

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

25th Sunday after Pentecost - November 14, 2021

## Words of Welcome

I am someone who marvels at amazing structures, especially those built before all of today's modern technologies. St. Andrew's church in Thunder Bay, as with many old churches, is really something to see and appreciate. In our scripture reading we consider another building made from stone and see what that may have to say to us today.

## Call to Worship

Not one stone will be left on stone.

**We worship our Rock and our Salvation**

Beware that no one leads you astray

**We worship our source of wisdom and truth**

When all seems lost, this is just the beginning of the birth pangs.

**We are here to worship the Word that endures  
and the hope that is born among us.**

Rev. Dr. Derek C. Weber, Director of Preaching Ministries, Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church, June 2021.

## Hymn

*The love of God comes close*

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1. The love of God comes close  
where stands an open door,  
to let the stranger in,  
to mingle rich and poor.  
The love of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the love of God is here to stay.
2. The peace of God comes close  
to those caught in the storm,  
forgoing lives of ease  
to ease the lives forlorn.  
The peace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the peace of God is here to stay.
3. The joy of God comes close  
where faith encounters fears,  
where heights and depths of life  
are found through smiles and tears.  
The joy of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the joy of God is here to stay.
4. The grace of God comes close  
to those whose grace is spent,  
when hearts are tired or sore  
and hope is bruised and bent.  
The grace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the grace of God is here to stay.

5. The Son of God comes close  
where people praise his name,  
where bread and wine are blest  
and shared as when he came.  
The Son of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk the Way;  
the Son of God is here to stay.

“The love of God comes close,” words by John L. Bell and Graham Maule  
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## **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Lord of Light and Life,  
we come before you in wonder and awe,  
eager to praise your name and enjoy in your presence.  
You are the source of all that is good and true,  
the essence of love.  
You bring gifts of peace and healing into troubled lives.  
You show us the way to love friend and enemy alike,  
to build a better world together.  
In this time of worship, inspire us to believe our work in Jesus’ name makes a  
difference.  
So may we live to bring you glory, O God,  
now and always.

**God of justice and mercy,  
you call us to take a part in our community,  
loving our neighbours and serving your purposes.  
We confess that this is easier said than done.  
We often sit in judgment  
criticizing any who fall short of our expectations.  
Yet we confess we, too, fall short of your loving purpose for us.  
Forgive us when we have been too quick to criticize  
and too slow to join in what needs to be done.**

O Lord, teach us your ways and give us the grace to follow them.  
Give us eyes to see the world as you do.  
Give us hearts to love others as you do.  
And give us the wisdom to discern how best to live as followers of Jesus,  
your Living Word. Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn?  
Only Christ—and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us;

Christ reigns in power for us; Christ prays for us.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God's generous grace.

Share that forgiveness with others in his name.

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## Scripture Reading Mark 13:1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" <sup>2</sup>Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

<sup>3</sup>When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.

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

## Message Stone Upon Stone

*Built in 1908-09 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay is constructed of white sandstone quarried on Simpson Islet, near Nipigon, on Lake Superior. The local newspaper at the time reported that the foundation stone came from nearby Mount McKay. The land was donated by Peter and Donald McKellar. The dedicatory opening services were held on June 13, 1909. It was declared a City of Thunder Bay Heritage Property in 1974.*

*The design of the building is 14<sup>th</sup> century Gothic, square in shape, with a gabled roof and a 95-foot tower at the north-east corner. The church was built at a cost of about \$72,000.00 and was designed by architects J.C. Stinson and W. Hood. M.H. Braden was the contractor.*

*The white stone trim came from Bedford, Indiana. George Dodd of Toronto, whose specialty was Gothic sculpture was hired to carve the details of the building. The iron*

*work and roofing were supplied by J&T. M. Piper of Fort William. Windows were supplied by Luxfer Prism Co. of Toronto. The organ was made by the Casavant Bros. of Quebec.*

*When the opening services were held on June 13, 1909, it was a great day not only for the congregation but also the City of Fort William. Newspaper accounts of the opening declared it “the most imposing edifice of the city”, and reported that other churches cancelled services so that their members could attend the opening of “the magnificent new structure”.<sup>1</sup>*

This description of the church at which I am the minister comes from a heritage booklet the church has created. There is a long and rich history in this church, and the building is beautiful and majestic. When I consider all it has meant to people throughout generations of family, it reminds me of the response of the disciples as they left the Temple in Jerusalem, as written about in the Gospel of Mark. “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” They were in awe. What is more striking is Jesus’ response when he says, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another, all will be thrown down.”

We have a difficult enough time now when we watch amazing structures come down, but it happens. I think of recent history when the cathedral in Notre Dame burned in 2015. The structure and UNESCO heritage site had survived all kinds of events since its building during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but still it could not withstand the inferno that overtook it. As humans we like to think that things we build will stand the test of time, but time has a way of humbling us.

The same happened to the massive, imposing, and impressive Temple in 70CE. We often forget that the words we read about Jesus in the Gospels were not like news today with a 24-hour newsfeed to keep us on top of the latest happenings. The Gospel of Mark was written some time after Jesus’ death and the people hearing these words had already seen the demise of the temple with the Romans crushing the Jewish revolt. They knew that Jesus’ words of warning, maybe even prophecy, had come true.

Jesus refers to all that we experience, the toppling of stones as it were, as the beginning of birth pangs. It is what we go through as the world seemingly heads into destruction over and over again. We have just ended our commemoration of Remembrance Day and what it cost for us to have freedom from tyranny. People living and fighting in the world in those years would have felt as if stones were toppling all around them.

