

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany February 7, 2021**

## Words of Welcome

Do you ever wonder what more you could do in service to others? Some people would ask this question with anticipation for the next or new project while others ask it with hands thrown up in the air because they are overwhelmed and tired, stretched beyond their limits, not able to see a way through. Some might not even consider if there is something they can do, or if there is anything to do because they are wrapped up in their own lives, concerned only for themselves. They haven't even considered that they could be part of a bigger picture and have gifts of service to offer. With these thoughts in mind, we enter into a time of worship.

## Call to Worship

We are here with our questions, our weariness, our hope.

We are here with our joy, our sorrow, our wonder.

We are here to be healed and to learn how to serve.

We are here to know the one who heals and restores.

We are here to worship.

©Joyce Yanishewski written for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Year B. February 7, 2021

## Hymn

*Jesus' hands are kind hands*

631

1. Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all,  
healing pain and sickness, blessing children small,  
washing tired feet and saving those who fall;  
Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all.

2. Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let them work for you;  
make them strong and gentle, kind in all I do.  
Let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too,  
till my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.

"Jesus' hands are kind hands," Words by Margaret Cropper © 1979 by Stainer & Bell Ltd.  
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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Creator God, Source of all life,  
in you all creatures are connected  
and all creation redeemed and made new.  
Day by day you make yourself known to your people.  
In the beauty of the heavens we see your glory.  
In the bounty of the earth we know your generosity.  
In strength for our bodies and minds we experience your energy.

Delighting in all that we have seen, known, and heard,  
we worship you, one God, Creator, Christ, and Spirit.

Holy One, along with our praise, we offer you our confession.

At times we forget what we once knew of your love.

Consumed by worry, we forget to trust you.

Although we know you made us for a purpose, we choose our own ways.

Discouragement seeps into our hearts in the cold of winter  
and we do not serve you with eagerness.

We fail to speak out against injustice in our community.

Forgive us.

Renew our energy for your purposes.

O God, send your Spirit to move in us and among us. Focus our attention as we listen, so that we may absorb your Word more deeply, come to know you better, and serve you with greater purpose. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news! God has touched our hearts and offered God's healing and forgiving love. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Amen.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/8725/worship-connection-february-7-2021>

## **Scripture Reading Mark 1:29-39**

<sup>29</sup>As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. <sup>31</sup>He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup>That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup>And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup>And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. <sup>35</sup>In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup>And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." <sup>38</sup>He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." <sup>39</sup>And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Message A response of service**

I stood at the kitchen counter washing the blueberries and the strawberries, sorting through the berries to clean them and then preparing the fruit for the lunchtime meal. At

another time, I was doing the laundry, moving clothing from washer to dryer, hanging some, folding others, bringing them upstairs to the bedrooms in order to place items in drawers or closets so they would be ready for when they would be needed for work or play. I thought of the many loads of laundry, sinks of dishes, meals prepared over the years, not to mention the number of times the bathrooms were cleaned, furniture dusted, and floors washed. Okay, I only washed floors when I couldn't stand it anymore, but that is still more times than I can count over the years.

I found myself pondering these things as I thought about Simon's mother-in-law, the woman Jesus healed when he came to the home of Simon and Andrew. She was not well, the fever had her in bed. We get the sense that she was pretty ill. Jesus was told about her as soon as he arrived at the home. We are not given her name and we are not told of any words she spoke, but we are told that when Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up, the fever left her and she began to serve them.

She began to serve them. I thought again of the hours I had spent in service to my family. I know that as a wife and mom I am not alone in this. Though some households are bucking the trends, it is still more likely that women take on the roles of serving others in the home than for the men to do so. It only takes Googling gender and Covid to find numerous articles that speak to the inequity being experienced the world over as women are reverting back to caring for home and family full time because in quarantine someone often needs to be in the home, and that responsibility seems to fall on women.

This is not to say that men do not serve by doing many things that need doing, but the feeding of people and maintaining the home are the daily reality of a majority of women whose focus and work is as a stay-at-home mom and also those moms who work at other jobs and careers and yet have all the responsibilities that go along with being a wife and mother. Though there are centuries of time between the story of Simon's mother-in-law and us, the call to serve in the home is still very real. More importantly, this is something that women and men find meaningful, necessary, and important.

Those who serve others in the home usually do it from a place of love, even when it is an expectation. I am thankful for the opportunity to cook and care for my home. It is not that I always enjoy it, but being able to do it means there is an opportunity to show hospitality to my family and friends. I say this even with Covid as the kitchen has been a place to prepare meals and treats and drop those meals and baked goods at the door of another.

Jesus healed the woman, raised her up and she resumed her service to others. We may think, "Yeah, she got up and got to work", but I wonder if it was more that she was so fully restored that there was no need to take it slowly and ease into her roles, but rather

she was able to do that which brought meaning and purpose into the life of a woman in her own time. She began to care for the home and the people in it.

