

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
7th Sunday of Easter - May 12th, 2024

## Call to Worship

God of the journey, Christ of the Way,  
Spirit who comforts and chides and challenges and moves us;  
we work out how to walk Your path.

**We gather as Your children, ready to listen and learn.**

**Speak into our today.**

**Let us worship, wonder and walk together.**

Beloved, settle here and prepare to be unsettled.

Sunday 12 May 2024 Seventh Sunday of Easter – Year B | The Church of Scotland

## Hymn

### *Before the world began*

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|---|---|
| 1. Before the world began<br>one Word was there;<br>grounded in God he was,<br>rooted in care;<br>by him all things were made;<br>in him was love displayed;<br>through him God spoke, and said,<br>“I am for you.” | 2. Life found in him its source;<br>death found its end;<br>light found in him its course,<br>darkness its friend,<br>for neither death nor doubt<br>nor darkness can put out<br>the glow of God, the shout:<br>“I am for you.” |
| 3. The Word was in the world<br>which from him came;<br>unrecognized he was,<br>unknown by name;<br>one with all humankind,<br>with the unloved aligned,<br>convincing sight and mind,<br>“I am for you.”           | 4. All who received the Word<br>by God were blessed;<br>sisters and brothers they<br>of earth's fond guest.<br>So did the Word of Grace<br>proclaim in time and space<br>and with a human face,<br>“I am with you.”             |

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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of promise and purpose,  
we praise with thankful hearts.  
As the beauty of the seasons change  
the beauty of your world lifts our hearts in praise.  
You lifted up Jesus to be by your side,  
and so we know he is always by our side  
as the future opens before us.

Show us the promise and purpose in our own lives –  
how we can unfurl with new life,  
and move into the future empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
embraced by the love of Christ our Lord.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you called your followers  
to carry the Good News of God's love and forgiveness to the ends of the earth.  
Yet we confess we cannot always find the words to tell others of our faith.  
We try to act out your love,  
but it's hard to tell others why we do what we do for you.**

**Forgive us.**

**Give us the courage to speak openly of our commitment to you.  
We ask it in the loving name of Jesus. Amen.**

### **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The promise of our faith is that we are already forgiven and,  
in Christ's name, given the power to rise up and subdue  
all that separates us from God and each other.

Receive the Holy Spirit and be empowered to be witnesses  
of God's resurrection power in Jesus Christ.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 1 © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press. Page 175.

### **Scripture Reading**

❖ 1 John 5:9–13

<sup>9</sup>If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. <sup>10</sup>Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

❖ **John 17:6–19**

<sup>6</sup> "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming

to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

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## **Message To Life!**

What gives you life? Or maybe put another way, what is life-giving to you? I would hazard to guess that many of you would respond with grandchildren! But going beyond that and to touch on many age groups, some might respond with being creative, writing music or poetry, painting, weaving, woodworking, knitting, dancing, baking or cooking, all can give us a sense of something that is more than just us. When we create it feels like an extension of ourselves. Really not a wonder as we are created in God's image. We are ourselves created by our loving Creator. So being creative, making, building, imagining can all be live-giving activities, part of being human.

Some people truly have life-giving work, this can be those in the medical professions, those who teach and bring understanding and meaning to our world, or really anything that builds a better world in terms of the well-being of others.

It is natural that people look for life in all kinds of places, circumstances, and even look for life in other people. The hope is that looking for life in that way is done so that it brings joy to our lives. It may be through work, social activities, or relationships, and looking for life or ways to appreciate and enjoy life in this way is truly a gift.

However, at times we lose our way and end up looking in all the wrong places for things that we think will make us feel alive. It may be that one turns to alcohol or drugs, sex, gambling, and addictions of many and varied sorts. Some may find themselves in toxic relationships that denigrate the well-being and value of one or another. And seeking help to find one's way out of that behavior or lifestyle takes courage, much courage. If you see yourself in any of what was just shared, please seek out help, you are worth it.

Thing is, we are all worth it. The whole of the reading from John 17:6–19 is a beautiful prayer of Jesus seeking protection and hope for God's people. The prayer was spoken in regard to Jesus disciples, but we continue to be disciples of Jesus and more broadly speaking all may claim these words even as they come to know and love Jesus.

Jesus was a real-life person who lived, died, and rose again, ascending into heaven to return to the Father, sending the Holy Spirit to guide and nurture each of us in our understanding and responding to all that God has done through Jesus in our lives. Our response is to love and be loved. To love God and to love others. To love God and be loved by God.

And this is where we come back to the words from 1 John in chapter 5. Here the writer speaks of testimony. God's testimony of God's love for us is shown in Jesus. The gift of God is the ability to believe in Jesus and in the belief that we are given eternal life through believing in Jesus. In this scripture, and really all of scripture, eternal life is not only about some great beyond, eternal life is about life right now, life that is abundant – abundant in hope, joy, love, and peace.

