

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

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

4th Sunday after Pentecost / National Indigenous People's Sunday

June 16th, 2024

### Call to Worship

Loving God: you call us together

**To worship God as the people of God.**

You call us by name and just as we are:

you know each of our needs; you know our experiences;

you know what rests in our minds and our hearts, and in your love you call us:

**To worship God as the people of God**

We come together, our heads, our hearts and our hands and feet yearning to be remade and redirected to paths of justice, and in ways of love. Help us, Jesus, to walk in the paths of justice and love that you yourself have walked:

**To worship God as the people of God.**

God invites us to worship as beloved and loving people! Mold us, Holy Spirit:

**To worship God as the people of God.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Healing and Reconciliation Sunday. Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Hymn

*Come, let us sing to the Lord our song*

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1. Come, let us sing to the Lord our song:  
we have stood silently too long;  
surely the Lord deserves our praise,  
so joyfully thank God for our days.
2. O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;  
God's living waters will never fail.  
Surely the Lord will help you to stand,  
strengthened and comforted by God's hand.
3. You dwell among us and cause us to pray,  
and walk with each other following your way;  
our precious brothers and sisters will grow  
in the fulfilling love they know.
4. Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing  
to the desire of all living things.  
Come, all you creatures, high and low;  
let your praises endlessly flow.

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### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Living God, from you come vitality, love and joy.  
Your peace is our companion, your love is our strength, your Son is our hope.  
Your Spirit nurtures tiny seeds of purpose and potential,  
hidden deep in the soil of life, to surprise us with new life.  
While the earth begins to bloom around us, we bring you our prayers and praise,  
trusting that your Spirit will renew in us the gifts we need to serve you in faithfulness  
in the example of Christ our Lord.

**Living, loving God,  
as we watch our gardens and our children grow,  
we confess we often resist the change growth can bring.  
We form opinions about many things – and cling to them.  
We fear new insights and new directions.  
Forgive us when we think we already know enough.  
Grant us faith like the mustard seed, able to grow with your blessing  
to become a mighty sign of your lively kingdom among us.**

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God of patience and persistence, speak through the Scriptures, and inspire our growth  
and gratitude, so that we may be changed by what we hear. Open our minds and  
hearts to a fresh encounter with Christ, your Living Word. Amen

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

God's love is not logical and understandable. For God forgives those we never  
would, and welcomes those we would continue to ignore.

**This is the One who has mercy on everyone, pouring grace and joy into  
everyone, including us! Thanks be to God, we are forgiven!**

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## **Scripture Readings 2 Corinthians 5:6-21**

<sup>6</sup>So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the  
body we are away from the Lord— <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we do have  
confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the  
Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup>For  
all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive  
recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves  
are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your  
consciences. <sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an  
opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in  
outward appearance and not in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for  
God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ urges us on,  
because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he

died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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## **Message We have this ministry**

Fractured relationships. They seem to be all around us and not one of us is immune. Even in my own extended family there have been fractures in relationships between siblings. It started with my mom's death and moved from there to circumstances in the world. Covid to politics has made the fractures all the more real. It is not that we don't get along, but the ability to speak freely has gone by the way side. Each of us measures our conversations so that we can continue to spend time together, love one another, and then depart on good terms. It is not that we haven't always had differences of opinion but we are far more careful now about how we express those opinions than we once were.

I have heard of this being the case for many families in this time that we are living in. Though fractures and fault lines have always been a part of relationships, it now seems even more pronounced. Having said that, even the family I married into has had it's share of trouble long before the world seemed to change in 2020. Brothers and sister estranged from each other, with battles over property and rights, who did what and who deserves this or that.

Us humans are difficult people. And these fractures are seen in our community, in our nation, and in the world. I don't have to tell anyone about the challenges of the political landscape here in Canada and how politicians and those who back them can be at odds. Can you even imagine a political stage in Canada where party leaders work together for the good of the people and not only for the good of winning the next election? That kind of cooperation and respect would transform what and how things are done while creating an environment that values and make decisions based in the well-being of everyone. Or a world where those who have abundance freely shared with those who have not been so fortunate. Where the care of everyone becomes a reality, not because it was forced,

but because everyone saw the benefit of equity in education, health care, housing, food security and more.

