

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
July 12, 2020 6th Sunday after Pentecost

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

Words of Welcome

Do you need something to hope for, to celebrate, to be excited about?
Stick around and we see what we can do about that!
Let's begin with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

Have you ever noticed all the different kinds of clouds that summertime brings?
There is something alluring and wondrous about clouds that captures our attention.
Perhaps they serve as a way the Spirit speaks through creation to tell us of our God.
Those swift, thin, wispy clouds of an almost-clear day are the Spirit's shorthand
announcement of God's grace-fullness and quick-moving love.

The bold rolling storm clouds with dusky-dark and violet underbellies
remind us that ours is a God of power and might.

The floating fleece clouds that graze slowly across the sky's blue fields
tell us of God's peace.

And the clouds of sunset, rosy orange and golden hearted, proclaim the glory of God.
This is the season of clouds, and perhaps the God
who led the people of Israel with cloud by day speaks to us through them yet.

The grandeur of God is all about us.
We come to worship the Creator of all.

© Glen E. Rainsley. Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P33.

Let us invite the Holy Spirit to breath on us in this time of singing...

Hymn

Breath on me, breath of God

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| 1. Breathe on me, breath of God;
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love
and do what thou wouldst do. | 2. Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will
to do and to endure. |
| 3. Breathe on me, breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine. | 4. Breathe on me, breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity. |

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Opening Prayer (based on Romans 8:1-11)

Life-giving God, we gather in Your presence to offer you thanksgiving and praise for all that you have done for us.

Through the life, death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, we have been set free—
free from the power of sin that leads to death,
and so we ask your forgiveness for those things in word, thought, or action that have brought harm to our relationships with you, people we know and don't know, ourselves and creation.
Remembering always that we have been set free to follow the leading of your Holy Spirit,
free to love you with all our heart and soul and strength,
free to worship!

May your Holy Spirit inspire our praise and our prayers.
Open our hearts and minds to your presence among us and within us, and to the Word You have for us today.

To you alone, life-giving God,
belongs all praise and honor and glory and blessing,
now and to the end of time.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

There is therefore now no condemnation *Rom. 8:1*
for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit of God dwells in you.

If you hear nothing else today, hear these words:
there is no condemnation.

In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 2 © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press

Scripture Readings Romans 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

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The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Message Romans 8:1-11 A time for celebration

I am not sure how many of you can hear your mom in your head. My mom died nearly three years ago, but even before she has passed and though I have not lived under the same roof as my mother for many, many years, I hear and have always heard her voice expressing an opinion. Pretty sure my kids say the same thing about me. I know what my mom would be thinking and saying in many circumstances. She was not one to hold back an opinion. As my hair has grown longer in these Covid days, I have often heard my mom's voice saying, "You should get your bangs out of your face." Every time I decide to go in front of the camera with my hair back or just off to the side, I hear her. I don't always conform to what she might have wanted, but that is the privilege of growing up and being able to make my own choices even if in my fifties I still am aware of what her opinion would be.

Over time I have become aware of how my mom's opinion also influenced my approach to scripture and particularly the writings of the Apostle Paul. My mom did not like Paul. She read him as a male chauvinist who wanted to keep women in particular in their place. I appreciate that my mom was a strong woman who was not going to be put in her place, but thankfully I have learned a lot about Paul which has allowed me to set aside my mom's opinion and form my own.

I have learned to read Paul with passion, keeping history and style of writing in mind. I give thanks for learned scholars and professors who have taught me, and I continue to learn. I used to think of Paul as a stern man lacking tack, whose writing is hard to follow, but I have come to understand him as compassionate, able to use sarcasm and wit, who like all of us, experienced much heart ache and sorrow, and yet was filled with gratitude and joy.

Today's scripture is one of those that is filled with a sense of celebration. Good News oozes out of the words. Paul is maybe even a little giddy as he shares his joy with the reader. Can you hear him? "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" I think this is just one more instance where words like condemnation, and all this talk about the law of sin and of death, weakening of the flesh, sinful flesh,

and so on, have clouded my ability to see beyond the dead words to the worship, joy, and Paul's desire to share this life giving message.

When one really takes the time to get around what seems like a convoluted piece of writing, you find blessing! Yes, this passage speaks to the struggles of life. It is part of a whole conversation around sin and death, law of the flesh and law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And to understand the whole of it you need to take it in the context of the entire letter to the Romans, especially chapters 6-8. Paul has been outlining the spiritual death that comes to us when we live apart from God and that spiritual death can affect all part of us, social, emotional, mental, and physical. It also affects all our relationships.