Now you might be saying, how in the world can that be possible given the situation in my home, my family, with my friends, and the mess the world is in? That is the thing about faith, belief in Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives...all around us may seem to be out of control, or at least out of whack, but God is steadfast. God's presence through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's love as demonstrated in Jesus, is something beyond the workings of this world and yet it is within our grasp. Using the words of Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, "Whoever believes in the Son of God inwardly confirms God's testimony...This is the testimony in essence: God gave us eternal life; the life is in his Son. So, whoever has the Son, has life; whoever rejects the Son, rejects life."

The life spoken of is an eternal and internal life, one that cannot be controlled by human circumstances. This is life that is internalized, trusting that the one who created you has a vested interest in your well-being. It is a parent child relationship of love, but one that is also a parent child relationship that is all grown up. A relationship that recognizes and realizes the complexity of living our human life, but is not restrained by the confines of bodies that age and decay or the frailty of human interaction, decisions, and consequences.

For the last few weeks we have spent time looking at portions of scripture that come from this writing of 1 John. Over and over again the emphasis has been on the commandment to love God and to love others. To love those who love God and to reach out to others and share in life-giving ways our love for God and for others.

This is how we show that we love God, and show that we trust God's testimony about Jesus, we love others. We find our peace in Christ. We find our hope in Christ. We find our example in Christ. We find our power in the love of God and then by looking for how God, through the Holy Spirit, is at work within us, in our church, in our homes, and in our communities.

We look for God and we find ways to participate in changing the world through the love that is outpoured into us and flows from us to every single person we encounter.

No one can give you concrete proof of God's love in Christ, yet the experience of God internalized into our whole being as we live out our lives trusting in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the love of God and belief in Jesus, can transform who you are, how you interpret the world around you, how you function in your relationships, and give you eternal life right now. This kind of life no one can take from you. It is a part of you because the life of Jesus is in you. You carry the life-giving seed of God within you.

Today may you go from this time of worship confident that God is with you, God is within you, and in love for God and love for all, you are transformed, filled with joy, hope, and peace in believing that Christ is in you. Go from this time of worship filled with God's love and go to love others in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

O God,  
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life,  
You have begun the work of creating a new world,  
a world where justice is known,  
where freedom and healing are available to all people.  
We are grateful for the seeds you have sown.  
We pray for the places in the world that are caught up in violence,  
where people are held captive or struggle under oppressive powers,  
and where sickness prevails and medical resources are scarce.

Grant each one courage and perseverance through your Spirit.  
May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

God of human connections,  
You have begun the work of creating a new community,  
one where love is shared and all find a sense of belonging.  
We are grateful that we belong to you.  
We pray for groups who are made to feel like they don't belong,  
for families caught up in tension or strife,  
and for those who feel that no one seems to care.

Grant each one courage and comfort through your Spirit.  
May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

God of the earth and its wonders,  
You have begun the work of making a new creation,  
a creation where all that has been broken is being restored,  
where all that has been distorted is made right,  
and what has been damaged is renewed.  
We are grateful for your power of renewal.  
We pray for the earth,  
the places where its natural balances are threatened  
and species put at risk by human exploitation.

Send your healing Spirit to renew the earth and make us wiser stewards.  
May creatures everywhere know the fullness of life you intend for us all.

God of this life and new life,  
As you work towards making all things new,  
we pray for renewal in our churches and ministries,  
for leaders tired out by their responsibilities,  
and for church members who aren't sure how to make a contribution.

Send your energizing Spirit to gather the church  
in ways both familiar and new.

May your servants in every church know the fullness of life you intend for us all  
and be empowered to bear witness to Jesus in refreshing ways.

For together we offer the prayer he taught us:

### 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 invites us to give the testimony of our hearts  
in practical offerings of money and time.

*1 John 5:10*

Therefore let us testify to God's love by bringing our gifts.

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### Hymn

*When long before time*

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1. When long before time and the worlds were begun,  
when there was no earth and no sky and no sun,  
and all was deep silence and night reigned supreme,  
and even our Maker had only a dream...
2. ...the silence was broken when God sang the Song,  
and light pierced the darkness and rhythm began,  
and with its first birth-cries creation was born,  
and creaturely voices sang praise to the morn.

3. The sounds of the creatures were one with their Lord's,  
their harmonies sweet and befitting the Word;  
the Singer was pleased as the earth sang the song;  
the choir of the creatures re-echoed it long.
4. Though, down through the ages, the Song disappeared,  
its harmonies broken and almost unheard,  
the Singer comes to us to sing it again:  
our God-is-with-us in the world now as then.
5. The Light has returned as it came once before;  
the Song of the Lord is our own song once more;  
so let us all sing with one heart and one voice  
the song of the Singer in whom we rejoice.
6. To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise;  
to you, Song Incarnate, we give all our praise;  
to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,  
be glory forever, through life and through death.

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## **Benediction**

Go in strength, with the assurance that Christ walks with you,  
to witness to his love in truth and action.

And may God's resurrecting love open the future for you,  
empowered by the Spirit,  
and embraced by the presence of Jesus Christ,  
our Risen and Ascended Lord.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 7th Sunday of Easter. May 12th, 2024. Year B.