

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - October 29, 2023

## Call to Worship

In a world that cries out, "Fear me!"

**We will listen to Jesus' words, "Don't be afraid!"**

In a world that wants us to hate the other...

**We will live Jesus' call to, "Love God.**

**Love your neighbour, as you love yourself."**

In a world that radicalizes...

**We, too, will be radical.**

**Radical with our hospitality.**

**Radical with our hope.**

**Radical with our love.**

Then come to this place, ready to be who we are called to be.

**Let us gather together and worship God.**

~ written by Richard Bott, and posted on [Sharing Liturgy](http://liturgy.richardbott.com/). <http://liturgy.richardbott.com/>

## Hymn

### Love the Lord your God

715

Love the Lord your God,  
with all your heart.

Love the Lord your God  
with all your soul.

Love the Lord your God  
with all your mind,

Love the Lord your God  
with all that you are.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart" Tune: © 1991 Desert Flower Music/Jim and Jean Strathdee  
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## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God, our God,

You are gracious and loving, holy and eternal;  
your love is steadfast, your presence ever near.

Your wisdom is older than time and as fresh as the morning dew.

Your name has come to us through the centuries,  
yet you can always do a new thing to draw us back to you.

God, Creator, Christ and Spirit,  
we offer you our prayers and praise this day in humble expectation;  
surprise us in this time of worship  
and refresh our readiness to serve you.

**God, our God,  
You know our hearts, the times we truly loved one another  
and the times we merely tolerated each other.  
You know our minds, the times we truly focused on you  
and the times we pursued our own purposes.  
Forgive us those times we went our own way,  
and renew our commitment to live lives marked by your grace,  
through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. October 29, 2023. Year A.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends in Christ, we are forgiven people, set free from past failures,  
to make a fresh start this day and every day.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to love God and to love others.

Thanks be to God for such everlasting grace!

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## **Scripture Readings**

### **❖ Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18**

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

<sup>2</sup> Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them:

You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

<sup>15</sup> You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. <sup>16</sup>You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the LORD. <sup>17</sup> You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. <sup>18</sup>You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

### **❖ Matthew 22:34-46**

<sup>34</sup> When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup>and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup>‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ <sup>37</sup>He said to him, ‘“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” <sup>38</sup>This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

<sup>41</sup> Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: <sup>42</sup>‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ <sup>43</sup>He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

<sup>44</sup> “The Lord said to my Lord,

‘Sit at my right hand,  
until I put your enemies under your feet’?”

<sup>45</sup>If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ <sup>46</sup>No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

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## **Message** Love Matters

It happens daily around our communities. People helping people. There are organizations that feed people, clothe them, house them. Just in our own few block radius I think of Grace Place, Underground Gym, the Thunder Bay Food Bank, and Shelter House. As a congregation we have supported each of these places in different ways. For years people from this congregation helped to prepare meals on different days during the month at Shelter House and when those teams could not be sustained the decision was made to make sure that food and financial supports have continued.

Right now, we are in the middle of a food bank drive for the Thunder Bay Food Bank on Miles Street. We do that at least twice a year. As one who has brought the collected food over to the Food Bank, I know how much that support is appreciated. We have donated mittens to St. James Public School and the Underground Gym. For the last few years, we have been a part of the Undercover Clothing Project of the Community Clothing Assistance organization in which we purchase brand new underwear and socks, gather it up and give the items to the organization to provide to families as part of their work. I could go on as we also help a number of other organizations including Elizabeth Fry and Lifewater.

I do have a question. When we do all of this what is our motivation? Do we even think about it? Now not for a minute am I questioning the validity of this generosity. It is beautiful and needed. The generosity and gifts bring resources to others. But when you purchase food for the food bank or give money to our mission projects, what is the motivation?

My hope is that it comes from texts like the one we heard read, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

Sharing resources is an act of love. It is a response of love to our loving God. Now all of this might seem like plain speak. Shouldn't this all be obvious? Yet, sometimes it can be helpful to ask the question why? Why do we do what we do? We don't ask the question in order to change everything we do, but rather to make sure that our motivations and actions align with our living out our lives as part of Christian community, and in response to the love of God for us. When you buy a gift to put under the Christmas tree here at the church for families, or purchase socks and underwear, food or give cash for Jan to spend on your behalf, do you feel the love?