Stones are one way that we might describe the walls that we build to protect and bring safety. Many walls are built to keep some people out and others in. Think of the Berlin Wall, the walls being built in Palestinian areas by the Israeli government, or the wall that

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<sup>1</sup> St. Andrew’s Heritage Booklet 2018.

Trump was trying to build at the Mexican border. But what about the walls we build around ourselves, walls to protect our personhood and our property?

We build walls of defence when we have been brutalized, abused, abandoned, forgotten or simply feel unloved. Some of us put stone upon stone as we rely on the things that we might call toys...big trucks, big houses, big craft rooms or garages stored floor to ceiling with supplies and tools. Other have built large Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or Tik Tok followings with each "like", each follower, becoming a stone in the structures that defines us. Our phones the lifeline to our egos.

What we might look to in our own lives is what is it that we need to make us feel important, valuable, accomplished, or learned. If there is anything that comes before God in our lives then we might want to take a look at that and see if that is a stone that needs toppling. Because there is always something. Always the next thing we think we need to get done, the next thing we want to buy, the next project we want to see through, the next promotion or invite.

What Jesus may have been saying in this scripture was, all the things we think are important pass away, relationships, work, health. Still when no one was paying attention, as people were busy with their lives, Jesus did something that showed care. Even now we don't pay attention to Jesus' selfless act unless it is Easter and even then, much of the population thinks about chocolate and Easter Bunnies not why Easter.

In only a couple of weeks we will come to the end of the Christian calendar. November 28 will mark the start of Advent when we once again remember the Christ Child. Yet, the rest of the year and especially right now, the point of this Christian faith is that even though we don't recognize our need to be forgiven, don't recognize the harm we have done, don't recognize the gift, Jesus toppled down the powers that be in our lives with his death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus, knowing that we wouldn't get it, still faced death for us and not just for some future heavenly existence, but so that we would know God now, would be in relationship with God now. We would know our value now.

The world is a messed-up place. Some of us get by less unscathed than others, but we need only look around to see how much pain and hurt is the experience of so many. A passage like this in Mark is a call to take notice of those who are not noticed but the world, to notice how we are living in the world, and to watch for God at work.

I appreciate what theologian and minister David Lose writes about this passage in his blog called *In the meantime*,

...what a difference it makes to notice! To know that we are beloved of God. To perceive the lengths and depths to which God will go to prove God's love for us. To recognize the worth and value we hold in God's eyes. To

appreciate, finally, that God loves us – *all of us* – and to have the numbness induced by living in a world of outrageous spectacle pierced by genuine regard, compassion, and sacrificial love. And, through all this, to be saved, to be freed to see others as beloved of God, to risk caring for them, to reach beyond our isolation to touch and to be touched by love.<sup>2</sup>

Today my friends, let's take notice. Let pay attention to where our hearts and minds are. Then pay attention to God and where God is at in these birth pangs. You can trust that God is present. God is going unnoticed among us, still saving, still loving, still forgiving, still offering grace in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

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.

So, we pray today for those who face danger and despair in these times:  
We remember before you those living with hunger,  
communities struggling with the impact of drought, storms and earthquakes,  
and all those for whom the pandemic is unrelenting.  
We remember people caught up in unrest and violence  
and those whose lives are directed by forces beyond their control.

*(Keep a time of silence)*

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering in these lives  
and those who work to bring justice and peace.

We pray for all those facing fear or frustration,  
wrestling with sorrow or discouragement in any area of their lives:  
For those who live with illness or pain...  
For those bearing chronic conditions or disability...  
For those who know the grief and change of bereavement...

*(Keep a time of silence)*

And we pray for all those who work to bring healing and comfort  
and agencies which offer support and care to those who suffer.

We pray for all who feel helpless or hopeless in this present time:

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<sup>2</sup> Lose, David. <http://www.davidlose.net/2018/11/pentecost-26-b-beyond-spectacle/>

For those struggling to make ends meet or trying to find employment...  
For those caught up in the pain of misunderstanding or broken relationships...  
and for those working through situations of conflict at home or at work...

*(Keep a time of silence)*

We pray for all who offer guidance and support in the midst of such difficulties  
and for those who have skills in reconciliation or mediation.

God of Our Past and Our Future,  
God of Healing and Hope,  
Help our congregation and churches everywhere  
as we regroup after months of pandemic isolation  
to engage each day with faithfulness and creativity.  
Where we need correction, show us a new way;  
where we need love and encouragement, draw near.  
Whatever our challenge, stay with us on our way  
for we are the followers of Jesus who pray together in his name:

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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**

God's goodness fills the world, if only we have eyes to see it. God's goodness fills the world, if only we have hearts to share what God has given us. Know that your gifts come from God's goodness and pass that goodness along to others in Jesus' name.

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As we 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.

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can God say than to you hath been said,  
to you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?
2. "Fear not, I am with thee; oh be not dismayed!  
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
3. "When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow,  
for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
4. "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
my grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:  
the flames shall not hurt thee; I only design  
thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."
5. "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not - I will not desert to his foes;  
that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never - no, never - no, never forsake!"

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**Benediction Psalm 16**

As you go from this time of worship and community, remember:  
God is always with you.  
No matter what you face,  
no matters what trials or hardships come your way,  
God is right beside you,  
guiding and directing your path.  
So do not live in fear, but in joy,  
celebrating God's presence  
and singing God's praise.

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/search/label/Proper28B>