one heart and one voice
the song of the Singer in whom we rejoice.
6. To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise;
to you, Song Incarnate, we give all our praise;
to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,
be glory forever, through life and through death.

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There are many ways to approach God, we do it in reading scripture, in song, and also in prayer to name just a few. So, join me now as we lift our prayer to the One who cares, listens, forgives, and redeems.

Opening Prayer

Holy One, we come before you with so much on our minds this day. From isolation to retaliation our world is reeling because so many fear for their lives. There is fear of illness, fear of poverty, fear of the power governments have over people, fear that the colour of one's skin puts them at risk, fear of saying the wrong thing, or not understanding.

So we come before you with all that we bring to this moment and place it at your feet, humbly desiring to learn, to know better, and to do better. We come to hear the words of scripture and those same words opening up to us through prayer, singing, a word. We trust in your love for each person and the power of forgiveness. We know that paths forward are not always peaceful but ask that they may be faith-filled, working for justice for creation, the land, waters, sky, creatures, and all people.

As we come before you in worship, we place ourselves and this world in your hands. We look for guidance through the work of the Holy Spirit. Grant us courage enough for the day, forgive whatever in our lives stops the love of Christ from flowing through the streets of our city, country, and the world. Be with us as we come together in this time of worship. We ask this in the powerful and loving name of Jesus. Amen.

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Assurance of Pardon

Faith's great good news proclaims the presence of a God
who never turns away from our needs,

but ever turns toward us
with an abundant and healing love.
Glory be to God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions.
United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P105.

We read from two scriptures today. The first is from a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a faith community in Corinth, the second reading from the Gospel of Matthew. Both readings come from the end of their respective writings. (Please note: in the video I say the reader is Sandra Dewsberry, when it was Mairi Gerow!)

Scripture Readings

❖ 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

¹¹Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. ¹³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

❖ Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Message

Ready. Set. Go! As a child, how many times have you heard those words at the start of a race. The Olympics were set for this summer we had hoped to hear "Ready, Set, Go!" over and over, although the word "go" has been replaced by the sound of a starting pistol. It still means "Go!"

In the gospel reading from Matthew we hear, "Go. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (vv19-20)
Go. Just get out there.

Jesus didn't say make sure you know exactly how you are going to tell people about God or how you might do things. Just go. Attending church whether in person or online, listening to a sermon, reading your Bible, and praying are all preparation for going out. We need to study what we want to understand and share, but then go. Go and spend

time with others, learn about them. Get involved. Show that you care and that God cares. Let your faith be evident in your conversation, your actions, your life. In fact, it should inspire your conversation, actions, and your life. But for goodness sake don't keep it to yourself. How can anyone ever know what it means to have faith in God if no one ever tells them about it?

I get that God is a mystery. Don't worry about it. Do what you can do. Share what you can share in any given moment and trust God to work with it. We sow seeds. It is not our responsibility to make sure the seed grows. We plant hope, love, forgiveness, faith, and let God work with that. Many times, we are given opportunity to build relationships that can help to foster faith and continue to demonstrate through word and deed what it means to be a Christian.

If ever there was a moment in time that we can build relationships it is right now. There is so much to learn about other people from different faiths, ethnicities, and backgrounds. With all its sadness and strife, now is a time where we can reach out and ask questions, get to know others, and share a little of who we are and how our own faith makes a difference for us. The purpose is not to overshadow what is going on in the world. If there is one thing we know about God, it is that God is with those who are struggling and oppressed.

If you want to see God in action pay attention right now. God is walking with those in the protests. God hears their cries for justice and change. As Christians, these are things we can support and even more so, be a part of the change. It often starts with a conversation, building relationships, listening to another's stories so that we can first of all look for what God is up to and second so that we can support the necessary change.

I am sitting in my kitchen today rather than at the church because some of the most important conversations I have, have taken place at my kitchen table. There is something about tables with a cup of coffee, tea, or whatever, that allows for relationship building. It is why family meals are so important. We often learn more about our children, grandchildren, and friends at a table than we do anywhere else. The table allows time and space to learn about one another.

It may be that this is the easiest way for us to build relationship, by inviting someone to our home to share in a meal, or making sure to set a date if someone invites you to meet with them. Rather than just saying, "We should meet for coffee sometime," don't let the moment pass. Set a date. Make an opportunity to learn about another person, their joys, sorrows, faith, and experience. If they ask about you, don't hesitate to share about your faith and how that influences your world view.

It is not that every conversation needs to be deep. More often than not, that will take time to build trust into the relationship. But there is no reason to hide that you are a Christian,

and why that is important to you with a sentence or two when asked about your activities and life. Remember we are sowing seeds, seeds of love and compassion, faith and hope.

I know we struggle with the mystery of God. Even today with this thing we call Trinity Sunday where we name that God is three in one. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is okay not to be able to explain everything away, even when critics may want to pressure you into doing so. I say again, as I as I have so often, if God fits neatly into some explainable box with no mystery, then that god is not nearly big enough.