I ask these questions not only for you but of myself? You may already be someone who imagines the child or family that may be the recipient of the gift you give, though you will never meet them. When you do so, do you give out of pity or respect, understanding that life often brings hardship?

This past week I have spent time in my daughter's home in Toronto listening to her do her work. Her daily job is one of teaching people about equity and diversity. She is continually discussing with people about bias and about the wonderful diversity that is a part of our lives and how we react to that. Knowing that I had a sermon to write for Sunday and that it included the words, you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself, I couldn't help but be confronted with the many ways we say with our hands and our spending that we love our neighbour, as we give to these worthy causes and charities, and yet judge the very people we are giving to.

I am struggling with how to say what I am thinking. Not because I don't know what I am thinking, but because I don't know how each of you thinks and how what I might say will be received. And maybe it is because I know that I am not always consistent in my own thinking. So let me give this a shot and an example.

At times when I purchase food for the food bank, I will buy a cake mix and a container of icing hoping that it will allow for a family to make a cake for a special occasion. I imagine the family, hoping that this small gift might bring a little joy into a challenging situation. When I buy underwear or socks, I have often bought for older boys knowing how tempting it is to buy pretty little socks and cute underwear for little girls. I have donated alongside many of you to the work of Lifewater as they build wells for communities. I do these things because I think it is important, but almost never do I think to myself, I do this because I want to love my neighbour.

I know when we give, and because many of us have been raised to be charitable people, we give because we know it to be the right thing to do, but what I am getting at is, do we do it out of love...do we do it out of love for our neighbour?

Again, I am not suggesting for a moment that all of this giving, for whatever reason, is not a good thing. But as followers of Christ, it may be important to remember that we do all of this out of love. You see, for us as Christian community we are called to love, to love and serve the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. As Jesus says, to those who are testing him, these two commandments are the important ones. These sum up all of the law of God. Remember those Ten Commandment, well they are summed up in these two statements. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.

The assumption here is that you do love yourself, or at least know that you are to love yourself even when you are not good at it. And by the way, this is not a new thing that Jesus is saying. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus, who is himself Jewish, quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,

and with all your soul, and with all your might.” We are not sure why he changed the last word from might to mind, but it might have been because it was learned and thinking people, teachers of the Torah, that were continually questioning him.

The second part of the answer Jesus gave, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”, comes directly from verse 18 of Leviticus. Again, these answers were not new. Every Jewish child learned of these things. It would seem that the simplest, most basic answer to the questions of the Pharisees, was one that everyone and anyone in earshot would have known.

Jesus, this itinerant teacher, the son of a lowly carpenter, this man with a following that the authorities were trying to trip up, was filled with wisdom and understanding. I often wonder whether Jesus was frustrated by all of this or patiently waiting them out. Whatever he is feeling, he takes this moment to ask them a series of questions that will trip them up,

“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David’” Then Jesus said to them, quoting from Psalm 110, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’”

If nothing else, this exchange has shown the authorities that Jesus knows the Hebrew scriptures, but essentially, this is the end of all questions. The fact that the leaders of the people cannot make a mockery of Jesus, cannot out speak him, cannot find a way to bring him down, means that the talking has stopped. From this point forward they will seek out a way to stop Jesus even if it means killing him.

And the thing is, Jesus knows that this is what is going to happen. He knows that earthly power will always try to stop the power of the love. Love that is shown not only in words but in action.

In a world that is as broken now as it was in Jesus’ time, earthly power and authority will continue to fight against love. Still, the love of God is more powerful. The love of God gave us the flesh and blood of Jesus that in the mystery and power of the cross proved love breaks the barriers of hell. And right now, it would seem that hell has broken loose on earth, with the ongoing war in Ukraine, with the horrors of the war in Gaza, and opioids taking the lives of people of all ages. With the encampments that cities worldwide are dealing with because people are not seen as worthy of our compassion, care, and resources, and the increasing use of food banks because of food insecurity, hell can seem pretty close at hand.

