

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

## Second Sunday after Pentecost - June 6, 2021

### Words of Welcome

There is so much in the news, in families, in lives, that is broken, hurting, in need of hope and mending. Usually our time together is focused on the Gospel stories. Today and for the next few weeks we will be looking to the life of the Apostle Paul for guidance and wisdom. Paul knew something about broken hearts, bodies, and relationships. As we begin, we turn to the call to worship.

### Call to Worship

We give you thanks, O Lord, with our whole hearts.

**We give thanks for your steadfast love and faithfulness.**

O God, we call on you, for you will increase our strength of soul.

**Though we walk in the midst of troubling times,  
you will stretch out your hand to us.**

So we gather to worship God, trusting in God's goodness and guidance.

**We come to offer our prayers and praise,  
seeking God's renewing love day by day.**

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### Hymn

*Nothing can trouble*

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Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.  
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
God alone fills us.

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### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of creation and compassion,  
we praise you for your attention to each and every blessed creature,  
marvelling at the detail and the grandeur you call into being.  
You tend the fragile beauty and balance in the world,  
receiving praise from the depths of the sea to the tops of the mountains.  
You have seen your church grow from tiny beginnings  
to a worldwide community of those who follow Jesus,  
full of diversity in voice and vocation.  
Receive our praise as we witness your patience and perseverance  
with all you have made.

Open our eyes to the purposes you have for us,  
for our congregation, and for our denomination.  
Awaken us with the insight of your Spirit  
and reveal to us how best to serve you in the world you love.  
For we offer ourselves to you in the name of Christ, our Lord.

**God of purpose and possibility,  
you give us work to do and the skills we need to accomplish your calling.  
Yet we prefer to follow our own ways.  
We resist your wisdom and fail to consider the suggestions of others.  
We think we know better.  
Forgive our stubborn nature  
and our unwillingness to reconsider our own views.  
By the power of your Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ our Lord,  
give us a teachable spirit to learn new ways to serve you  
and live as good neighbours in church and community.**

Lord God, Loving God, send your Spirit upon us as your Word is read and interpreted, so that we will hear your voice and know the way of truth and love through Christ, the Living Word. Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

The prophet Micah reminds us that God requires three things of us:  
to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.  
To all who turn away from self-interest  
and seek reconciliation with God and neighbour in kindness and humility,  
God offers forgiveness and peace.  
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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## **Scripture Reading 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:5**

<sup>13</sup>But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture — “I believed, and so I spoke” —we also believe, and so we speak, <sup>14</sup>because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. <sup>15</sup>Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, <sup>18</sup>because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5 <sup>1</sup>For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— <sup>3</sup>if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

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

## **Message** Mending broken hearts and broken lives

I can't begin to have anything of value to share without acknowledging the atrocities committed against indigenous peoples by governments of Canada and churches over decades. The bodies of 215 children in a mass grave at a Kamloops Residential School is something we cannot turn a blind eye to anymore. If it were another country and that made the news, Canadians would be disgusted and call for answers. It is also why the United Nations has called on Canada to search for the remains of missing residential school children.<sup>1</sup>

The Presbyterian Church is among those who have been and will continue to be called to account for our actions in running residential schools. And I get that you and I were not those who were directly involved and so some may question why we have any responsibility. Regardless of one's view on the situation, my hope is that we will be part of the healing, but as a denomination there is and will be more evidence of unbearable stories and experiences told and substantiated.

It will be our responsibility as people of God – as Christians - to continue to confess our wrong doing of what can only be called evil acts against other human beings. Were there good people, good teachers and care givers? – yes. Have some people come out of residential schools okay? – yes, but it does not take away from the harm done.

Our attention must turn to those who suffered horrendous losses of life, dignity, and experienced profound harm. This is generational trauma and it will take generations of work to bring healing and wholeness to community and our country.

