

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

3rd Sunday after Pentecost - June 18, 2023

National Indigenous Peoples Sunday

Words of Welcome – Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that Thunder Bay is built on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. The footsteps of their ancestors have walked these lands for millennia, and we are grateful for their stewardship. We also acknowledge this place as a historic Metis settlement.

The Church's relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada has been marked by colonization and the racist beliefs that underscored colonization (namely, the superiority of a Christianized, western European worldview). [The Church has confessed its role in running residential schools](#), its complicity in the harms of colonization, and rejected the [Doctrine of Discovery](#). The church is committed to walking toward reconciliation. This includes advocating that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation, responding to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) and engaging with the findings of the [National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice](#). In 2006, General Assembly established the Healing and Reconciliation program to assist individuals and congregations that are building relationships based on justice, love of neighbour, and mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. [Indigenous Justice - The Presbyterian Church in Canada](#)

Call to Worship

Holy and generous is God, the Creator of all things.

Loving and gracious is Christ, the Bearer of healing and hope.

Gentle and wise is the Holy Spirit, the Breath of new life.

Trinity of grace, we call on you today.

Come and worship the God who made us and loves us all!

We come with joyful praise and hopeful hearts!

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 3rd Sunday after Pentecost. June 18, 2023. National Indigenous Peoples Sunday. Year A.

*Hymn

God of the sparrow, God of the whale

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|---|---|
| 1. God of the sparrow, God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise | 2. God of the earthquake, God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save |
| 3. God of the rainbow, God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks | 4. God of the hungry, God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life |

5. God of the neighbour, God of the foe
 God of the pruning hook
 How does the creature say Love
 How does the creature say Peace.
6. God of the ages, God near at hand
 God of the loving heart,
 How do your children say Joy
 How do your children say Home.

"God of the sparrow, God of the whale," words by Jaroslav J. Vajda © 1983,
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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator God,

You have made a world of such amazing diversity – with unique living things we cannot number! We praise you for such wonder. You have created such amazing diversity in humankind – through culture and language, custom and community, expressed in so much creativity and compassion.

We praise you for such wonder.

In Jesus Christ, you show us how much you love your creation and how we can live by your love.

By the power of your Spirit,

give us new eyes to behold the wonders you have made

and teach us how to love your creation with humble, grateful hearts.

Creator God,

The diversity in your creation amazes us,

but we confess we often prefer what seems familiar.

We'd like everyone to speak our language.

We wish others held our values and shared our customs.

We fail to see how our own preferences affect others and the earth itself in harmful ways.

Forgive our easy assumptions, and teach us to listen to the stories others tell with open minds and hearts.

Amid the distractions of our times,

give us undivided hearts and attentive minds, O God.

Help us discern your wisdom in the scriptures,

so that we may follow Christ, your living Word. Amen

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Assurance of Forgiveness

The prophet Micah declared that God requires three things of us:

to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

To all who seek reconciliation with God and neighbour in kindness and humility, God offers forgiveness and peace.

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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Scripture Reading Romans 5.1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

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

Message Hope

I was writing in my prayer journal and the words that flowed were, “I had hoped...” “I had hoped that this week I would be more organized and disciplined. I had hoped to make more phone calls and visits. I had hoped to have my sermon written well in advance. I had hoped...”

You may have your own list of things you had hoped for. Some may have included, I had hoped for a few more years. I had hoped that retirement would include golfing, travel, gardening, more time for painting. I had hoped that our family could mend our brokenness, I had hoped that I could come out of the depression, I had hoped that the cancer could be dealt with. I had hoped to attend my grandchild's graduation or wedding.

More broadly one might hope for peace in Ukraine, safe passage and homes for refugees, housing for the underhoused, churches that could agree on how to understand and interpret scripture. One may have hoped that colonization was a thing of the past and that broken relationships with our indigenous siblings could be reconciled.

Hope

Hope as a noun is defined as desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment; expectation of fulfillment or success. Hope can also be someone or something on which hopes are centered. It may also be something desired or hoped for.¹

As a verb, hope defined is to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true or to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment. It can mean to expect with confidence – to trust.²

¹ [Hope Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#). Accessed June 16, 2023.

² Ibid.

Whether one is Christian or not, hope is important. Hope gives us a reason to get up in the morning. Hope that the new day will bring good things. For those who live in the darkness of depression or despair, hope can be elusive. Hope is life giving and important to well-being.

Though it is Father's Day, I share a story of my mother, one which I have shared before. It was she who said that as long as she could see a light in the darkness of her trials, she had hope. I knew that things were going sideways in her last year when she shared that she couldn't see that light anymore. Chronic pain, struggling with mobility issues, an unending unforgiving itch that could not be relieved, took away her hope for joy in this life. Though in this life she had lost hope, she still knew that in her death her hope was in being freed from all that hindered her now and that she would live in the joy and love of God.

Some people are able to live with much challenge and never lose their hope. Hope gives them the ability to live life with joy. It does not take away the struggle, but somehow it well, as Paul says, produces character.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul begins with talking about the joy, the faithfulness, the unity, and realization of God promise of faith and grace. This particular reading follows on the heels of all that with the words, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God." (v1-2) Wonderful!

