

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
Church Anniversary/7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - May 29th, 2022

## Words of Welcome

In a world that has so much news of anger, and hate, and violence, we share together today a message of love, the love that Christians are to have for one another, for God, and for others. Join with me in this time of worship as we consider how to love and be one in Christ and in God.

## Call to Worship

We come to this place of prayer,  
**for here we can bring our hopes and dreams,  
our hidden fears and the doubts we dare wear on our sleeves.**

We come to this place of grace,  
**for here we learn compassion and joy,  
and discover how deeply we are loved.**

We come with these people called the church,  
**to be blessed by the variety of gifts,  
to live as one for our God.**

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## Hymn

*We praise you, O God*

**425**

1. We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;  
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring.  
We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;  
we bless your holy name; glad praises we sing.
2. We worship you; God ever-faithful, we bless you;  
through life's storm and tempest our guide you have been.  
When perils o'er take us, you will not forsake us,  
and with your help, O Lord, life battles we win.
3. With voices united our praises we offer,  
and gladly our songs of true worship we raise.  
Our sins now confessing, we pray for your blessing;  
to you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise.

Words and Music: public domain

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of glory and majesty, God of mystery and mercy,  
in Christ Jesus you came to live among us, sharing in our joys and sorrows.  
After he suffered and died for our sake,  
you raised him and took him up in glory so that he might fulfill all things.  
As our ascended Lord, he gives hope to your people in all places,  
in every generation and every situation. So we claim that hope this day,

for ourselves and for the world you love.

You desire us to share in the unity and be one as you are Three in One.

We confess that such unity often eludes us.

We dwell on our differences and find reasons to criticize each other.

The love you called us to offer one another disappears when we disagree.

Forgive us for making our opinions and preferences into dividing lines within the body of your Church.

O God, you are the beginning and the end of all things, the First and the Last.

Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to your truth,

so that we may find new beginnings in Your Word,

and make living your Word our purpose and end.

Call us again to honour the unity and love you cherish for your followers so we may witness to unity and love in this divided world. We offer you our praise and worship in the name of Jesus Christ, who now lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. 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.

Believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven

and given a ministry of reconciliation for his sake.

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## Scripture Readings John 17:20-26

<sup>20</sup>“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup>I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

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

## Message Completely One

Walking down a street one might find themselves looking into a shop window and see your reflection and that of the surrounding area. There are wonderful photographs one can find of mountains, trees, clouds, and whatever else may be around, being reflected in water, whether a big lake like Superior or a quiet smaller lake. Those photographs can be awe inspiring especially when taken at sunrise or sunset or when flowers are in full bloom making for a striking vista of purples, orange, blues, yellow, and reds.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa which sit across from the Parliament Buildings also is beside a building with many glass windows and the church is reflected in the windows. It is really a stunning site. Reflections are interesting as they do not reflect exactly what is the actual subject. There is always some distortion, it does not take away the reality, the beauty or even the not so beautiful, yet reflections can give a sense of what is. There is a resemblance of the original object or subject being reflected. As Christians we are called to reflect the love and oneness of the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

The scripture reading from John 17 is the end of a prayer that Jesus prayed over his disciples just before his betrayal and arrest. He has spent the last hours over dinner, teaching, reminding, demonstrating. He has even watched as Judas walked out the door on his way to betray Jesus to the temple authorities, and predicted Peter's denial that he even knew Jesus. And still, he prays for them. He prays for those who will continue to teach and heal, and love. Those who have followed him, been at his side for the last three years, knowing that they have much to face, that they will fail, that they will struggle, and yet he prays for their protection, for courage, for God to be with them and go with them.

And then Jesus prays for us. His words were, "I ask not only on behalf of these [those present with him at that time], but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." We are those who will believe in Jesus through the words of the disciples. And Jesus' prayer was that we "may all be one." Verses 20-23 go round and round in this prayer of desire and hope that just as God the Father was in Jesus and Jesus was in God that we would also be in Jesus and in God, "so that the world may believe that God had sent Jesus."

Today it is difficult to read the words that Jesus prayed, look at the church and the world, and begin to hope that as followers of Christ we have lived out those words. This passage is all about oneness in Christ, the glory of Christ, the glory given to Jesus and given to us. Maybe part of the struggle we understand glory to be glorious, beautiful, powerful, and often power over others. Where the glory of Christ is most fully revealed in the power of the cross, a place of suffering and death. We don't like to think that glory can be something that comes in suffering, and not suffering for ourselves, but suffering for the sake of others.

For us today, that suffering most likely would be in giving of our time, energy, resources, power and money to help those who are most vulnerable. The glory that Jesus speaks of is manifest in servanthood, compassion, and love. This is what Jesus taught

throughout his ministry and demonstrated in the feeding of multitudes, the washing of feet, and the crossing of historical boundaries between people.

Jesus prayed that we may be one, as God and Jesus are one. Jesus in us and Jesus in God, that we May become “completely one.” This complete oneness is shown in love. Jesus talked about this oneness in the context that through that oneness the world may know that God had sent Jesus and God loved all, even as God loved Jesus.