One might think this has very little to do with the message I have today, but turns out that even though I chose this scripture more than two weeks ago it speaks to this work of reconciliation, of healing and wholeness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://winnipeg.citynews.ca/2021/06/02/un-calls-on-canada-to-search-for-remains-of-missing-residential-school-children/>

Accessed June 3, 2021

The scripture is actually a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Church in Corinth. We know this was one of a series of letters written to this group of followers - people that Paul himself had established as a worshipping community of faith. In fact, historians and theologians are certain there were a few letters written that we do not have access to any longer. What we do know is that something happened that caused considerable strife in the relationship. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, the first letter to the church in Corinth that we have access to, was written in response to quarreling and one-up-man-ship, plus a number of other divisive issues that were plaguing the group in Paul's absence. There was condescension and questions of authority. We don't need the details to understand our scripture reading, but it does give us some background.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes more about himself and what he is personally going through in his body, mind, and spirit, than he writes in any other letter. This letter is a response from Paul to the church as he tries to navigate the break in the relationship between himself and those he's writing to. Paul hoped the letter might continue to bring a greater degree of reconciliation and healing to all. The letter is also about where Paul and consequently where we find our strength and courage for such mending of broken relationships. Paul makes it clear that God is the source of our hope now and in a future time, an eternal time.

For a moment, I invite you to think about a relationship past or present that seems beyond repair. One that breaks your heart, not one that you are thankful for the rupture of the relationship. There are some relationships that are so unhealthy that the only way to be okay is to break the bond. It doesn't mean that we don't care for the other or others, but that in order for us to be okay we cannot be around that kind of toxicity. Even there one can heal without engaging, by forgiving another and praying for the well-being and wholeness of the one we have had to walk away from. That is a type of reconciling.

For this exercise, think of a relationship that is broken but you really want to be healed. In my experience there can be major shifts in relationships through marriage, divorce, illness, death, coming out, a move to another place or another job. The list of reasons for trouble in relationships is as varied as the people involved. So, take a moment. What relationship do you desire to have healed? It may be something in your own heart and life that you wish to heal.

It was already stated that God is the source of hope for our reconciliation, of bringing back to life and wholeness broken relationships as shown in the resurrection of Jesus. One could say that resurrection life demands reconciliation, that resurrection is about relationships.

Paul points us to an understanding that God is both within us and outside of us. He begins by talking about the one, God, who raised the Lord Jesus and will raise us also

with Jesus, bringing us all together in God's presence. (v14) Then he follows with the observation that even though our outer nature is wasting away God is renewing our inner-selves. The wasting away means in one sense that our bodies naturally age and come to an end, but even more so that the burdens of life weigh us down, take a toll. Still, because God is with us, in our very soul, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. Our inner nature being that which is connected to God. God renews us day by day, but also prepares a place for us for when we pass from this earthly life. God is really out there, in whatever heaven is. God is within and outside of us.

Paul looks to our hope, but uses all kinds of metaphors to get across the fact that our bodies, our lives, our burdens and brokenness are temporary and of this world. Paul was a tent maker by trade so one of the metaphors he uses is a comparing our bodies to a tent. Professor Scott Hoezee extends the metaphor, "The fabric is torn, rain gets in, the more vibrant color of the original tent fabric long ago faded away to now some dull gray, pale looking thing. I've lost half my tent pegs and two of the supporting cord ropes have frayed to almost nothing. One strong gust of wind could knock this old tent down to a flattened mess."<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully this is not where the metaphors end. Paul continues, "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (5:1) So though we have struggles and burdens, broken relationships with people we love, and beyond our circle of family and friends to broken relationships within our church, communities, and country, God is with us now renewing us inwardly, and is with us always into eternity.

So what does this mean for those broken relationships I asked you to consider earlier on? I think one has to go a little further into the scripture to verse 19 of chapter 5. It is in these words that we hear the Good News of the and a way forward. "...in Christ [and assuredly through Christ's resurrection] God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."

We have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation.

We are human being with all the frailty that goes with that, frailty of body, mind, spirit, and relationship. Jesus too lived an earthly life with a body of flesh and blood. He understands the fragility of our lives. He understands the challenges of relationships, the broken that cannot be healed as was experienced with Judas and the redeeming and reconciliation of relationships as he experienced with Peter and the other disciples who had deserted him in his time of need.

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<sup>2</sup> Hoezee, Scott. [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-5b-2/?type=lectionary\\_epistle](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-5b-2/?type=lectionary_epistle)  
Accessed June 2, 2021

Jesus experienced death in his body, just as we experience decay and death in our bodies. But more than that, Jesus has a resurrected body, and that allows us to live resurrected lives, that renewing from within, where the Spirit has been given to us as a guarantee. Resurrection life is one that starts right now. It means hope and courage as we mend broken relationships with those for whom we care deeply. It means hope and courage for reconciliation between indigenous and nonindigenous, between people of all cultures, race, gender, and whatever else separates us from one another.

