

## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany - January 22, 2023

### Words of Welcome

There is something about the light as it makes daybreak. It gives us a sense of awe, hope, and wonder at what a new day will bring. The dawning of the morning is an opportunity for new beginnings. Today we talk about the light dawning in our lives. As we begin, we join in the call to worship.

### We Worship God

#### Call to Worship

Jesus calls us to praise and prayer, to song and silence;

**Jesus calls us to worship.**

Jesus calls us to hearing and healing, to service and solidarity;

**Jesus calls us to love.**

Jesus calls us to advocacy and action, to protest and provision;

**Jesus calls us to justice.**

Let us heed the call of Christ.

***Let us worship together with joy.***

written by Joanna Harader and posted on **Spacious Faith**. <https://spaciousfaith.com/>

#### Hymn

*Arise, your light has come*

712

- |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Arise, your light is come!<br>The Spirit's call obey;<br>show forth the glory of your God<br>which shines on you today.  | 2. Arise, your light is come!<br>Fling wide the prison door;<br>proclaim the captive's liberty,<br>good tidings to the poor.          |
| 3. Arise, your light is come!<br>All you in sorrow born,<br>bind up the broken-hearted ones<br>and comfort those who mourn. | 4. Arise, your light is come!<br>The mountains burst in song!<br>Rise up like eagles on the wing,<br>God's power will make us strong. |

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#### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Gracious Light-Bearer,

Into the shadows of our isolation you speak words of life and community.

Challenger of our lives, you call us from places we call home

to lead us more deeply into the world you love.

With your gentle, healing touch you redeem the broken places of our lives

and you heal the wounded places of the earth. Inspire our worship here this day,

so that we may receive liberation in your word,

and be filled to overflowing to share your reconciling love throughout the earth.

written by Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, and posted on the **United Church of Christ's Worship Ways** website. <http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/>

**God, our Light and Salvation,  
forgive us for those moments when we have walked in darkness,  
stumbling in the wilderness of quarrels, division, and bickering.  
You have called us to follow you and to fish for people  
but too often we think that *our* way is the *only* way to do your will.  
Forgive us, Lord, for the brokenness that we bring upon ourselves.**

**God, the Stronghold of our Life,  
hear our cry as we come to you for unity.  
Send your Spirit to gather us as you desire us.  
Remind us that unity does not mean uniformity.  
Teach us that the “same mind” you call us to have  
is not ours, but the mind of your Son, Jesus Christ.**

written by Stephen Fearing, and posted on *Wild and Precious Life*. <http://www.stephenmfearing.com/>

O God, we seek your wisdom and truth in the Scriptures. Send your Holy Spirit upon us to open our minds and hearts to receive the gift of your Word. Challenge and comfort us in what we hear, and strength us to follow Jesus, your Living Word.

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The greatness and the glory of God,  
the saving love of Christ,  
and the power of the Spirit take form in forgiveness.  
Receiving forgiveness, we experience closeness with God.  
Acknowledging it, we offer words of praise. Glory be to God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P99.

## **Scripture Readings Matthew 4:12-23**

<sup>12</sup> Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup>so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

<sup>15</sup> ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

<sup>16</sup> the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned.’

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

<sup>18</sup> As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ <sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in

the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them<sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

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## **Message** The Light has Dawned

How many times has you used the phrase, “It dawned on me?” When your tummy growls and you find yourself saying, “It just dawned on me that I haven’t eaten all day.” Or losing you keys, you walk around the house and finally it *dawns on* you where you left them. That after spending five minutes retracing your steps!

Maybe it has been a little deeper thinking. You may have attended a conference or been a part of a conversation when something suddenly *dawns on* you. An idea, direction or decision makes sense because it finally *dawns on* you what was missing or needed to happen.

Using the words *dawned on*, basically means that something has suddenly become clear, maybe even certain. It is to begin to understand, or that something or someone is more understandable. It is finally grasping the meaning of an idea, realizing for the first time what is possible or at stake. It is about human perception and it comes from the idea of light coming in darkness.

I don’t have to tell you that in the light things are clearer. In the darkness we may stumble around trying to find a light switch, but once the power gets from the electrical switch to the light bulb, well then everything becomes visible.

As I share I am also aware that for about 15% of people who are blind my analogies may fall flat as for them darkness is a totality. But I believe all can relate to what happens in our minds and hearts, maybe even our bodies, once we grasp the meaning of something or realize the impact of a thought.

In a reading from Isaiah we hear,

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined (Isaiah 9:2)

And again, in the reading from Matthew,

the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned (v16)

Could it be that this is what was happening when those four fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James and John, dropped their nets and followed Jesus?

In Matthew we are given no preamble as to why they just up and left what they were doing. We get no reasons or background, just that for Peter and Andrew, they “immediately...left their nets and followed him.” (v20) And for James and John, “immediately they left the boat *and* their father, and followed him.” (v22).

Could it be that somehow the light that was Jesus dawned on them when he passed by? We have no idea if there was something they knew about Jesus or if he had a long in-depth conversation with them before this call. All that the writer of the gospel of Matthew sensed was necessary for his Jewish audience that would be reading these words, was that Jesus called these two sets of brothers and they immediately followed.

At the time of this writing, the people of Israel were living in a kingdom that was not their own. Rome had taken hold of the land at this point, just as Assyria was in power in the time of the scripture written in Isaiah. They always held onto the hope that a Messiah would come and the land would once again be theirs. They hoped for an earthly king such as one with the power, strength, and authority of King David of old. So it could be that they thought this earthly man Jesus held some hope to be such a leader.