But we humans are not very good at love, especially love in community. We think we are good at it, but push come to shove, protection of our power, money, resources, desires, and standing in the community often comes before loving others. We are very protective of our own, whether family, property, or even our church. Sometimes we are not very good at any of that as relationships fail because of infidelity, or financial crisis, stresses of health and work. This is not just relationships between two people but also in organizations, and certainly in the Christian church.

We fail to remember that how we live and love, how we treat others in community and in the world, how we see someone of another ethnicity, gender, or socially, is a reflection of God to others. Jesus’ prayer was about the community of faith, it can be read for us as individuals and that is helpful, but it was ultimately about being in community. This is the distinction between being simply spiritual and being a Christian. Christians need community. We are called to our work in community with one another. We best reflect the relationship of Jesus in God, and God in Jesus, and both in us, when we live out our faith in the community of the church.

This does not mean that we protect the church, that we turn inwards, but rather it is a call to gather for the upbuilding and strengthening of our faith and understanding so that we can better work together in places outside the walls of a church, reflecting the oneness, glory, and love of Christ and of God.

In a world that is fractured, where families are unable to greet each other because of differences, where churches vie for members, and power dominates, where powerful think only of money and more power, more influence, more land, more resources...we are called to care. Where the lives of people different from us are not valued, we are to care for those who have no power, to love those who have no influence or resources, to reflect the love of God into the world.

We reflect inwardly as we determine if we are reflecting outwardly the power, love, and compassion of the creator, and continually correct ourselves and each other when we get off course, when our reflection is so distorted that no one can recognize God’s oneness with Jesus in our behaviour.

Jesus’ prayer was that we would be one, not just this community of faith, not just one with those who think just like us, but one with those whose thought and understanding are different from our own. The one thing that we are to have in common is love for all, for all of God’s created world, for each person, to know the intrinsic value of each person just because they are created by a loving God who desire that they may come to know

God's love for them through each of us, and as the community that reflects the oneness of God's love.

We will not do this perfectly, just as reflections in mirrors, water, and glass is not perfect, but the more closely we can resemble the God of love, and the glory of Jesus who died because of his love for us, the more people we know we are Christians by our love. May we strive to become a clearer reflection of complete oneness so others may come to know and believe that God loves them.

## **Prayers of the People**

Faithful God,

We give you thanks for your steadfast love

that provides courage and comfort for your people in every challenging time.

Continue to surprise us with your grace, O God, and breathe your Spirit upon your church once more, to draw us together in worship and witness.

Renew our faith so that we may serve you with courage and creativity, offering the hope we know in Christ Jesus to this struggling world.

God of peace, thank you for sending Jesus into the world, to reconcile the world to you through the forgiveness of our sins.

May the fruits of the reconciliation and peace he offers continue to work in places of hatred and hostility.

Today we name before you the places on our minds and hearts these days, and relationships in need of your reconciling grace:

O God, do not let us be resigned to injustice or indifference.

Inspire us to build renewed relationships in these days of deepening divisions.

God of fellowship, we pray for our church and our community.

Renew our life together as we gather again socially as the pandemic shifts around us.

Inspire our congregation with a fresh vision for our ministry.

Comfort those who mourn the loss of dear ones,

and support those who are sick, and those recovering from setbacks or failure.

Give strength to people who are worn out or discouraged, and calm the anxiety or anger that can keep us apart.

Bless and encourage any who are struggling in their faith, and guide those with questions to your truth.

God who calls us into our future, we pray for students who will be graduating this year, filled with anticipation and uncertainty about the future. Guide their choices.

We remember the graduates from our theological colleges.

May they always remember that you called them into ministry,

and that you will provide them with the wisdom, strength and grace needed to live out their calling in ever-changing contexts.

Faithful God,

By your Spirit, fill us with the faith and courage to do the work

Jesus commissioned his followers to undertake wherever he leads us.

For we are bold to pray together the words he taught us, saying

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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

Though the Easter season draws to a close today, we continue to enjoy the blessings God pours out for us in Christ and in creation. We give thanks to God for these blessings as we present our offering in Jesus' holy name.

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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>

## Hymn

*The church is wherever God's people*

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1. The church is wherever God's people are praising,  
singing God's goodness for joy on this day.  
The church is wherever disciples of Jesus  
remember his story and walk in his way.
2. The church is wherever God's people are helping,  
caring for neighbours in sickness and need.  
The church is wherever God's people are sharing  
the words of the Bible in gift and in deed.

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## Benediction

We leave this place of prayer,  
**to join God in listening to the hopes and dreams,  
the hidden fears and the doubts of our neighbors.**

We leave this place of grace,  
**to share the compassion and joy of Jesus with others,  
so they will discover how deeply they are loved.**

We leave to be with the people of our world,  
**so the Spirit might bless us with their rich gifts,  
so we may discover our oneness in God.**

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