We are not likely to see the fullness of this in our life time, but we get to live into it each and every day with the knowledge that what is being renewed within us now will become our reality in a time eternal, where we and all others are with the God of love, the God whose message is reconciliation.

The weight of our burdens, of the harm, the hope, the work and the courage of reconciliation is preparing us for a different kind of weight, the weight of glory beyond all measure. The weight of glory beyond all measure. Now imagine that burden! Amen.

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For the Presbyterian Church in Canada, of which St. Andrew's is a part, today is known as General Assembly Sunday as June 6<sup>th</sup> is the day this year when representatives, known as commissioners come together for four days to listen to the work that has been done as a denomination and to make decisions for the future. For the first time in the PCC's history this work will be done virtually.

Our Prayers of the People begin with a focus on this time of meeting. Let us pray...

### **Prayers of the People**

God of communion and community,  
we give you thanks for our life together in Christ,  
and the work of the Spirit that draws us closer to you and to each other.  
We pray for the life of our denomination as it meets in General Assembly.  
Send your Spirit to work in and through the commissioners,  
even while they gather at a distance and engage through virtual technology.  
Speak through your Spirit to open minds and hearts to your leading.  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ sustain us in communion and community,  
even when we differ over decisions and directions.

God of compassion and concern,  
Thank you for all the ministries and mission Presbyterians undertake together  
in Canada and in many places throughout the world.  
Thank you for lessons learned and hope inspired  
by all the partners we have worked with, over this difficult year  
and throughout many years and many different cultures.

We pray for all who serve in the name of our church  
and for those who join in ministries supported by Presbyterians Sharing  
and Presbyterian World Service & Development.

Bless the important work undertaken in Jesus' name  
which looks so different in each location.

Open all our hearts to support these ministries  
with generous giving and ongoing prayer,  
so that lives will be healed, transformed and strengthened  
according to your compassionate concern.

God of our hearts and our hopes,

We pray for those you have given us to love.

Hear us as we place their needs and hopes before you in this silence. *(Hold a brief silence)*

We pray for those who serve our nation as leaders in business, politics, health care  
and education. Grant them wisdom in this challenging time, so that their choices  
consider the needs of the most vulnerable whom we name before you in silence.

*(Hold a brief silence)*

We pray for those who face uncertainty, unrest and threat from violence day by day.  
In this moment of silence, we bring before you people in our own community who  
know upheaval because of the pandemic, and those in places around the world where  
injustice is unrelenting. We lift up to you the indigenous peoples of Canada who  
hearts are laid bare with grief for the loss of children over decades of residential  
schools. *(Hold a brief silence)*

God of the earth and all its fullness,

In this season of planting and growing, of nesting and nurturing, we pray for the  
environment and all the creatures it supports. Protect species and habitats at risk,  
and awaken us to better stewardship in the garden you have entrusted to us.

Hear our prayers for everything and everyone you have created in love  
as we pray the words Jesus taught us:

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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

We offer our gifts in gratitude for all we receive from God in Christ and in creation. We trust God can multiply them in ways we cannot even imagine and surprise us by what can be accomplished through us as we sow seeds of generosity in the gifts we bring.

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There are people from different churches and places following this service. I encourage each of you to present your offering to God this day to your church community.

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or 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 or to connect with me.

## Hymn

*O Breath of life, come sweeping through us*

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1. O Breath of life, come sweeping through us;  
revive your church with life and power.  
O Breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,  
and fit your church to meet this hour.
2. O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,  
till humbly we confess our need;  
then in your tenderness remake us,  
revive, restore, for this we plead.
3. O Breath of love, come breathe within us,  
renewing thought and will and heart:  
come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,  
revive your church in every part.
4. O Tongues of fire, come rest upon us,  
so we may speak your word aright;  
kindle the flame of love among us;  
equip your church to spread the light.

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## Benediction *(inspired by 2 Corinthians 4:13-14 and Mark 3:33-35)*

Sisters and brothers of Christ, go into all the world!  
Go forth with forgiveness and grace.  
Go forth with compassion and love.  
Go as Christ's family for all the world to see.

Adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2012*, © 2011 Abingdon Press by Mary Scifres. Posted on the *Worship Elements* page of the *Ministry Matters* website. <https://www.ministrymatters.com/worship>