

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

24th Sunday after Pentecost - November 12, 2023

Call to Worship

God of all times and places, we gather to worship you.

We turn our eyes to you and rejoice in your presence.

God of all life and love, we gather to sing your praise.

We turn our eyes to you and marvel at your power and your promise.

God of all wisdom and wonder, we gather to learn from your Son.

We turn our eyes toward Christ and wait for your Word to lead us.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 24th Sunday after Pentecost. November 12, 2023. Year A.

Hymn

O for a thousand tongues to sing

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1. Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of God's grace.
2. Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
and bids our sorrows cease—
'tis music in the sinner's ears;
'tis life and health and peace.
3. He speaks, and listening to his voice
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
the humble poor believe.
4. Hear him, you deaf; you voiceless ones,
your tongues again employ;
you blind, behold your Saviour comes,
and leap, you lame, for joy!
5. My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
and spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of thy name.

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of might and mercy,
we come to worship you this day,
proclaiming your power and your promise
in a world where many things keep us on edge.

We proclaim your power
to defeat forces that work against your hope for the world.

We proclaim your love that cracks open our hearts
and draws us to you and to one another.

We proclaim your promise in Jesus Christ
that nothing can separate from your love.

**God of mercy,
we confess that the world around us is broken and heartbreaking.
Countries turn disputes over territory into threats of terror.
Old enemies stir up conflict within tribes and nations.
The threat of violence keeps us all on edge.
We have not learned from past conflicts
what leads to peace with justice among nations and neighbours.
Forgive us all.
Strengthen our desire to live out our trust in you
in friendship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. November 5, 2023. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Believe the Good News! The mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us. In him, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. Thanks be to God!

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Scripture Reading Psalm 100

- ¹ Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth.
- ² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into God's presence with singing.
- ³ Know that the LORD is God.
The Lord made us, we belong to God.
We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.
- ⁴ Enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving,
and God's courts with praise.
Give thanks to the Lord, bless God's name.
- ⁵ For the LORD is good;
God's steadfast love endures forever,
God's faithfulness to all generations.

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

Message Enter the Gates

This morning each of us walked through doors. The first door I walked through was from my bedroom to the kitchen. As I left my home, I walked through my lovely blue front door to get to my car door in the driveway. As I entered into the church there was the door at the top of the accessibility ramp that leads into the most used entrance of the church. And there were more doors as I went from the front entrance to my office. Then as I

came into this time of worship, I passed through doors into this majestic sanctuary where stained glass and warm dark wood greet all of us as we spend this time together.

Each of these doors is significant to my day. Each door represents a part of my home and work life. We walk through doors consistently each day. From doors that are part of our home life to doors that take us into community whether for shopping, work, doctor or various other appointments, school, and so much more.

Doors are an opening into our lives. The psalmist writes, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." (vs 4). These gates are the doors that brought people into the temple, God's court so to speak. This psalm uses the language of royalty to help describe who God is, why we praise God and give thanksgiving, and how to do it.

The first line asserts that we are to "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth." For those of you who think you can't sing and so should hum or sing quietly, yours' are voices God wants to hear! Make a joyful noise! We don't need to praise God perfectly; we just need to make noise. The noise may be laughter or chatter as we connect with others. It may be music, but it is not limited to beautiful sounds that we seemingly connect with the heavenly angels, thinking that is the worship God desires.

People think that worship needs to be dignified and quiet. How many of us grew up being told to sit still in church and so still think that quiet is necessary. God loves to hear the sound of children in worship, even when it is distracting to us. The sound of children in worship is a joyful noise to the creator of all life. Quiet is not for God's sake, the quiet is in respect for those who need the stillness to focus on their time with God. Still there are times for joyful noise in the church and certainly elsewhere in our lives.

This psalm is filled with action. Make a joyful noise. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come into God's presence with singing. Enter God's gates with thanksgiving. Give thanks to God. Bless God's name.

Recently I had a conversation with someone about how we worship and how it must appear to many that all of this singing, praising, our prayers, could seem so foreign. Even for me, I think at times that worshipping God is a strange thing to do. And there are many groups and organizations that demand the worship of a human being or their power. Really even money seems to want our worship. Humans and power want our loyalty, our lives, demand our time and energy without giving us much back.

Worshiping God is not done to take from our lives. Our worship is a response to the life-giving energy, freedom, and release that is a life with God as our one and only sovereign and because God is good. Good in the sense that God has been faithful and an enduring presence, kind and loving to those who look to God for their strength, their hope, their meaning and purpose.

As I wrote, I was also keenly aware that right now across the globe it must seem to many that God is not present. There are people who have literally had their doors blown off their homes, and have no home. They have become refugees in their own lands and in lands far from their homes. War and natural disaster have taken any doors that may have been theirs to walk through and dismantled all that they have known to be their security and familiar to them. I heard from someone the other day that when asked where is God in Gaza, the answer was God is in the rubble.

That answer could not have brought much hope or solace to anyone. God is with people, not in the rubble, but in the hearts and minds, in the spirit of the people. And when faced with that kind of terror and chaos, it must be almost impossible to feel that God is with you. To be honest, we often don't realize that God has been with us all along until we are in a position to reflect and ponder what we have experienced. Still, I have met people that have trusted God's provision in the most challenging of circumstances. Have felt the peace that comes only through the knowledge of God's Holy Spirit with them. It is something I know from my own life to be true.

