

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

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

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, -September 29, 2024

### For the Sunday before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

#### Call to Worship

We are called together

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

God calls us by name and knows what rests in our minds and our hearts,  
and calls us:

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

We come yearning to be transformed and redirected to paths of justice  
and in ways of love so that in truth we can turn to God:

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

God invites us to worship as beloved and loving people and together:

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

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. For the Sunday before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Sunday, September 29, 2024.

#### Hymn

*May the God of hope go with us every day*

**726**

May the God of hope go with us every day,  
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

*Refrain*

*Praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all.*

*working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

"May the God of hope go with us every day" Words: English translation, Alvin Schutmaat, Music: Hispanic folk song © 1990, Presbyterian Publishing/Westminster John Knox/Geneva Press Music: Public Domain All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

#### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy and loving God,  
blessed are you in all the universe:  
your goodness is seen in creation,  
your holiness is incomprehensible,  
your truth and wisdom are radiant,  
your justice rolls down like waters,  
your love is wider than all the universe and  
your mercy greater than the heights of heaven.  
and so, with our lips we sing your praises  
and we join with your good creation in joyful praise of you  
as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

In recalling all that you are and all that you have done,  
we recall then who we are and what we have done.  
And so, to begin again with you and one another,  
we confess our sins:

We confess that we have  
failed to comfort those in pain,  
ignored the needs of others,  
and not sought peace or worked for justice.  
And we confess the sins of your church  
in running residential schools that separated children from their families.  
We confess that in our cultural arrogance  
where there was laughter, we stifled it;  
where families lived warmly together, we broke them up,  
and where there was dignity, and we stole it.

We repent of our past sins and pray for the strength to walk a new good way with  
you and one another.

Open our hearts and minds, O God, by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that as the  
Scriptures are read and your Word is proclaimed, we may hear what you are saying  
to the church today. Amen

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. For the Sunday  
before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Sunday, September 29, 2024.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

By God's grace we have been saved and this is not our own doing;  
it is a gift of God.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. For the Sunday  
before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Sunday, September 29, 2024.

## **Scripture Readings Mark 9:38-50**

<sup>38</sup> John spoke up, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we  
stopped him because he wasn't in our group."

<sup>39-41</sup> Jesus wasn't pleased. "Don't stop him. No one can use my name to do something  
good and powerful, and in the next breath slam me. If he's not an enemy, he's an ally.  
Why, anyone by just giving you a cup of water in my name is on our side. Count on it  
that God will notice.

<sup>42</sup> "On the other hand, if you give one of these simple, childlike believers a hard time,  
bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd  
be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck.

<sup>43-48</sup> "If your hand or your foot gets in God's way, chop it off and throw it away. You're  
better off maimed or lame and alive than the proud owner of two hands and two feet,  
godless in a furnace of eternal fire. And if your eye distracts you from God, pull it out  
and throw it away. You're better off one-eyed and alive than exercising your twenty-  
twenty vision from inside the fire of hell.

49-50 “Everyone’s going through a refining fire sooner or later, but you’ll be well-preserved, protected from the eternal flames. Be preservatives yourselves. Preserve the peace.”

[The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

## **Message** Be at peace with one another

Picture this. Jesus is sitting with his disciples. We know that he is on a journey with them from one place to another and he did not want anyone else to know it. He wanted to take some time away in order to teach them. He had said some pretty difficult things prior to where we pick up the conversation. And as part of the teaching and conversation he has taken a little child and put his arms around the child and he said to the disciples “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcome not me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:26-27)

There is no indication, as Jesus continues into what we heard today, that the child is no longer in Jesus’ arms. Rather the child becomes central to all that continues to be said. Some of the words you heard are pretty gruesome and rather horrifying to think about. Because of it we often gloss over those words or prefer not to think they came from the mouth of Jesus. But again, the way this was said was not to be taken literally, but rather to be of shock value. Jesus was not advocating for self-mutilation and fear mongering about the fires of hell.

