

3rd Sunday after Epiphany - January 26, 2025

Call to Worship

There is one true God

**Whom to know is life eternal,
whom to serve is joy and peace.**

God creates all that is.

**The whole universe displays
the majesty and power of its Maker.**

We worship God as the source of all life.

**With thanks we acknowledge
God's wisdom, power, faithfulness, and love.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. January 26, 2025. Year C.

Hymn

Brother, sister, let me serve you

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| 1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too. | 2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load. |
| 3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear. | 4. I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through. |
| 5. When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony. | 6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too. |

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ and Spirit;

you are the maker of a better world.

You are the creator of lasting peace.

We worship you for the gifts of peace and healing that

You bring into troubled lives.

You have shown us the way to work for justice,

to love friend and enemy alike, to build a better world.
In this time of worship,
inspire us to believe our work in your name makes a difference.
So may we live to bring glory to you through our commitment to you
and the communion we share with so many around the world
as your faithful disciples.

Knowing your love is everlasting, we confess to you our sins:

**God of grace and harmony,
we confess we can be divisive when you call us to unity,
quarrelsome when you call us to seek peace,
and critical rather than caring.**

**We have grown used to our own ways
and cannot imagine you would ask us to change
even for the sake of the Gospel.**

**Forgive us when we mistake our familiar traditions for your truth.
Show us how we can witness to your love
through working and worshipping together. Amen.**

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Assurance of Forgiveness

God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.
It shines into the world and scatters the darkness.
Know that you are forgiven and forgive one another.
Be at peace and walk in the newness of life, led by God's light.

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Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the

body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

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Message One Body

The human body is amazing! If you start looking up facts about it one will find talk about the different systems in the body, how many cells, how much of the body is made up of water, and on and on. Those who study the body, heal the body, and operate on the body are very knowledgeable individuals. For most of us things don't get too complicated unless dealing with illness, in which case you learn way more about your body than you may have ever wanted to know.

There is the song about Dem Bones. We can sing, “the toe bone connected to the foot bone, the foot bone connected to the ankle bone, the ankle bone connected to the leg bone,” and all the way up until we get to the shoulder, neck, and head bone. But for many of us the extend of our knowledge of the body is limited and pretty general considering how complex our bodies are.

In Apostle Paul's time there was also a very limited understanding about the human body, but for all generations it has been very apparent, just by looking at us, that the body has a head, feet, hands, ears, eyes, nose, and private parts. Paul's use of the body for analogy is not unique for his time. Normally the analogy of the body has been used to show a hierarchy within the family unit, the organization of groups, or in government. The head of course always being considered the most important part of any organization.

This thinking is still prevalent in the world. We talk about the head of a company, the CEO, the head of government or the head of state, the head of the church, and the head of the family. Each time we do so we mean that the person at the top has authority and some amount of autonomy as well as importance, that separates them from the rest of the group. For us, the church, our head is Christ, and though Christ is the head, we are intrinsically connected as the body of Christ. Christ chooses us as the body.

What was unique about Paul's use of the body as an analogy for the church is that in his writing no one part of the body is said to be more important than another. In fact, he makes sure that we are aware that the more private parts of the body are as important and have role to play. The parts we cover and treat with modesty are as integral to the whole body as the head, hands, and feet. And I find it interesting that though we call Christ the head, in Paul's writing he includes the example of eyes and ears which are part of the head as parts of the body that are as needed as the feet in order for the church to be the church.

It was Paul's intention to make sure that people understood that the church was not going to be the church as it should be unless everyone, every part of the body, was seen and understood as necessary, needed, and valuable.

Now this passage comes right after the scripture about spiritual gifts that says each person is given gifts by the Holy Spirit for the common good of the whole. Paul continues in this part of the reading to express just how important each person is to the whole saying that "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body" (12:18-20).

There are two points yet to make. Paul writes that "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (12:26). And that "[we] are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (12:17). Let's unpack that a little, but looking first at the statement that we are the body, and yet individuals.

Take a look at your hands. You see there that you have individual fingers, each one important to your ability to write, grasp and manipulate items. Each finger serves a purpose. Still together with the palm and back of the hand we call it all the hand, and we are able to do much more with the whole hand than each finger can on its own. This does not lessen the importance of each finger but rather upholds the need for each finger in the work of the hand as a whole.

We are individuals here in the church. Each of us unique. Each of us with gifts that are ours that another does not have. We may share some gifts in common, but not one of us has every gift of the Spirit within us. Individually we have value and can do many

things, but when we are brought together, we can do even more because it takes everyone to be the whole church.

