

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Words of Welcome

There are some pretty challenging passages in scripture, but those same words are the basis of faith and without them our faith is, as the Apostle Paul puts it, futile. If you are curious, join together with me as we begin with a call to worship.

## Call to Worship

We come from scattered lives to this place,  
seeking unity in the Spirit,  
seeking the grace of the Christ of all people,  
seeking the peace of the God of All.

God's people have gathered,  
in our glorious diversity and difference,  
as God created and intended.

Let us worship God together.

[13 February, 6th Sunday after Epiphany | The Church of Scotland](#)

## Hymn

### *He came down*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. He came down that we may have love;<br>He came down that we may have love;<br>He came down that we may have love,<br>Hallelujah forevermore. | 2. He came down that we may have peace;<br>He came down that we may have peace;<br>He came down that we may have peace,<br>Hallelujah forevermore. |
| 3. He came down that we may have joy;<br>He came down that we may have joy;<br>He came down that we may have joy,<br>Hallelujah forevermore.    | 4. He came down that we may have hope;<br>He came down that we may have hope;<br>He came down that we may have hope,<br>Hallelujah forevermore.    |
| 5. He came down that we may have life;<br>He came down that we may have life;<br>He came down that we may have life,<br>Hallelujah forevermore. |  |

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## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of majesty and mystery,  
we come before you in wonder and humility.  
Source of all that is, you are beyond our imagining,  
astonishing us with the detail and designs within your creation.  
Word of hope and healing,

you touch our lives with truth and tenderness,  
revealing our need and our gift.  
Spirit of purpose and possibility,  
you move within us when we least expect it,  
awakening our gifts, urging us to respond.  
Receive our praise and prayer this day,  
and prepare us to receive your Word in its wisdom and warning,  
for we come to you through Christ our Lord,  
trusting in his grace and truth.

**God of life and love,  
at this season of the year our hearts are grateful  
for all the love which touches our lives.  
Still we confess that we are not always  
shining examples of the love we long for.  
Forgive us those times when we failed to keep our word  
and disappointed those who love us.  
Forgive us when we gave into our tempers and temptations  
and disappointed your hopes for us.  
Renew and remake us through the grace of your Son, Jesus,  
your love made flesh.**

God, you are the source of wisdom and understanding for us.  
In the midst of all that distracts us, help us listen in stillness.  
In the midst of competing voices, may we hear your Word for our lives and our times.  
By your Spirit, help us discern Jesus' call to follow him. Amen.

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

St John records that God is love, and that God's perfect love casts out fear.  
We are promised that those who abide in love abide in God,  
and God abides in them.

So claim your hope in this Good News:

God's perfect love abides in you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## **Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. <sup>15</sup>We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not

been raised. <sup>17</sup>If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

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

## **Message** The First Fruits

As I was pondering the scripture reading today and as it speaks to the “what ifs” if Christ was not raised from the dead, the only thing I could think of was, if there is no resurrection of the dead into new life, then maybe we are all destined to a future Zombie Apocalypse! Why my mind went to a world of Zombies where walking dead are trying to eat or infect other live human beings, I have no idea. I don’t even watch that kind of programming or play those kinds of games. Still, it seems that a Zombie Apocalypse could be the opposite of believing in the resurrection of the dead in terms of what Christians understand that to mean.

Given our propensity to believe what we see on TV and media more than other sources, it is probably easier for people today to believe in Zombies than the risen Christ. Really, the reason Paul is writing what he is writing is because even in his time there were people in the Corinthian church who were providing their own theories about whether or not Jesus actually rose from the dead in bodily form.

Yet, Paul isn’t writing to debate whether or not one should believe in the resurrection. Arguing the point would be like trying to convince people who trust in the safety and need for vaccines and those who don’t to understand the other. For Paul the resurrection is a given. It is a fact based in the written accounts of others and his own experience of a transformed life after what he describes as an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. There is nothing one might say or do to change his mind.

Paul is working from the premise given early in the letter in Chapter 15:3b-5.

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;  
and that he was buried;  
and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures;  
and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

For him this is not up for debate and his reasons are like a well constructed logics argument. Follow me as I read and unpack his points one at a time.

