

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

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

10th Sunday After Pentecost - July 28th, 2024

### Call to Worship

Today is a day especially created for you to find peace and hope.

**In the midst of our hectic lives, we surely need such a time as this.**

Come, rest in the Lord.

**Our souls long for God's refreshing love.**

Let the demands of your week melt away in God's presence.

**Refresh and restore us, O Lord, we pray.** [Ministry Matters™ | Worship Connection: July 28, 2024](#)

### \*Hymn

*Breath on me, breath of God*

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| 1. Breathe on me, breath of God;<br>fill me with life anew,<br>that I may love what thou dost love<br>and do what thou wouldst do. | 2. Breathe on me, breath of God,<br>until my heart is pure,<br>until with thee I will one will<br>to do and to endure. |
| 3. Breathe on me, breath of God,<br>till I am wholly thine,<br>until this earthly part of me<br>glows with thy fire divine.        | 4. Breathe on me, breath of God,<br>so shall I never die,<br>but live with thee the perfect life<br>of thine eternity. |

Words: Public Domain

The opening prayer of worship acknowledges that it is God that invites us to worship and we who respond.

### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Your glory flows through all generations,  
as you name every family in heaven and on earth.  
And so we come to you this day, O God.  
Your grace is higher than the farthest star;  
your peace is deeper than our greatest emptiness;  
your love spans the abyss of death;  
your hope stretches into all eternity.

And so we come to you this day, O Christ.  
When our lives bottom out, your grace is still our bedrock;  
when our spirits run dry, you fill us with your joy;  
when we falter in our faith, you strengthen us  
to serve with hope and peace.

And so we come to you this day, O Spirit.  
God in Community, Holy in One, we come to you this day.

**Wisdom's Heart: deep within, we know how we have failed to be your people. Our hardened hearts are closed to the love of Christ; our lust for**

more and more blocks the fullness of your grace from transforming our lives; our trust in the powers of the world reveals our foolish nature.

Have mercy, God of every generation. Pour out the rich blessing of forgiveness on our parched souls. Feed us with Heaven's Bread, so we might be nourished by your gentleness. Shape us as your people, and restore us to faithful living, as we seek to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in service to everyone we meet. Amen

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## Assurance of Forgiveness

The Letter to the Ephesians declares that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, for we are being rooted and grounded in his love. The forgiveness he offers is a gift of this love that is wider and deeper than we can ever imagine. Receive God's forgiveness and be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

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## Words for Illumination

With the church at Ephesus, may we hear anew the words of Paul: "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

## Scripture Reading Ephesian 3:14-21

<sup>14-19</sup> My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

<sup>20-21</sup> God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

*The Message (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson*

## Message My response to God

It is a regular occurrence on the streets of cities and our city is no different. A 911 call comes in and police, paramedics, the fire department or all three at once are dispatched into the community to deal with every thing from overdoses, to domestic violence, gun

threats, fire and so much more. I am sure that I cannot comprehend the ways in which first responders use their knowledge and gifts to respond to the needs of others. These people give of themselves. It is no wonder that there is a need for stress leave and/or various other programs for people in these vocations who care for the community in ways we can only imagine.

That is what prayer is like for many of us. It is our 911 call to God. We are in a jam or find ourselves in situations that we cannot deal with either because we have made poor decisions or life has just brought us to our knees and so the only thing we think to do is to pray. This can happen with people who believe that there is a God and even with those who are just hedging their bets as they don't see any solution or way out.

It is okay if that is how you come to pray, but know that it does not have to be the only time you pray or the only way to pray.

As someone who is in ministry, I find that when I go to someone's home and a meal is served or even in the church when there is a meeting or a meal, everyone looks to me for the blessing. Thing is that all of us are equipped to pray. Prayer is just us speaking from our hearts, giving thanks, asking for help, or swearing profusely at God because we feel so alone and devastated. It is all prayer. The Book of Psalms is filled with all kinds of prayers spoken by people in all kinds of situations from giving thanks, to being so mad that they tell God to smash babies against a rock. (Psalm 137:9). Now that is flippin' mad! Thing is God can handle any type of prayer, because prayer is just us talking to, with, or at God. God is big enough to deal with your emotions.

In the scripture from Ephesians, we have this wonderful prayer. Paul says that it is his response to get down on his knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. This prayer is his response to God based in all that Paul had written so far in this letter to the church at Ephesus. This is a letter about God being God for all people not just for the Jewish people and not just for the gentiles, which is the rest of the world. God is God for everyone and because of that we are to find ways to be united. United in love, generosity, justice, compassion and more.

In a time when the news and global politics in particular appear to only be filled with reasons for division, God call us to unity in Christ. Whether or not you believe in God or follow Christ, the message of compassion, justice, love, and working for the good of all that is the Christian message is a compelling one. A message where there is equality and equity. Where my need is not more important than my neighbours'.

And Paul can speak to this from a place of change. Paul, once Saul, was a persecutor of Christians. As a Christian, to see Saul was to see death. As a Pharisee he saw himself as one with the true answers about God and was going to do what it took to get rid of those who were followers of Jesus. Then he has a spiritual experience, one that completely changes his way of being... of living. The persecutor became the persecuted. In fact, Paul was writing this letter from jail, there because of his beliefs and teaching others about Jesus.