It is not likely that they understood in that moment what type of leader Jesus was, that he most certainly was a king, but one whose kingdom was not of oppression, of forcing out the Romans, but rather whose kingdom and power was defined by love, forgiveness, peace, and justice. The kind of justice that brings equity and hope, not despair for the most vulnerable.

There may have been some kind of light that they perceived when they met Jesus that compelled them to leave all that they knew, but it may also have been the promise, the hope, that their lives could be different if they were not serving the Roman Empire. It is likely that it took time for things to really *dawn on* them about what they had entered into and who Jesus was.

The stories in all four gospels tell of the fact that they would get close to understanding, but it is not until Luke writes the accounts of the apostles in Acts that we really get to see how the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, what they witnessed, and what it meant after the fact, that we see how the light dawned on those first followers of Jesus.

For most of us, it can take time for something really profound to dawn on us. It is like the morning; it is darkness and then as the sun rises more and more becomes visible to us. What may take us a long time to figure out...to have dawn on us...is God's call on our lives. Unlike the immediate response of the fishermen, we seem to take a long time to figure out God's call on our lives, if we ever figure it out or even think about it in the first place.

So often we go about our lives doing whatever comes before us. We make plans, we work, we retire, we age, and little do we ponder or ask, where is God in this? What is God calling me to do at this stage of my life or in a particular situation or opportunity?

Asking those questions can help us understand or have it dawn on us, what we are to do in order to live our lives in the abundance of love, grace, hope, and joy that God desires for us and for all people. It doesn't matter what age you have reached, God's love and desire for you to live an abundant life does not change or go away. When we consider God's call on our life in any given moment it may dawn on us what our meaning and purpose is in this time and place.

The same goes for the church. Our church has a calling, a purpose. Our work in the community of faith is to hear our call together, which takes conversations, prayer, discernment and at some point, it will dawn on us, whether slowly as when the morning is ushered in, or suddenly as when a light switch is turned on, what we are to be doing. What God is calling us to be and do in our time and place with the people who share this walk of faith.

The darkness we experience is our lives without Christ. It is not that life, especially in North America, is not fine for a good number of us, but when the light of Christ, that great light has dawned for us and on us, our lives take on a wholly other meaning and purpose. We no longer live just for ourselves, but for a God who calls us to be a light in the darkness pointing the way to love, grace, hope, and forgiveness so that other may live and have abundant life.

If you are someone that is struggling, the light of Christ dawning on you can mean that you finally make difficult decisions about your wellbeing and that of those you love. We can, through the dawning of Christ, the understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit, and the deep love of God, make changes in our lives that bring about transformation and wholeness that we never imagined. This can be the catalyst for change in work places, retirement homes, families, in circles of friends, in the church, and ultimately in our communities.

The light has dawned. It is the light of Christ in our lives and, through the Spirit working in us, we become light for others. Never underestimate the power of new understanding and insight, new light on a challenge or in a life. This is power we have been given in Christ whose light has dawned.

Matthew wrote, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light...light has dawned!" May the light of Christ dawn in your life today and every day, for you, for those you love, and for the world.

In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ, Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

God in whom we live and move and have our being,  
This week we join with Christians around the world  
to pray for peace and unity, and for justice and mercy in your fragile creation.

We remember before you today people living face to face with war and violence, especially those places where ancient hatreds burn.

God, speak to us a word of peace.

We remember before you today people living face to face with economic uncertainty, those struggling with rising costs of daily necessities, and those who have lost their jobs, their savings, their homes or businesses. And we pray for people in other regions of Canada who face different challenges than we do...

God, speak to us a word of reassurance.

We remember before you today people living face to face with discrimination and social prejudice, those who are bullied at school, at work or at home, and all those who have been made ashamed of who they are...

God, speak to us a word of dignity.

We remember before you today people living face to face with illness and suffering, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment, those struggling with disability or delay in medical attention, and those who know grief or fear...

God, speak to us a word of healing.

We remember before you today people of different creeds and faiths, those who seek understanding and co-operation among different religious traditions, and those who show love to their neighbours, whatever their creed or conviction...

God, speak to us a word of reconciliation.

We remember before you today your whole creation and its many vulnerable facets and faces.

Teach us how to care for the rips and tears in the fabric of the world you love so we may live together wisely and protect the future in our attitudes and actions ...

God, speak to us a word of wisdom.

And so, in unity with your Church around the world you love, we pray together 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

Jesus called the first disciples who followed,  
not knowing that we would follow their example so many centuries later.  
We bring our gifts in Jesus' name,  
not knowing whose lives will be touched,  
but trusting that something good will come of everything we offer to God.

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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

*O Jesus, I have promised*

569

1. O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou forever near me,  
my Saviour and my friend:  
I shall not fear the struggle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.
2. Oh let me feel thee near me:  
the world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear.  
My foes are ever near me,  
around me and within,  
but, Jesus, draw thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.
3. Oh let me hear thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
oh speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
oh speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.
4. O Jesus, thou hast promised  
to all who follow thee,  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be,  
and, Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
oh give me grace to follow  
my Saviour and my friend.

*Words: Public domain*

## Benediction

As we leave this gathered worship, we know that we do not leave alone.  
We go with God into a world resonant with God's presence.  
We go with one another, bound together in Spirit and in truth,  
a mighty company of disciples of Jesus Christ.  
Let us go, then, separately but together,  
as we seek to be the on-going sign that God is at work in the world.

*Derek Weber, Discipleship Ministries, July 2022*

[Discipleship Ministries | Third Sunday after the Epiphany, Year A -... \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](http://umcdiscipleship.org)