1. If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and faith has been in vain.
2. If Christ has not been raised then we are found to be misrepresenting God, because we testify of God that he raised Christ.
3. If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.
4. If Christ has not been raised, faith is futile, and we are still stuck in our sin without hope for change and renewal.
5. If Christ has not been raised then those who have died before us have perished. There is no place for them but the ground.
6. And if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then as Christians, we are to be pitied because we have been duped and have lived our lives in vain.

What this boils down to is trusting the witness of those who experienced Jesus' after the resurrection of his body. We don't have body cams or phone cameras to go back to for video proof, all we have are the written accounts, the scriptures both old and new that tell us of people's anticipation, experience, hope, and witness.

Oh, and we have one more thing. We have the witness of transformed lives of those who we call Christians in the faith. We have our own accounts of how our lives have been transformed, even if little by little, by our faith in a resurrected Christ. And hopefully we have seen the work of resurrection in the lives of those we know and love as well as others we encounter in our daily lives.

You see, resurrection is about life after death and what that will look like, but as importantly it is about how we live out our lives right now. The difference between living in the hope of a risen Christ or not is the difference between feeling alive in Christ and alive to change in ourselves and the world in ways that bring about justice, compassion, grace, love, and hope, or on the other hand, feeling hopeless, broken, unloved, alone, and forsaken.

Paul writes, "in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." Our lived experience, one that brings life to ourselves and others is the first fruits that we offer to witness to the hope, love, grace, compassion, and justice of God. Where people who are vulnerable are lifted up, where we think of others and their need even as we care for ourselves. Our lives are the witness to others of a resurrected Christ even if they have no idea what they have encountered in us, just because we chose to share the love of God with them through our words and actions.

Professor Frank Crouch wrote the following,

It's not possible to proclaim that "there is no resurrection of the dead" once we have seen resurrection made visible in people whose actions bear

witness to God's life-giving power. We don't have to make ourselves believe it. It speaks for itself all around us and among us, from creation to Exodus, to prophets, to Jesus, until now and forever.<sup>1</sup>

So as Christians, even when we doubt or question, we believe that Christ is risen from the dead and because of that we have life, right now, and it is abundant, through God's grace and love. This is the Good News and the witness we bring to the world each and every day. Thanks be to God that Christ is Risen from the dead!

## **Prayers of the People**

God of mystery and mercy,  
We come before you today carrying hopes and dreams,  
the burdens and blessings of our lives.  
We bring all that is on our hearts and minds to you,  
seeking your comfort and strength, listening for your guidance,  
grateful that you hear us when we pray.

God of life and love,  
We give you thanks that you engage us whenever we need you,  
in the midst of challenge and uncertainty.  
We pray today for all those who are fearful about their future,  
and for all who wrestle with challenges at work or at home.  
Help us face our fears and our challenges, sure of your steadfast love.

God of hope and healing,  
In Jesus Christ you confronted demons that trouble our minds  
and the pain and illness which can weigh us down.  
We pray today for all those who are facing health concerns,  
and for all who care for the suffering and those in need support.  
Surround each one with your steadfast love.

God of peace and promise,  
when we wrestle with any burden,  
your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.  
Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:  
for the victims of violence or disaster, for their friends and families...

For refugees at risk in so many places in the world,  
and those making a new home in our community...

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<sup>1</sup> [Frank L. Crouch. Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)  
Accessed February 11, 2022

For those caught in despair and poverty in our own neighbourhoods  
and in the forgotten corners of your world...

Renew the strength of all facing realities  
beyond their control with your steadfast love:  
Faithful God, Hear our prayer.

Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and equip us to do your will  
as together 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 the offering

Our faith does not rely on human wisdom, but on the power of God working in us and among us. So we bring our offering, trusting that each gift has a power beyond itself, the power God gives. Trust in the miracle of God at work in the world through the gifts we bring. ©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Year C.

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.

## Hymn

*Love divine, all loves excelling*

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1. Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation;  
enter every trembling heart.
2. Breathe, oh breathe thy loving Spirit  
into every troubled breast.  
Let us all in thee inherit,  
let us find the promised rest;  
take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be.  
End of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, almighty, to deliver,  
let us all thy grace receive.  
Suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore they temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

4. Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee,  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love and praise.

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## **Benediction**

In this time of worship, we have proclaimed the presence and power of the risen Christ with the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts.

Now, as we go from here let us demonstrate the presence and power of the risen Christ with the deeds of our hands and the labors of our lives.

[Ministry Matters™ | Prayers for February 13, 2022](#)