

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
2nd Sunday after Epiphany - January 19, 2025

Call to Worship

Come, Holy Spirit,
The wind of God, the breath of Life.
Come, Holy Spirit,
Our Advocate, our Counselor.
Come, Holy Spirit,
Teacher of Wisdom, Reminder of Christ.
Come, Holy Spirit,
Granter of forgiveness, giver of peace.
Come, Holy Spirit.
May we feel God breathing through our worship.
May we receive the Holy Spirit in this place. Amen.

~ written by Joanna Harader and posted on **Spacious Faith**. <https://spaciousfaith.com/>

Hymn

I sing the almighty power of God

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1. I sing the almighty power of God
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad
and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at God's command,
and all the stars obey.
2. I sing the goodness of the Lord,
that filled the earth with food;
God formed the creatures with a word,
and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how thy wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eyes,
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the skies.
3. There's not a plant or flower below
but makes thy glories known,
and clouds arise and tempests blow
by order from thy throne,
while all that borrows life from thee
is ever in thy care,
and everywhere that I could be,
thou, God, art present there.

Words by Isaac Watts. Arrangement by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Public Domain

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,
through signs of grace you reveal your glory to all the world.
Opening our eyes to the hidden and surprising wonders you perform,
we believe with our minds and trust in our hearts
that you alone are Lord of all creation.

Through the gifts of the Spirit given to each one of us
we see how you work among us, with us, and in us
for the good of your church and for community.
We pray to be a blessing not only as individuals but together.

**God of all life and our lives,
we gather in worship week by week,
seeking your refreshing presence.
But we confess sometimes we are discouraged
by things happening around us.
We don't expect your presence to make a difference for us.
Forgive us when we give up on you and end up feeling unfulfilled.
By your grace, refresh us when we are weary or worried,
and renew our trust in you
though Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Adapted from: *Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1* © 2012 Westminster John Knox Press
and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday after Epiphany. January 19, 2025. Year C.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The God who challenges us is also the God who encourages us.
The God who confronts us is also the God who accepts us.
Be assured that God is with us even now,
accepting, guiding, and forgiving. Thanks be to God

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Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹⁻³ What I want to talk about now is the various ways God's Spirit gets worked into our lives. This is complex and often misunderstood, but I want you to be informed and knowledgeable. Remember how you were when you didn't know God, led from one phony god to another, never knowing what you were doing, just doing it because everybody else did it? It's different in this life. God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can. For instance, by using your heads, you know perfectly well that the Spirit of God would never prompt anyone to say "Jesus be damned!" Nor would anyone be inclined to say "Jesus is Master!" without the insight of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁻¹¹ God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

wise counsel
clear understanding
simple trust

healing the sick
miraculous acts
proclamation
distinguishing between spirits
tongues
interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.

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

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

Message Everyone Benefits

Here we are, not even a full month out from Christmas. By now most everyone has packed away any ruminants of the Christmas Season. Gifts given are being enjoyed or have been returned for various reasons. The unwrapping and excitement pretty much given way to the everydayness of life. Some gifts were given to bring joy in the moment, other gifts will be used daily. Gifts given to children and adults alike. For some exchanging gifts, buying or receiving a gift, doesn't happen, or it feels like an obligation, for others it is pure joy. Gift giving between humans can be complicated even if one enjoys it as you have to figure out what will be appreciated by the person receiving the gift.

Yet, most often these gifts are temporary. They don't last. Given today's capitalistic and throw away markets, most things are not made to last anymore. Having said that, I think of the gift of an afghan Ken and I received that was handmade by his grandmother when we were married. We still have it some forty-two years later. Although I will say I have pretty much preserved it rather than used it much, knowing that it would likely be the only things of her we would ever have.

Basically, gifts are a way we can show our gratitude, respect, and concern for others. Gifts can be physical gifts, like we tend to exchange for Christmas and birthday or even the financial offerings we give in worship. Gifts can also be things like sharing knowledge, expertise, and time.

Then there are gifts of life. We talk about the gifts of the earth, the food that we can grow from fields of wheat to garden plots in the back yard. The gift of creation and the gift of relationships. The gifts of love or sorrow shared.

In this reading of the first letter of Paul to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks about gifts of the Spirit, but first he grounds the Corinthians and us in the fact that Jesus is Lord and that God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, work as one. Then he gets into this dialogue about spiritual gifts with the continued reminder that these gifts all originate in God's Spirit.

The specific words used in *The Message* are, "God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out

everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all."¹ These are gifts of God for the people of God to be used to benefit everyone.

These gifts of the Spirit are not squandered or hoarded or dismissed, though it is easy to want to do so for various reasons. For starters we may not have paid attention to the gifts of the Spirit we have been given, or ignored that these are something that every Christian is given for the good of church and community. We may think that our gift of art, craft, woodworking, singing, dance, computing, organization, imagination, companionship, or encouragement is not worth sharing or that it is only to be used to get us ahead in the world. Yet, when our gifts are used to benefit others the blessings overflow in the lives of those we touch and our own lives.

Again, taking words from *The Message*, "Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues."² (v4-10)

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. The variety of gifts would take pages to cover. This is meant to be a sampling of the many and different gifts of the Spirit, but note they are given to each person so that through those gifts we can show others who God is. Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. And we don't all get the same gift or gifts, and not all of our gifts are necessarily needed every time, but they will be needed.

