

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

5th Sunday after Epiphany- February 6th, 2022

Words of Welcome

What grounds one in faith? Maybe you haven't really thought about it. Maybe you are beginning or still questioning your faith and the why of being a Christian. Let's see if we can find some answers through this time of worship.

Call to Worship

It is by grace that we are who we are:

people who are called by Jesus, yet fearful to follow.

It is by God's grace that we can become followers:

people who are fearful, yet gifted with courage beyond wonder.

It is with God's grace that we become who we might be:

people who step out in faith, sharing the good news generously.

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Hymn

I have decided to follow Jesus

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1. I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus,
no turning back, no turning back.
2. The world behind me, the cross before me
the world behind me, the cross before me;
the world behind me, the cross before me,
no turning back, no turning back.
3. Though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow,
no turning back, no turning back.
4. Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back?

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Almighty and everlasting One,

God ever creating, ever loving, ever leading:

your presence is peace when we are frantic;

your Word is truth when we face deception;

your Spirit offers freedom when we are paralyzed by fear.

You give purpose in confusing times;
You call for justice when the world settles for inequality.
For all that you are, all that you have been, and all that you will be,
we worship you as the Source of Life,
the Promise of Redemption,
and the Spirit of Love in Action,
One God, now and always.

**Merciful God,
you call us to fullness of life but we confess our shortcomings.
We have wandered from your ways and wasted your gifts;
we have ignored your grace at work among us,
and focused on loss and complaint.
We have been suspicious of the motives of others,
too quick to judge and too slow to forgive.
Give us the courage to see clearly who and what we are.
With your forgiveness, cleanse us from all our faults and failings,
and inspire us to walk a new way.**

God of light and life,
We turn to your Word for guidance and inspiration week after week.
Send your Holy Spirit to move in and among us this day
as we listen to the Scriptures read and interpreted.
Help us to hear your challenge and your promise,
and to respond with our commitment to follow Jesus, your Living Word. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

The grace of God has molded us throughout our lives and will continue to do so until our final breath. God's grace is never in vain. Even as God embraces our past, God moves us into the future— a future filled with hope, and the fulfillment of dreams.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Options: February 6, 2022](#)

Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ²through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

³For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be

called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

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

Message Hold Firmly

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

What you have just heard, and maybe have spoken with me, was the Nicene Creed, agreed upon at the Council of Nicaea in 325AD. It was an early confession of the church, or what we call a confession of faith, about the nature of God - one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Churches have continued to create confessions of faith, even to this day, but this Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed are still used today.

Still, of what importance or even relevance is there is having or reciting a confession of faith for us today? Many believe what they believe and how they believe, well because it works for them, not giving much thought to the why. Is it though, that a confession of faith is a grounding for our faith, a place to anchor, or hold firmly so that our work, our ministry, our lives, and our faith make sense? A way to know that we are not being willy-nilly about what makes one a Christian?

You see, for an onlooker the church may appear to be another volunteer organization that tries to do it's best for others, similar to other service organizations, many of which to do really good work, often better than the church itself. Some may only see the church as a place that has created more harm than good. In this climate it can be hard to not be majorly influenced by the current culture. We know that the church in North America, in Canada is in decline. Yet for many of us, we also know that there is a deeper truth, a reason for why we continue in our belief and in the church when so many say they are Christians, but no longer attend church. We know this truth even if we cannot articulate it. Which is why confessions of faith are important.

For the Apostle Paul, the writer of this first letter to the Corinthians, there was a confession of faith that had been part of the knowledge of the church for some time. He shared it as "first importance...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." (vv3-5)

It is that simple and that complex and deep...Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised. Now if you don't believe that you are sinful, then you won't even know how to interpret this, but for those of us who believe that we can't get through a day without getting something wrong in our relationship with others and with the one who created us, that we are not doing a very good job of being image bearers of God, well this is something to hold firmly to.

For those who think that the resurrection was or is a nonstarter, Paul shares what seems to be common knowledge at the time, that the resurrected Christ showed himself to others so that there would be witnesses to the resurrection, there was Cephas, the twelve, and then "more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time...then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles," and finally to Paul himself. To believe in the resurrection was to believe the scriptures, which in Paul's time were only the Hebrew scriptures. The New Testament did not exist for Paul. His letters became part of those scriptures for us.