This whole conversation had a lot more to do with those who need protecting and the misuse of power. This, particularly as the disciples had recently had a conversation about who was the greatest among them. Jesus was like, “How do I get this through your heads! This is not about being great, it is about being compassionate, about glorifying God, and protecting those who are powerless in our world.” (my paraphrase)

Jesus started with a child. Children need protection. They are powerless, vulnerable, and at the mercy of anyone and everyone.

It is why this story is particularly poignant on this Sunday before the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. I can’t help but picture Jesus with his arms around an indigenous child. Can you imagine, with this story in mind, and with Christ’s concern for the least of us, how God’s heart must have been breaking as children were taken from their homes, brought into residential schools, and made even more vulnerable, their spirits broken? Can you hear their cries for justice, for compassion, for their parents and community?

It is not that it was all ugly for every person, but it was for most. Imagine your child or grandchild being taken from your home and community. But even then, many thought it was something of value, but rather than me telling you the story, I want to share with you the story behind the orange shirt using Phyllis Webstad’s own words.

I went to the Mission for one school year in 1973/1974. I had just turned 6 years old. I lived with my grandmother on the Dog Creek reserve. We never had very

much money, but somehow my granny managed to buy me a new outfit to go to the Mission school. I remember going to Robinson's store and picking out a shiny orange shirt. It had string laced up in front, and was so bright and exciting – just like I felt to be going to school!

When I got to the Mission, they stripped me, and took away my clothes, including the orange shirt! I never wore it again. I didn't understand why they wouldn't give it back to me, it was mine! The color orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing. All of us little children were crying and no one cared.

I was 13 years old and in grade 8 when my son Jeremy was born. Because my grandmother and mother both attended residential school for 10 years each, I never knew what a parent was supposed to be like. With the help of my aunt, Agness Jack, I was able to raise my son and have him know me as his mother.

I went to a treatment centre for healing when I was 27 and have been on this healing journey since then. I finally get it, that the feeling of worthlessness and insignificance, ingrained in me from my first day at the mission, affected the way I lived my life for many years. Even now, when I know nothing could be further than the truth, I still sometimes feel that I don't matter. Even with all the work I've done!

I am honored to be able to tell my story so that others may benefit and understand, and maybe other survivors will feel comfortable enough to share their stories.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus in his teaching was saying to the disciples as he held that child in his hands, get this right. It is not about power it is about compassion.

Where we picked up the conversation today, where the disciples are complaining because there were others casting out demons in Jesus' name, shows that they didn't get what Jesus was trying to tell them...trying to teach them. I guess maybe they thought that only they should have the privilege of casting out demons in Jesus' name, or only they knew the right way to do it. But Jesus stops them and says, just because the others are not like you and not from this group doesn't mean that they do not have something to offer. If they are glorifying God, the Creator, in what they are doing, if they are bringing freedom to the captive, and feeding the poor, giving a cup of water to the thirsty, they are not working against God.

People do not have to be exactly the same to accomplish the will and desire of God, which is to bring peace to others. For Christians we bring the peace of Christ. In a podcast Professor Matt Skinner put it this way, "Jesus' concern was over the exploitation and manipulation, the taking advantage of the powerless in a whole host of ways."<sup>2</sup> For

---

<sup>1</sup> [Phyllis' Story - Orange Shirt Society \(orangeshirtday.org\)](https://www.orangeshirtday.org/). Accessed September 27, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> [\(27\) Sermon Brainwave 984: Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost \(Ord. 26B\) - September 29, 2024 - YouTube](#)

Jesus would be better to be without body parts if those parts caused you to harm someone vulnerable than to enter hell with it all intact.