Paul is well aware that the body and the spirit are part of a whole. That what happens in our bodies and minds that is not done in right relationship with God can actually lead us to a path that is less than God's desire for us and less than we would want for ourselves. This path is destructive to varying degrees, and surely is not one that leads us to feeling whole, loved, forgiven, and free.

Paul also states the other side of this. Once again aware that the body and the spirit are part of a whole, if we live in right relationship with God then our whole approach to life changes. Our circumstances may not change, though often we do find we have the courage to make changes in our attitudes and actions, but when we are in right relationship with God we are at peace. Paul says it this way, "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

This living in the Spirit is very powerful. It is the very power that raised Christ from the dead and will give life to you. Life in body, mind, and spirit. Again, Paul does not separate the body and the spirit. The two are part of a whole.

Paul is celebrating that we don't have to stay stuck in our lives, that regardless of age, ability, colour of skin, sexuality, power, wealth or prestige, when you live your life in the power of the Holy Spirit, that same power that...hear this...that same power that raised Christ from the dead will give you life! "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!"

Will you always make the right decision, do the right thing, follow through, trust God? Not likely, but we are not condemned when we get it wrong. We can stop beating ourselves up, do a one eighty and try again knowing, that we are not alone, that the Holy Spirit, God himself, has your back and want the very best for you in every relationship and in every part of your living. Not only that, this extends to your family, the church community, the community you live in, the nation, and the world.

This power is so great, so immense that it starts in you, in me, in our neighbours, and can activate a ripple effect that covers the globe! I know this sounds Polly Anna, but God has promised to be present, to be in it with us. And he showed his commitment in the life, death, and resurrection, of his own son, Jesus Christ! This is Good News in a world

that feels completely off kilter right now. We can make change. We can be a part of bringing the kingdom of God to our world in this moment!

I don't usually end with re-reading the scripture, but I want you to hear Paul's excitement, his joy, and his hope, so I read again from Romans 8:1-11 but this time from Eugene Peterson's, *The Message*...He entitles it...

The Solution Is Life on God's Terms

¹⁻² With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

³⁻⁴ God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

⁵⁻⁸ Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

⁹⁻¹¹ But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you

are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!¹

The word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Closing Prayer

Tender and loving God, you formed the earth
to be a place of joy and abundance for all your creatures.
For food in all its variety and the people who grow it, transport it,
and market it, we give you thanks.

These days of pandemic have shown us how much we depend on others.
We pray for those who do not have enough food,
and for those whose agricultural supply is at risk
through extreme weather, uncertain prices and social upheaval.
Help us care for the earth and its fruitfulness
And for each other in our common need of its fruits.

God of all the nations,
You gather people together in communities to care for each other
and enjoy each other's company and creativity.
Yet the pandemic has revealed there are so many vulnerable people,
so many places where resources are not shared fairly.
Where there is division, bring unity and peace with justice;
Where people are distracted, give wisdom to see what is important;
Where people are tired and anxious, bring strength and courage.

God of compassion,
You call us to be communities held together
by prayer and love for our neighbours.
Where people mourn loss of any kind, provide comfort;
Where there is illness and pain, bring healing;
Where there is distress or discouragement, transform fear into hope.
Fill us with your Spirit and by that same Spirit,
equip us to serve one another in Christ's name
so that your compassion touches lives with love and mercy.

Loving God, we lay before you now our personal concerns in this time of silence:

We offer you these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ,
using the words he taught us to pray...

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¹ [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to make an offering

Trusting that God is with us and seeing the difference that makes in our lives we can be moved to respond in ways that give to and help others.

If you would like to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

Let us leave this time of gathering with a song of joy, promise and hope...

Hymn

Every time I feel the Spirit

Refrain: Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit movin in my heart, I will pray.

O ev'ry time I feel the Spirit movin' in my heart, I will pray.

1. Upon the mountain my Lord spoke.
Out his mouth came fire and smoke.
All around me looks so shine,
Ask my Lord if all was mine.

Refrain

2. Jordan river runs right cold,
Chills the body, not the soul.
Ain't but one train on this track,
Runs to heaven and right back.

Refrain

Words: public domain

Benediction

May God, whose forgiveness is boundless,
the Christ, whose charge is freedom,
the Spirit, which grants us life and peace,
keep our minds and hearts in grateful communion
as we seek to serve.

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