We continue to learn about God through the scriptures, being together in community, whether in person or online. We do our best to learn more about God and lean into our faith. That responsibility never goes away, but know that in this lifetime, you will never fully grasp the infinite nature of God. It doesn't mean that you don't know enough to share with others.

I am not a chef or baker, but I have taught my children to cook and bake. I am not a mechanic, but I can drive a car. I am not a computer programmer or technician, but I still use the technology to do my work. We don't need to know everything about something to have it influence, guide, and inform our lives. And we share what we know of things with others, so why not our faith, our understanding of God.

As I write these things, the events of the last couple of weeks are never far from my mind and I wonder where is God when the world suffers. One thing I know is that God is not sitting in our empty churches waiting for our return and watching things unfold in the world. God is out in the neighbourhood, on the streets, at the kitchen table, present, willing and waiting to use everything, every moment, to make this world a more just, hope-filled, and loving place.

God did not will George Floyd's death, in fact I am sure that God was laying on the ground with George holding him in his last breaths, in the cry for his mother. I am also sure that God is out in the neighbourhood using that moment to change us, to change the world. God was with Breonna Taylor, the front-line worker who was shot to death in her apartment when police barged in looking for someone else. God is in the world, and commands us to go! Go! Be with those who are suffering and afraid. Go! Invite people to a table, your table or a coffee shop table, so that you might learn, but that you might also share.

Go! So that God's love might have the last word. Go, not as one who has the answers, but as one who listens. Go, trusting that the Holy Spirit is working through you, breathes life, love, and hope into every corner of the world that you touch. As Christians we have something to offer in this critical moment. We have the love of God who cares so much for those who suffer most. Please don't let another opportunity pass. And remember, God is with you always, to the end of the age.

God is not with us only in the easy moments, the joy filled moments, but also and maybe even more so, in the difficult, dirty, horrific, and change making moments. God is with you always, in every moment. So seize the day as they say, but seize it knowing that God goes with you, and that you belong to a community of faith that will help you through the tough spots, walk with you, guide, and love you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. One God, the source of all life. Amen.

We respond to all we have heard and sung thus far with a prayer. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

God of our past and our future, God of healing and hope,
We come before you with grateful hearts,
trusting that you walk with us through all the times of our lives,
including this strange time of illness and isolation.
You are still the God of our history and God of the world you love,
so hear us as we pray for your world and the people around us.

We remember today those who face danger and despair in these times:
Those who suffer the effects of coronavirus in their lives and in the lives of loved ones;
those living with hunger while the world is distracted,
those caught up in unrest and violence despite the pandemic,
and all whose lives are directed by forces beyond their control.

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering of many different kinds
and bring justice and peace to those most vulnerable.

We pray for all those facing fear or frustration,
and those wrestling with sorrow or discouragement.
We remember those who live with illness, disability or pain day by day,
and all who know the grief and change of bereavement.

We pray for all those who work to bring healing and comfort to those who suffer,
remembering those who put their own health and life at risk during the pandemic.

We pray for all who feel helpless or hopeless in this present time of such uncertainty:
For those facing unemployment or struggling to make ends meet,
For those caught up in misunderstanding or broken relationships
And for those working through situations of conflict at home or at work.

We pray for all who offer guidance and support in the midst of such difficulties.

God of our past and our future, God of healing and hope,

the General Assembly was supposed to gather today in Waterloo, Ontario, yet our church has had to respond to the pandemic, cancelling large gatherings and holding others through technological means. Hold us together in the days ahead and remind us of our common faith in Christ. Help us learn from the challenges we are going through and give us new ways of living out our faith.

Support our denomination and our local churches to engage questions and choices with respect and faithfulness, trusting that you can do new things for us and with us. Keep us loving and gracious, in the example of Jesus, our Lord and friend, who pray taught us to pray together:

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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 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, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Invitation to make an offering

In this season of Pentecost, we celebrate the outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Church, filling it with the gifts needed to serve in Jesus' name. One way we celebrate is with the gift of generosity so that our love overflows in the example of Christ himself. If you would like to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay please visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

Holy, holy, holy. Even the title of this hymn lends itself to the triune nature of God. As we sing, we give thanks for God who is bigger than us and all that we experience, knowing that God is Holy, is with us always to the end of the age.

Hymn

Holy, holy, holy

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1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert and art and evermore shalt be.

3. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though our eyes in sinfulness thy glory may not see
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love and purity.
4. Holy, holy, holy. Lord God almighty!
all thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Words: public domain

Benediction

God, who created you in the divine image, sends you forth:
go, to reflect the presence of our Creator to everyone you meet.

Jesus, who has redeemed you, has established the reign of God in our midst:
go, to bring healing to the broken of the world.

The Holy Spirit, who calls you to be God's people, goes with you to many places:
go, to tear down the walls that divide us,
and to build lives of hope for all of God's children.

And now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you always.

— adapted from a prayer written by Thom Shuman, and posted on his [Lectionary Liturgies](#) blog.