Even under those circumstances he says, “My response is to get down on my knees before the Father this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth.” Paul continues, “I ask God to strengthen you by his Spirit – not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength – that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in.” And then more yet, “And I ask God, that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.”

What a prayer! It is written for all. It is primarily written for community for the benefit of community. The “you” you hear in this is a plural you, more like y’all. It is not that the prayer cannot or should not be accessible for the individual, but to only consider it in that light takes away the full power of the prayer. This is about being people of God, whether you are a skeptic or a full on, no doubt in your mind, kind of Christian.

And Paul does not stop with those words, but continues with, “God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!” So often I have said that if God fits in a box, then that is not God at all. God is so much bigger than our imagination. Is capable of so much more than we could come up with in our wildest dreams. And yet God does not do it in a pushing way, but rather by working in and through us. As Eugene Peterson writes in *The Message*, God Spirit works within us...deeply and gently within us.

If there is something going on in your life that needs prayer, I encourage you to use this prayer for your life or the lives of those you love. Every time you see the word “you” replace the “you” with your name or the name of someone you want to prayer for. This is deeply powerful.

But remember, also and importantly, this is a prayer for community. Here at St. Andrew’s were have a lot going on. We are working at what our ministry will be and how God is shaping us and this church for the wider work of sharing love, compassion, hope, justice and more in community, whether that be our city or more broadly in the world. I believe Paul’s prayer can be a prayer that we use to determine what it is that God is up to in our midst. And that will take all of us praying. The one thing we can use more of is prayer so that whatever goes on here will be deeply held in prayer, will be covered in prayer, bathed in prayer.

Let me share the words that Paul wrote once again, think of the church, this church or the church more broadly. Do not think that your imagination or wildest dreams can come close to what God could be or is up to in our midst, with others, and in community. Only pray and trust that God will answer, that this magnificent Creator, who parcels out all heaven and earth will strengthen us by the Holy Spirit – not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength – that Christ will live in us as we open the door and invite Christ in. And with both feet planted firmly on love, we will be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love.

Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God knowing that God can do anything – far more than we could ever imagine or guess or request in our wildest dreams, doing it by working within us, the Holy Spirit deeply and gently within us. Respond to all of life, respond to God in your life, no matter how much you trust God, respond with prayer.

In Christ, with Christ and through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Invitation to the offering**

The offering of our lives, from our time to our money, are given to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.

St. Andrew's uses all the money that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts to this ministry make a difference and allow us to continue this ministry of online worship as well. If you are able to make a one time donation or support this ministry on an ongoing basis your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at [standrewpres-tbay.ca](http://standrewpres-tbay.ca). There you can find various ways of giving from etransfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. Thank you for your support.

Once again, we pray. This time we hold in prayer those closest to us, those unknown to us, and we pray for the world.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of mystery and miracle,  
You work within us, your Spirit deeply and gently within us  
We give you thanks for all the ways we have tasted your abundance,  
in friendship and fellowship,  
in food on our tables and protection on our streets.  
Amid these everyday satisfactions,  
keep us mindful of those who lack the necessities of life  
and who find each day unpredictable and anxious.

Throughout the world and in our own communities,  
we witness increased divisiveness  
and hatred toward those considered a threat.  
So many people face turmoil in war and upheaval.

In so many countries and in our own neighbourhoods,  
we witness great inequity and deep need for even the staples of life.

In our communities, congregations and families,  
we witness uncertainty about the future  
and hope for leaders who are wise and trustworthy.

In our own lives and the lives of so many others,  
we witness depression and anger, anxiety and despair.

We pray that you will calm the turbulence within and around us.

We hold before you in these moments of silence  
the people and places in need of your healing presence this day.

In the face of what all that may trouble us, all that we might ask, we thank you for  
your steadfast love and faithful presence, you are the calm centre,  
the inner strength we desire, and so we offer the prayer he 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

*The church's one foundation*

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1. The church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ our Lord;  
we are his new creation  
by water and the word;  
from heaven he came and sought us  
that we might ever be  
his living servant people,  
by his own death set free.
2. Called forth from every nation,  
yet one o'er all the earth,  
our charter of salvation,  
one Lord, one faith, one birth,  
one holy name professing  
and at one table fed,  
to one hope we are pressing,  
by Christ's own Spirit led.
3. Though with a scornful wonder  
the world sees us oppressed,  
by schisms rent asunder,  
by heresies distressed,  
yet saints their watch are keeping;  
their cry goes up, "How long?"  
But soon the night of weeping  
shall be the morn of song.
4. 'Mid toil and tribulation,  
and tumult of our war,  
we wait the consummation  
of peace forevermore,  
till with the vision glorious  
our longing eyes are blest,  
and the great church victorious  
shall be the church at rest.
5. We now on earth have union  
with God the Three-in-One,  
and share, through faith, communion  
with those whose rest is won—  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with thee.

Words and music: public domain

## **Benediction**

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia!

Go with the Spirit deeply and gently with you.

## **Postlude**