You and I might be given the same gifts, but because we are unique individuals, the way that gift is manifest in me will be different from the way God gets you to use the same type of gift. We both may be encouragers, but I may be called to encourage one person or group and you another. "All these gifts have a common origin but are handed out one by one by the one spirit of God. The Spirit decides who gets what, and when."³ (12:11)

I find this truly exciting, but it is also challenging when we are called to use these gifts in the community of faith and to benefit not only ourselves but our broader community. Which is exactly what we are supposed to be doing... using our gifts to make God's love, grace, and forgiveness known to others so that they may come to experience the abundant life that God offers. And do not think of abundance as material possessions, though it may include that. The abundance of God is about grace, passion for life, love, hope and so much more.

¹ [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

² Ibid

³ Ibid.

And let's consider more about why these gifts are given to us. To do so, I would like to share a piece by retired Professor Frank Crouch as he writes concerning this passage from the letter to the Corinthians.

First, from the beginning, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they exist, not just as a group of people who come together once a week, but as a "church of God," and not just any church of God, but "the church of God that is in Corinth." God has called them together in Christ to live and serve in a specific city, with its own historical and cultural context that generally pays little attention to God, the call of Christ, or the richness of life in the Spirit. Paul calls on them to bring their distinctive identity and purpose to full expression right there where they meet together and live.⁴

Let me revamp that a little, Paul reminds the church of St. Andrew's that we exist, not just as a group of people who come together once a week, but as a "church of God," and not just any church of God, but "the church of God that is in Thunder Bay at the corner of Donald and Brodie, across from city hall." God has called us together in Christ to live and serve in this specific city, with our own historical and cultural context that generally pays little attention to God, the call of Christ, or the richness of life in the Spirit. Paul calls on us to bring our distinctive identity and purpose to full expression right here where we meet together and live.

Specifically, since Covid and through the New Beginnings program, we have been looking at how to be the church of God from this place, and that work is not done. It will never be done. We have the gifts of the Spirit given to each one of us for our own time and for the church and for the community that are meant to benefit everyone.

Today and in the coming weeks, may you be encouraged to reflect, learn, and even test through conversation and works how you are specifically gifted through the work of the Holy Spirit to help us be the people of God right now in this moment from this place, for each other and for the community. **You** are gifted. Everyone has at least one gift of the Spirit, I say that knowing that all of us are given gifts in multiple for the work of God, because for some amazing reason God chooses to work through ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Praise and thanks be to God for these gifts of the Spirit and for the gift of you as part of our body called to be the church. Amen.

Prayers of the People

O God,
Jesus brought joy into lives that needed hope and a new beginning.
We pray for all those who need a new beginning this year:

⁴ Frank L. Crouch [Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)

Accessed January 17, 2025.

Individuals trying to make a new start,
Families trying to sort through difficulties,
Groups hoping to accomplish good things for others,
Refugees building new homes in a new land,
Students and teachers beginning a new semester,
Businesses and congregations trying to rebuild.
Show each one how much they matter to you,
and renew their courage and resolve to make a fresh start.

O God,
Jesus changed water into wine and sends the Holy Spirit
to show us that you can accomplish extraordinary things through ordinary lives.
We pray for all those volunteering their energy and concern
to make a difference for others in this community.
We pray for our elected leaders and for all government workers
trying to manage their responsibilities.
We pray for those working for justice,
raising awareness to problems in society and for the earth itself.
And we pray for one another
and for each good purpose we undertake with new resolve this year.
Give us a glimpse of how our hands become your hands, blessed by the Spirit.

O God,
Jesus faced the suffering around him with compassion,
reaching out to those in pain and grief with healing and hope.
We remember before you those whose lives are wrapped in sorrow or despair,
and those facing tragic death or critical illness...
We remember those rebuilding lives and communities after flooding and storm and
fire and all those burdened by pain or problems that seem to have no end...
Embrace each one with your comfort and courage,
and show us what we can offer to make a difference.

O God in whom we live and move and have our being,
thank you for giving us the courage and commitment we need
to follow Christ in good times and in hard times.
Thank you for the strength we find together as part of your church
and the gifts you give us in each other,
gifts we can rely on as we plan for our ministry and mission
in these ever-changing times.
Help us trust in the promise of your love for us and energize us with your Spirit
so that we can recognize the opportunities you give us
to live out the grace and mercy we know in Jesus Christ
who taught us to pray together:

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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

God offers us many gifts through the same Spirit so that, together, we may serve in Jesus' name.

Trust that what you have to give, God will bless in faithfulness and fruitfulness.

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We gather our gifts together and present them as an offering of gratitude and praise. And we give thanks for the support we receive for the ministry here at St. Andrew's in Thunder Bay. Head to our website at standrewspres-tbay.ca or give directly through an e-transfer at offerings.standrewspres@tbaytel.net.

Hymn

Called as partners in Christ service

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1. Called as partners in Christ's service,
called to ministries of grace,
we respond with deep commitment,
fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing,
side by side and friend with friend,
equal partners in our caring
to fulfil God's chosen end.
2. Christ's example, Christ's inspiring,
Christ's clear call to work and worth,
let us follow, never faltering,
reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer,
All God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together,
Gracious gifts from God unfold.
3. Thus new patterns for Christ's mission,
in a small or global sense,
help us bear each other's burdens,
breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision,
words of challenge, said with care,
bring new power and strength for action,
make us colleagues, free and fair.
4. So God grant us for tomorrow
ways to order human life
that surround each person's sorrow
with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living,
our compassion to increase,
messengers of faith, thus giving
hope and confidence and peace.

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Benediction

Go out into the world, sent as Christ Jesus was sent,
gifted and empowered for the common good.

Dream dreams, pursue visions
and speak of God's goodness
in the words of those who would hear.

And may God give hope to your dreaming;
May Christ Jesus set rivers of life flowing within you,
and may the Holy Spirit unite you as one body and set you ablaze with joy.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

[The Day of Pentecost – Year A – LaughingBird](#)