And for a moment let's talk about hell, since it comes up a lot in this passage. I can't say that I have done a study on this, but with all that I have read and pondered, I have come to a place of understanding that hell is life now as we live it or even after death, life or death that is devoid of God. That is hell. In a conversation between professors, Karoline Lewis and Joy Moore, they said it this way, "Hell is a way or state of being that goes against what Jesus has put before us. A place without the present or peace of God. A place without the mercy justice or hospitability of God."<sup>3</sup>

As we reflect on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as we wear our orange shirts that are a reminder of the vulnerable being harmed, may we remember what Jesus was actually teaching. Jesus was about ridding the world of abuses. He was serious about the desire to change the world so that all people can be safe but especially those who have no power.

And so he took a little child in his arms. May the children always be the reminder of what Jesus valued and continues to hold as the place for Christians to land, where the most vulnerable among us have our attention, our care, and our compassion and for whom we work for justice and peace. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

We bring you our prayers for the world, for people and communities harmed by discrimination and hate, for your church and for those we are in relationships with and love.

Creator God, you created us in your image and set us in the world to live in peace with you and one another. We pray for those who are hurt and hurting because of false beliefs about the superiority of a particular race, class, or gender; let your truth and justice bring healing.

Comforting God, we pray for healing in the communities and families of all who experienced residential schools. Hold in your loving care and bless with strength and courage those who pursue healing, truth and reconciliation: let your grace and power bring new life.

We pray for strength and healing for all Survivors and intergenerational Survivors of residential schools. And we pray for healing for the siblings, family, and friends of those were taken from home but did not return, and for the intergenerational impacts the schools continue to cause today in families and communities.

God of transforming love, the wounds of racism continue to this day, imbedded in the fabric of our institutions and governments. Let your compassion and wisdom flow through all public policies and practices. Where power is hoarded, bring your equity

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

and justice. Where racism is resisted, bring your courage and strength to acknowledge and address it. We pray that our communities, churches and country will be places where there is justice and where people advocate for dignity of all creation.

We pray:

...for people whose bodies, minds and souls are in pain and those struggling with physical or mental illness;

...for people who experience violence in their relationships, in their home, workplace, community or country, and for those who have been displaced by war, unjust economic systems, the climate crisis, and ongoing impacts of colonization around the world;

...for people living with housing insecurity: where home is inadequate for the needs of the people it must shelter, is unsafe, unaffordable, or inaccessible;

...for people who are struggling with economic insecurity, barriers to education or employment, unfairness in policies or practices;

...for people at the frontlines of social support systems who daily face the evidence of systemic racism and continue to strive for the safety and dignity of people and creation.

Hear us now as we pray in silence...

And now we join our voices into one prayer and pray as Jesus taught,

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. For the Sunday before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Sunday, September 29, 2024.

## 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

We offer our whole selves and we offer the gifts of our hands, hearts, and minds. We give financial gifts to help the church do the work we are called to do in acting for justice and hope knowing that for us it means our ministry and the work that we do from this place.

Consider the ways your life has been impacted by God and others working with and through you and may your offering reflect God's presence in your life.

St. Andrew's uses all the money that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts make a difference and this includes the 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. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

## Hymn

*Arise, your light has come*

712

1. Arise, your light is come!  
The Spirit's call obey;  
show forth the glory of your God  
which shines on you today.
2. Arise, your light is come!  
Fling wide the prison door;  
proclaim the captive's liberty,  
good tidings to the poor.
3. Arise, your light is come!  
All you in sorrow born,  
bind up the broken-hearted ones  
and comfort those who mourn.
4. Arise, your light is come!  
The mountains burst in song!  
Rise up like eagles on the wing,  
God's power will make us strong.

Words: Ruth Duck Music: William H. Walter. copyright © Ruth Duck 1974  
All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

## Benediction

Go into God's good creation  
praying that the Spirit will open our minds to receive truth,  
open our hearts to seek peace,  
and strengthen our bodies to work for justice.

Let the Spirit guide you in ways of love and justice,  
to walk lightly and humbly and seek truth, reconciliation, healing, and wholeness.  
And may the Blessing of Creator, Christ and Spirit  
rest upon you this day and everyday.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. For the Sunday before and observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Sunday, September 29, 2024.