In all this, we forget that the love of God that was displayed on the cross, that defeated death, is the love that dwells within us. This love is a gift of God through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. This is the love we respond to when we love our neighbour. It is the power of love that we share when we see Christ in the face, in the body, of anyone and everyone we encounter.

Don't let the world tell you that love doesn't make any difference in Gaza, in the Ukraine, in the encampments, in our supporting our missions, purchasing food or clothing and giving it as part of our work. But also don't forget that it because of love that we do what we do. It is because of love that we call ourselves the church. It is because of love that we are the church, the people of God.

Love for us is not only an emotion, but more than anything it is an action. Love is something we do intentionally as our response to God's love and for the sake of the world. Love matters!

May you know the amazing and deep love God has for you and know that this love is for every one, no matter who they are, or what you might think about them. God's love matters and our love matters. May we go from this time of worship to love God and love others in Christ's name. Amen.

### **We Respond to God's Word**

#### **Invitation to the offering**

How do we show our love for God and neighbor through our offering?  
May it be a gift, and act of service, a response to God's love for us.

Should you wish to support this ministry and/or 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>

#### **Prayers of the People**

Faithful God and Holy Friend,  
We do not have enough words to thank you  
for all you have given us and the love you share with us in Christ Jesus.  
In the silence of this time,  
help us review the week just past, remembering the ways we encountered you –  
in the beauty of creation, the support of friends, the wisdom of books,  
the joy of music, the energy of exercise, through study and prayer.

God of comfort and challenge,  
we are grateful for your presence in these uncertain times  
at home, at work and at school.

We give you thanks for your attention to the small details  
and the large responsibilities we face.

Make us attentive to the needs of those around us.

In silence we name before you those finding these days especially difficult.

God of persistence and inspiration,  
we remember before you the many who struggle to recognize your presence

or fail to hear your voice amid all the competing voices in our world.  
We pray for those feeling depressed or anxious,  
those facing grief and loneliness,  
and those who are worried about their health or their future.  
Do not forget these people even if they forget you.  
Comfort them and fill them with peace.

God of justice and leadership,  
We pray for our country and nations of the world facing immense challenges.  
Guide decision makers in these complex times  
and keep the hearts of those with resources open  
to those who do not have enough.  
We pray for places where justice is lacking,  
where violence threatens or leaders are untrustworthy.  
Strengthen voices of wisdom and acts of courageous compassion  
to tend the needs of people most at risk.

God of grace and guidance,  
You call us to be your hands and feet,  
your voice and comfort in the world, following the example of Jesus.  
Equip us to respond to the needs around us in his name,  
and make us bold to get started right here and right now.  
For we dare to 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**

## We are Sent out as God's People

### Hymn

*Joyful, joyful we adore you*

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| 1. Joyful, joyful we adore you,<br>God of glory, Lord of love.<br>Hearts unfold like flowers before you,<br>opening to the sun above.<br>Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;<br>drive the dark of doubt away;<br>giver of immortal gladness,<br>fill us with the light of day. | 2. All your works with joy surround you;<br>earth and heaven reflect your rays;<br>stars and angels sing around you,<br>centre of unbroken praise.<br>Field and forest, vale and mountain,<br>flowery meadow, flashing sea,<br>chanting bird and flowing fountain,<br>join to praise you joyfully. |
|--|--|

3. You are giving and forgiving,  
ever blessing, ever blessed,  
wellspring of the joy of living,  
ocean depth of happy rest,  
God Creator, Christ our Saviour,  
all are yours who live in love.  
Teach us how to love our neighbour;  
lift us to your joy above.

4. Morning stars, awake the chorus;  
mortals, join with every part,  
for what joy is set before us  
as Christ's love joins heart to heart!  
Ever singing, march we onward,  
victors in the midst of strife;  
joyful music leads us sunward,  
in the triumph song of life.

Words and Music: public domain

## **Benediction**

Go with love for God filling your hearts,  
to show love to each neighbour  
or stranger you meet in the week ahead.  
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you now and always. Amen.

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