This confession of faith, this place of grounding, of sharing with the Corinthians something that was worth holding firmly too, comes near the end of Paul's letter to the

church there. A church that was fiercely divided and questioning. And after all that Paul has written to help rectify and address the situation, he is ending his letter with a conversation about the foundation of our faith which is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what makes the Christian church, well, Christian. For all the good or harm the church has done, it does not take away from why we are Christians. Our distortion of the gospel that allows us to be saved by the grace of God, through Christ, does not take away from the meaning of God's act to reconcile creation, people, and the world to God whose love between the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit overflowed into the creation of the world.

When we believe, when we confess our belief in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, when we know the transforming power of grace, then we trust that we have something of value to share with others. That sharing can come through various forms of ministry, work, and service, but sharing God's love, compassion, and grace with others becomes a way of life, and will draw others to faith. Not because you profess from a mountain top, but because you took time to care, love, and yes, say a few words when appropriate to show the why of what you do and believe as you do.

For how can anyone know about the love of God if we never speak about how it has changed us, shaped us, has given us something to hold firmly, and the grace that we have experienced because we know of God's love.

Paul knew that grace. Paul, a man that had once persecuted those who followed the way of Jesus, who watched over the murder of Stephen, and request to be sent out to destroy the church, that man knew the transforming power of God's grace. It was because of the risen Christ that Paul was completely changed.

Now your transformation may not be as abrupt or feel as much as a 180 that was Paul's, but over time we are shaped by our belief in a Saviour and a God that loved so much "that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Jesus may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16)

That eternal life starts today, not in some here after, but right now. Take hold of the grace that is offered to you, hold firmly to the confession that Christ died for your sins and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day, because that is a story of love, the love of God, the love of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of grace and compassion,
we bring before you the widening circles of our lives.
We lift up those closest and dearest to us
and name them before you with affection and gratitude: *Keep a silence for 15 seconds.*

Thank you that your love reaches into the very depths of their needs
and gives them strength for their journeys.
Jesus, we are here for them and for you.

Lord Jesus Christ, we celebrate the life of your church,
that international community of believers whose worship and
service strengthen our faith and challenge us to live what we believe.
We remember before you this day Presbyterian World Service & Development,
its staff and committee, and its global partners,
giving thanks for their vision, courage and compassion.
In the midst of sudden and overwhelming crises
which cry out for response throughout the world,
you work through this agency to act swiftly with mercy and hope.
We give you thanks for all that is being done in Ha iti, Afghanistan and other places,
and for the long-term commitment we can show to those in deepest need.
Jesus, we are here for them and for you.

Spirit of healing and hope,
we remember before you the many communities and individuals
experiencing ongoing conflict and violence,
widespread drought or severe flooding,
crowded quarters in refugee compounds,
a yearning for education and a struggle for freedom. *Silence for 15 seconds*

We join our prayers with those of desperate people everywhere,
trusting in your gifts of courage and resilience
to grapple with these steep challenges.
In a world of so much abundance,
inspire generosity and hope among those who give and those who receive.
Jesus, we are here for them and for you.

Holy and loving God,
We are in awe of your goodness.
We know in our hearts the tug of our common humanity,
as well as the boldness of your Spirit to respond to those who suffer
and make a difference wherever we can.
We offer these prayers and the unspoken prayers of our hearts
in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to say together:

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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

The Divine Deliverer of compassion and care is calling us to serve, and to share our talents and treasures for the good of God's realm. No matter how we have fallen short in the past, God's grace assures us a variety of gifts to contribute. How is God calling you to share today?

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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.

Hymn

Jesus is risen from the grave

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| 1. Jesus is risen from the grave;
Jesus is risen from the grave;
Jesus is risen from the grave.
Hallelujah! | 2. Jesus was seen by Mary;
Jesus was seen by Mary;
Jesus was seen by Mary.
Hallelujah! |
| 3. Peter will soon be smiling;
Peter will soon be smiling;
Peter will soon be smiling.
Hallelujah! | 4. Thomas will stop his doubting;
Thomas will stop his doubting;
Thomas will stop his doubting.
Hallelujah! |
| 5. Jesus will meet his people;
Jesus will meet his people;
Jesus will meet his people.
Hallelujah! | 6. Jesus is here in bread and wine;
Jesus is here in bread and wine;
Jesus is here in bread and wine.
Hallelujah! |
| 7. Jesus will live forever;
Jesus will live forever;
Jesus will live forever.
Hallelujah! | |

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Benediction

Fellow children of God:
Go, recognizing God's grace on your journey.
Go, discerning the Spirit's calling in your life.
Go, identifying the Christ as your guide.