Which brings me to another line in the psalm from verse 3. "Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." The word "know" in this context is about total intimacy. It can actually refer to sexual intimacy, but in this case is about just how intimately God knows each of us and we can know God. God made us, created us, cares for us as a shepherd cares and tends to the concerns and safety of the sheep that are the shepherd's responsibility.

Though we may not know or feel that God is with us, we can be assured that it is not our feelings that we need to trust, but the word of God that says, I am with you always. I love you; you are valuable, you are mine. It doesn't mean that it takes away the harm or the struggle. I certainly wish I had a better way to describe that for which there seems to be no words, the presence of God with you. But God is always present no matter what kind of door you have to walk through, be it a physical door or a figurative door.

Our doors might be ones of fear and or failure. Doors of illness and hopelessness, doors of joy and promise. In many churches there are stained glass windows that have a picture of a door without a doorknob and it is a reminder, not that you can't get through, but that God can always get through the door, the door of your heart, the doors of your insecurity, the doors of your hopelessness, the doors of your frailty, the doors of fear, sadness, grief, and loss.

And when we realize that God is on both sides of any door, and God is with all people, we can enter the doors of the world with a joyful noise, with gladness, with singing, with thanksgiving, and with praise.

In a world that is beside itself with those who criticize, who harm, who want to have power over others, and destroy. Where social media and newsfeeds are cesspools of insensitivity and hatred. Where people are not given second chances or allowed to change but are judged on past mistakes even though they may have grown and learned from their mistakes, as human beings are supposed to do. We are called to be counter-cultural, to enter all doors of life knowing that God, who is loving and forgiving, who sees all of us as hurting, and in need of hope and the promise that we are not alone, knowing that God is with us. We are called to enter into the world making a joyful noise, with gladness, with singing.

It could be that our way of being in the world that values and finds joy, that loves and offers hope and forgiveness could change the course of history, if not for the world, maybe for our families, friends, and our communities.

May you walk in the world knowing that our God is good, faithful, kind, enduringly present. And may the Holy Spirit that lives and breathes in you be the light and life that others need to see and hear so that they too can be whole, transformed, loved and have the courage to walk through any door. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of life,

You open our eyes on the world you love and show us your presence and your purpose. We see the wonder of your creation and the compassion you offer through friend and stranger.

For these gifts we give you thanks. We pray for those who cannot recognize these gifts and find themselves lost and alone.

Open their eyes to your presence and our companionship.

God of justice,

You open our eyes on the world and show us struggle and conflict.

We see the stressful times around us and the burdens many must carry.

We pray for those whose businesses are struggling;

For producers unsure they will receive a fair return;

For workers uncertain about their jobs or looking for new work;

For families feeling the stress of economic uncertainty.

Open their eyes to new possibilities

and open our eyes to ways we can support them.

God of compassion,

You open our eyes on the world and show us suffering and despair.

We see the challenges for health care right around the world.

We pray for communities struggling with AIDS, malaria, and chronic hunger

and for those nearby facing illness, delays in treatment and uncertain outcomes.

Give strength and energy to those who provide care and courage and hope to all who wait for healing.

Open their eyes to your mercy and open our eyes to needs we can meet.

God of wisdom,

You open our eyes on the world and show us its complexities.

We see countries locked in old animosities and communities overwhelmed by fresh upheaval. We pray for those displaced by current conflicts and natural disasters.

Open the eyes and ears of leaders to the suffering of their people, and to solutions as yet untried; and open our eyes to ways we can participate in resolving situations which break your heart and ours.

And so we pray that your kingdom will come among us in 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

Each week we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom. Though we do not know exactly what this will look like, we offer our gifts and talents to God for the work of the Kingdom here and now, that it will be known here and everywhere.

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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>

*Hymn

Come, know my joy, the Maker says

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| 1. "Come, know my joy," the Maker says
and pours out works of power
that sear the sense, defy the mind
and fill the soul with awe,
and we with open mouth receive
God's gifts with infant need,
And, sight unfocussed, scarce perceive
Loves presence as we feed. | 2. The feast we join is long begun;
God bids us welcome here
to name and use the sovereign gifts
within our human care.
With God's own joy some seem to soar,
a fierce and holy flame;
some gifts are thorns we scarce endure
to touch, or face, or name. |
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3. “Come, seek my face,” the Giver says,
“with heart and soul and strength;
let fear give way to love; come, step
upon the waves of faith.”
Dear Giver, Gift, we seek your face:
you share our thorn, our scar.
We learn your joy when by your grace
we share the gift we are.

4. “Come, learn of me,” the Servant says
and multiplies a feast
of loaves and fish, of bread and wine,
transforming every guest.
“Come,” says the Host, “from west to east
bring gifts to share—come, eat! —
none lost or wasted when God’s feast
of joy will be complete.”

“Come, know my joy, the Maker says” words by Andrew Donaldson
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Music: Irish Traditional

Benediction

Keep your eyes open this week.
Stay alert for signs of God’s Spirit at work
and invitations to share in the work of the Spirit
wherever you find yourself.

And may the God who made us,
the Christ who mends us,
and the Spirit who brings us life
bless you and sustain you in every challenge and commitment. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. November 5, 2023. Year A.