We often think of serving when it comes to home as lacking importance and does not make much of a difference but this act, in the Gospel of Mark, was significant enough for the writer to let us know it happened. There was something in the moment that spoke to who Jesus was and what the response should be. Jesus healed with a touch, he lifted her up. The woman's response was to serve.

There are Christians who proclaim loudly and proudly about their faith, how God has healed them, and they respond by making others feel that if they have not been healed it was because they did not have enough faith. For the majority of Christians though, we know the touch of Christ, we have experienced some amount of healing in our lives, often in how we see ourselves and view the world and we respond quietly. For those who understand their healing to have come through faith, they respond through their actions, often through serving others. That does not mean that they have not utilized the gifting of professionals in the fields of medicine and psychology, but that they understood that God was present with them in the healing and the process and the response was to be there for others – to serve as they have been served.

And service is something that can be celebrated. We speak of soldiers who have served their country, politicians who have served their communities, and particularly in our world experience now, we are acutely aware of those who are serving on the frontlines of the fight against Covid.

Rather than viewing Simon's mother-in-law as someone to be pitied for having to get up and work when she has just gotten better, we are more likely to appreciate the intent of this story by understanding that to serve meant to be restored to a place of purpose and intention, to have new life.

What is being said is not meant to make you think you must do more and be more. The hope is that you will celebrate how and where you are able and do serve, from your home, to those you work with and intentionally volunteer with. Pondering the story allows you to consider if you recognize the work Jesus is doing in your life and how you might respond to that. When you hear the whispers in your heart and mind that seem to be calling you to be with others in a capacity of service, it may be time to pay attention. If you are finding that there is a lack of joy in your service to others, whether paid or unpaid, whether it is hard work or not, you may want to consider whether this is the way you are being called to respond to Jesus' healing and restoring work in your own life.

Though there are various approaches and ways to preach this scripture, and most would be on point, today we consider what it means that Jesus came to proclaim the message

of transformed life, of a kingdom to come that was not like anything the earth had known, and in doing so he would teach and heal and people would respond.

When we hear a message through listening to a worship service, sharing experiences with others, at work, through prayer or the reading of scripture, we have the opportunity to be touched by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that works as Christ's Advocate in our time. We can ignore it, squander it, or chose to respond in service. Simon's mother-in-law's example is well taken. Experiencing Jesus' healing touch has power to restore and our response to serve others continues that work.

We do not do this alone, God who is for you is present with you when you are serving from a place of love and concern for another. Thanks be to God for our ability to serve, whether with a phone call, a sandwich, a glass of water, and when possible a hug. Maybe you serve by praying for others or simply by the work you do. It is for you to determine your response, your service, and demonstrate the loving, healing, grace-filled presence of God in your life and the lives of others. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Holy and loving God,  
we thank you for the story of Christ's life among us, a pattern for the way we live.  
We give you thanks for moments of quiet and contemplation that restore us,  
and help us perceive your Spirit at work in the world and in our own lives.

Teach us to trust in your strength, so that we can live with confidence and courage even in the midst of stress and anxiety. These days of pandemic are still difficult and we need to know you are near in our lonely times.

Meet us in that place of deep stillness within us all.

In the quiet of this moment we hand over to you  
all those things stirring within us today:

Anything that has been distracting or hurtful... *(Hold a silence)*

Anything that makes us worry or brings sleepless nights... *(Hold a silence)*

Our hopes and dreams for the future... *(Hold a silence)*

and for the lives of those we love... *(Hold a silence)*

We hold before you the needs and hopes of those we know who need your presence, especially remembering those facing grief and loss... *(Hold a silence)*

We pray for wisdom for the leaders of our world... *(Hold a silence)*

We pray that peace and prosperity will begin to flourish in places facing war, famine, and disaster, and we pray for the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development serving in these situations... *(Hold a silence)*

We pray that those who manage the world economy find honest, just and generous ways to respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic... *(Hold a silence)*

We pray that the dignity of each creature be honoured and the earth itself be treasured... *(Hold a silence)*

May peace with justice thrive in the world you love.

And now we pray together in the words that Jesus taught:

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## 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

Jesus' ministry brought healing and hope to so many people who reached out to him. Our offering supports ministries of healing and hope here and around the world. Know that your gift matters and you have this opportunity to give as God has blessed you.

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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.

## Hymn

*Send me, Lord*

777

1. Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus; Send me, Lord
2. Lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus; lead me, Lord.
3. Fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus; fill me, Lord.

"Send me, Lord/Thuma Mina," Words: South African (Zulu) traditional. Music South African traditional; arrangement, Anders Nyberg. All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

## Benediction

Renewed by the power of God's unconditional love and forgiveness;  
strengthened by the witness of Jesus to be of service to others,  
we go from this place rejoicing in the opportunities to serve others in Christ's name.  
Go in peace, and may the peace of God always dwell within you.

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