It sounds wonderful. Faith, peace, grace, hope, sharing the glory of God. It wraps up everything in a beautiful picture of what we wish our lives and the world offered. But that is not our world, and Paul quickly acknowledges that with words that express that in this life there is suffering and there is no getting around it. Yet he is able to write about suffering in a way that gives it meaning and purpose. Before I read it again, understand that it is not God's will that we suffer. Choices in our control and beyond our control take a toll.

Still Paul writes, "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (v3-5).

Let me read that slowly. Ponder each layer. And not only that...but we also boast in our sufferings...knowing that suffering produces endurance...and endurance produces character...and character produces hope...and hope does not disappoint us...because God's love has been poured into our hearts...through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

That love was demonstrated on the cross, where God's own Son, Jesus Christ, took all that we bear in this world, all that separates us from God and made a way for

relationships to be restored, people to be restored. Sometimes this restoration is physical healing, but that healing is more about hearts than it is about anything else. It is about love.

On this National Indigenous People's Sunday, we think of the broken relationship between settlers and Indigenous people. We cannot take away the harm done, but we can work toward reconciling the harm done. And when I say we, it will take love, forgiveness, peace, and hope for a better way by all. God did not want the pain and suffering that was the result of colonization. The sharing of the Gospel was to bring peace not pain. Us Christians have not done that well, taking the Great Commission to mean share the gospel regardless of what needs to be sacrificed. May God and others forgive our arrogance.

It is also Pride month, and again we hear of harm done in the name of those who believe their take on God's word is the only way to read and interpret scripture. May God and those who have endured harm forgive our arrogance.

For those who have experienced harm through colonization, prejudice, and judgement, those who have experience harm at the hands and words of those who were supposed to love them, these words of suffering are not to be used to justify their suffering, but hopefully bring meaning and purpose through healing.

We all suffer, some have suffered because of culture and society, many of us have individual trials and tribulations that are part of being human in a human body.

What I have learned is that when we do the work of emotional and spiritual healing and allow God into the healing, we can boast, or translated another way, we can rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us... Hope does not disappoint us... because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Each of us regardless of race, culture, gender identity, social or economic status is loved, and God proved his love for us in that while we still were sinners, broken hurting people, Christ died for us.

May each day glimmer with hope from the time you get up to the time you lay down to end the day. The hope is not for perfection or lack of struggle, but that in our living, in our expectation that God is showing up for us, that if we allow God to use us, we may in time be a light, a glimmer of hope, a healing presence because we understand the suffering, and know the promises of faith, peace, grace, hope and above all love.

In Christ, with Christ, through the Holy Spirit that has been give to us. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of the earth and all its peoples,
in Jesus Christ, you proclaimed the good news

that true life and peace are found in you.

Guide your church to proclaim this good news,
not in ways that merely please people or don't ruffle feathers,
but in ways that bring Christ's reconciling love to divided communities
and lives out of joint with each other.

Shine your light into the world's hidden corners,
exposing violence, exploitation, and bigotry.

Reveal what dehumanizes the vulnerable and degrades your creation.

God of the earth and all its peoples,

Let your light shine!

On this National Indigenous Sunday,

We pray for Indigenous communities across this land, and all around the world.

We thank you for Indigenous leaders who lead advocate for the needs of their
people. Bring healing to those who confront painful experiences, and build bridges of
understanding among us all. May your justice prevail so that Indigenous
communities have the resources needed to thrive
and receive respect for the decisions they make.

We pray for the National Indigenous Ministry Council

and the ministries with Indigenous people that the Council tends.

Bless the leaders and participants in each ministry
with the resources they need to serve their communities effectively.

Teach the wider church what is being learned through these communities
and deepen the bonds of faithful friendship we can share with each other.

God of the earth and all its peoples,

Let your light shine!

God of healing and hope,

thank you for your faithfulness to us in all situations

We pray for all those who are ill or in pain,

for the anxious and discouraged,

for those facing death or the loss of someone dearly beloved,

and for those struggling to make ends meet in these uncertain times.

We pray for Presbyterian World Service & Development and its partners
as they work to bring healing and hope to places of strife and deprivation.

May the mission we share in Jesus' name

shine the light of your love into desperate lives.

God of the earth and all its peoples,

Let your light shine!

God of the faithful future,

bless this community of faith

and guide us as we plan for the future in changing times.

Bless students and teachers as the school year ends
and restore them for learning with summer enjoyment.
Grant us all times to rest and to enjoy this summer
and replenish our hope and energy to serve in your world.
God of the earth and all its peoples,
Let your light shine!

We offer all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, sung and drummed,
through Jesus Christ our Lord 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

God's Spirit equips Jesus' followers to bring healing and hope to the world God loves. The gifts we offer God are tangible signs of that healing and hope at work in us and through us, for the sake of Christ our Lord.

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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 Lord my God! / How great thou art

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1. O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed,

Refrain

*then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art!
Then sings my soul! My Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art*

2. When though the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze,

Refrain

*then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art!
Then sings my soul! My Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! how great thou art*

3. And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin,

Refrain

4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Refrain

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Benediction

Let us go now, as a people united in Christ,
to reconcile what is divided,
to heal what is broken,
to bring together what is torn apart.
By the power and grace of God, we are called to minister
to one another in the name of the One who came for us all.
Peace, joy, and love be among us in ever new day.

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