When we look globally the fractures get even more significant, from the elections and the crazy that is politics in the U.S. to the war in Ukraine and the insanity of the Gaza strip. And all of these things are just what we hear about regularly. How often are the struggles of people in Muslim or predominately black countries even making our news feeds? We don't know the half of the challenges going on. So we sit with all of this, feeling like there is very little we can do to change our own circumstances let alone that of the nation or world.

Fractures in relationships have been the norm for humans since nearly the beginning of time. Though the story of Adam and Eve is one handed done to us, it is the first story we have in scripture of the fracture of human relationships with one another, creation, and with God. That story of Adam and Eve and the apple, being tempted by the serpent and giving in to the temptation, set Adam and Eve against each other, separated them from God and even affected the way they lived in the beautiful creation that had been set apart for them. It is a story that speaks to the human condition. We continue to have challenges in relationships between ourselves and God, and the concerns over climate change is the prime example of how we are at odds with nature.

In this second letter of Paul to the Corinthians the broken relationship is evident. This writing is more like a personal letter and speaks to the hardship and challenges in the relationship between Paul and this particular community of faith. In the reading from today Paul starts out talking about living by faith and moves into what a ministry of reconciliation looks like. And it is that reconciliation piece that is the focus for us today.

When Paul writes, he writes as one who at one time went after Christians in order to put a stop to their witness and work, even to the point of killing people. As a zealous man of the Jewish faith, one with authority, he was going to make sure that nothing threatened the status quo of his religion. And he did it from a place where he was sure he was right, where change was unwanted, and threats to the religion that he was so sure about were to be dismantled.

And then he changed. He had a Damascus Road experience that rocked his world to the point that he became the change maker, the instigator for making disciples for Christ. This time though he would do it from a place of love and not hate. He would build communities of faith that would bring the love of Christ into the world.

Paul came to realize that Jesus was more than a mere human being, Jesus was God's Son and that changed everything, including how he would see and live with others. It meant seeing the world and all that was in it from the point of view of Jesus' love and God's grace. These things given as a gift in Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit to

be our teacher and guide. Paul wrote, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way." In other words, yes, Jesus was human and walked among people, but things changed with the resurrection of Jesus. There was something much bigger at work.

At the time that Paul was writing this second letter to the Corinthians there were still fractures in the community of faith and with Paul himself. In his writing he was looking for ways to reconcile the community to himself and to God, as well as each other. And so, he looks to the example of what God was doing in Christ. Again, we hear from Paul in verses 18 and 19, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."

God's reconciling act is to be an example to us about how to be in relationship with one another. But even the fact that reconciliation is needed shows that broken relationships happen. If we are to live into our Christian faith as followers of Christ then we are called to find ways to reconcile our personal relationships, looking also beyond ourselves into the community and more broadly to the relationships in our nation and in the world.

It that sounds like a tall order, well it is. And once again, we will not do it perfectly and sometimes we will not even do it well. In our humanness there will always be relationships that we cannot reconcile. We are human and we are broken and sometime the hurt is too deep, the danger to real, in order to reconcile. Still, we strive to be image bearers of God where we respond to the brokenness around us, restore what can be restored, and rejoice when reconciliation happens.

...I would be remiss if I didn't say something about our relationships with Indigenous People on this Indigenous People's Sunday. I will do it from the point of the work done and yet to be done in the PCC.

This first week of June, when I was at General Assembly, a key moment happened when the Assembly stood together to hear the apology of the PCC to those who experienced the trauma of residential schools run but the Presbyterian Church in Canada. I take the following from an article written for the PCC,

As a church that ran 12 residential schools, we bear a collective responsibility to truth and healing. In the 1980s and 1990s, the truth about abuses children suffered at residential schools began to be heard. Over the next decades, more truth about the pain and harm inflicted at the schools have become part of our common memory, in large part because of the courage of Survivors and

intergenerational Survivors who are standing against a legacy of colonial violence and racism, seeking healing from their harmful and deadly impacts.

June 3, 2024 [marked] 30 years since the church adopted its 1994 confession, which acknowledges the church's complicity in a deadly assimilation effort that targeted Indigenous children.

In its report to the 2023 General Assembly, the National Indigenous Ministries Council articulated the need for an apology that reflects the "now greater understanding of the profound harm these institutions [residential schools] caused and continue to cause, to generations of Indigenous people." ... members of the church are invited to engage in collective and group learning about the need for an apology, the legacy of residential schools and intergenerational trauma, the roots of anti-Indigenous racism, our responsibility and commitment to uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and what is needed for truth, healing, and justice for Indigenous peoples. This includes in worship, which is central to our faith life and community.

As I said, the apology was made at the General Assembly this year. It was humbling and I will always give thanks that I was present in the moment it was first read aloud in the PCC. This fall, on September 29, the Sunday closest to September 30 which is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the apology will be read in this church.

Reconciliation, whether in our personal lives, in our community, with Indigenous People of our nation, and reconciliation in the broad sense of our country and our world is our responsibility as Christians. From the Apostle Paul we hear, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

To be reconciled to God means that we bring that work of reconciliation to our lives and that of others. We are Christ's ambassadors in the world and our ministry is reconciliation, bringing wholeness and healing to lives in any way we can. We do it in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Gracious God, you hold all things in your hands.

We may plant seeds but it is your mysterious power that brings forth growth.

We play our small parts but you awaken new life.

Thank you for our place in your purposes.

Guide our plans for ministry in the days ahead.

We pray for the work of our church and our government

in pursuing Truth and Reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples.  
We pray for indigenous communities  
which lack clean water to drink and health care close at hand,  
and for all those mourning  
the loss of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.  
Guide decision makers to act with timely courage and compassion  
for justice to be done.  
Awaken understanding in those who feel no empathy for the struggles of others.

On this day that celebrates fathers,  
we pray for families in war-torn communities  
where celebration is an impossible dream.  
We pray for fathers and families who face financial hardship  
and worry for the well-being of their children.  
And we pray for any who feel empty or lonely this day,  
who fear the future or mourn the past.  
As summer holidays draw closer, guide families to find meaningful opportunities  
to enjoy each other and the world on their doorsteps.

Gracious God, you hold all things in your hand, including us.  
Be with all those who carry on in spite of loss or grief,  
and with those who face pain or uncertainty about their future.  
Keep us open to your Spirit's leading.  
In all that we do with and for each other,  
help us embody the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying

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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

Let us remember those seeds of love, hope, grace, and peace which we carry in our hearts and souls, as well as our wallets and purses, so that in remembering, we would offer them to our God for use in the work of reconciliation and hope.

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## Hymn

### *We have this ministry*

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1. We have this ministry and we are not discouraged;  
it is by God's own power that we may live and serve.  
Openly we share God's word, speaking truth as we believe,  
praying that the shadowed world may healing light receive.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our living.
2. O Christ, the tree of life, our end and our beginning,  
we grow to fullest flower when rooted in your love.  
Brothers, sisters, clergy, lay, called to service by your grace,  
different cultures, different gifts, the young and old a place.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our giving.
3. The yoke of Christ is ours: the whole world is our parish;  
we daily take the cross, the burden and the joy.  
Bearing hurts of those we serve, wounded,  
bruised and bowed with pain,  
Holy Spirit, bread and wine, we die and rise again.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our loving.

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## Benediction

The God who has reconciled us to one another,  
as well as the Holy Community, sends us forth.

**We go to gather the broken  
as we bring healing in our hands.**

Jesus, who has shaped us into new people  
with his grace-filled hands, sends us forth.

**We go to welcome those we have ignored,  
drawing the stranger into a warm embrace.**

The Spirit, who teaches us how to look at others  
with the eyes of love and hope, sends us forth.

**We go to become one with those tossed aside,  
to be the community of hope for which they have searched.**

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May we go with the grace of God  
The love of Christ Jesus  
And in communion with the Holy Spirit. Amen