You may believe that you only have a small part to play in the role of the church and it would not be noticed one way or another if you did not use your gifts. You are wrong. We may not yet even know what we are missing because you have hidden your gift. Tucked it away for fear that you will be called on to do more than you think you are able to do. But I tell you that we are not who we can be or are called to be without you.

You may not have a clue as to what you can do or what your gifts are. If so, take time to study the gifts, do a little homework, ask people what they see in you, or just take time for conversation and let people know that you are searching to understand how God has gifted you.

For those who know their gifts it is important to not see your gift as more important than another. Those who are expressive and well spoken or have power and prestige can easily be seen or thought of as more important than others. Paul warns us not to believe that of ourselves or of others. People with very discernable gifts that know how to use them must not be seen as more valuable to the whole than those who are still struggling to understand how God is using them for the good and strength of the whole.

You may also need to assess what you are doing in the church presently. If it does not bring you joy then maybe you are not using your gifts as God intended. Even if what you do is a lot of work, it should be joyful work in the church. It may bring you joy to see a child's face light up when you teach them, or to know people are satisfied because they have been nourished through food and fellowship, or the music you share has lifted or comforted someone's spirit.

Maybe it is taking time after worship to count the offering and though done quietly and is not noticed by many, is still something you enjoy and you know is helpful to the whole. Maybe it is taking minutes or chairing a meeting, leading people in Bible or book study, organizing an event, making phone calls and writing cards. There is little in the world, work, or church that does not take some amount of effort. But even if difficult and at times challenging, it should be joy-filled work because you know that you are using your gifts in a way that God intended.

What can be truly life-giving to the church is when someone comes forward with new ideas for both the work and/or worship of the church. The church was never meant to be unchanging. The church changes as people use their gifts, grow in faith, and in love of one another.

There is an African word that can be translated a number of ways. The word is Ubuntu. Translated it means humanity, but can be defined as meaning, "I am what I am because of who we all are." This captures the essence of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. As individuals we are what we are because of who we all are. As the church we are what we are because of who we all are. Further to that, as Paul wrote, if one suffers than the whole suffers together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. We are to be so connected to one another that we suffer and rejoice together.

You are important, without you I cannot be who God intended me to be. Without each of us, the church will not and cannot be what God intended it to be. We are as connected as our breath which goes out from one person and is breathed in by another.

Know that you are a necessary part of the church and we will only be who we are supposed to be if each of us steps up and shares our gifts, time and energy, no matter how limited you may think that is. Let others encourage you, listen to you, and share in the life and work that God is calling us to in this day, in this place, and with each other.

The Holy Spirit is calling you. Listen to the voice of the Spirit in your heart and as revealed to you by others. Please don't ignore it. Don't be afraid or shy, lazy, or too proud. We need each other to be the whole body of Christ living, working, in our world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of life, God of love.

You created us and set us in relationship with each other:

In families and neighbourhoods,
in churches and communities,
in cultures and nations.

We give you thanks for the rich gifts of arts and culture,
of home life and community celebration
which bring meaning and encouragement to our lives.

Help us contribute our gifts
to the traditions and imagination that sustain the best of our common life
from one generation to the next.

God of mercy and forgiveness,

You call us to live together in peace and unity.

In this Week of Prayer for Christian unity,
we pray that your Spirit will create understanding and co-operation
among all who bear Christ's name.

Help us share our gifts with each other
so that churches within our community may flourish
and our common mission will find new energy.
Lead us to reach out to those of other faiths and no faith
so that, together, we may be a blessing in the world you love.

God of healing and hope,
We pray for our neighbourhoods and our nation.
Where people are divided and bitterness turns into resentment,
show us how to work for reconciliation.
Inspire our leaders at every level of community life
to work together for the care of the most vulnerable
and to restore the goodness of our common life.
Make us generous citizens and careful stewards
of the land you entrust to us together.

God of justice and mercy,
We pray for the world you love, the world Christ died to redeem,
so deeply divided by religious and political animosities,
by ancient bitterness and current conflict.
Encourage world leaders to work for peace and understanding,
especially in places torn apart by violence,
by poverty, by hunger and by the effects of natural disasters.
May the hope that Jesus embodies encourage us all to work for positive change.

God of courage and comfort,
We remember those of our congregation and community
in need of your special attention today....

Use us as agents of your healing and hope
as we offer ourselves in Jesus' name in the words he taught us to pray:

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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

Offering

The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are part of one body, each of us and all of us. The gifts we offer in Jesus' name are all needed, each of them and all of them. Together, the body of Christ accomplishes many things through the gifts we share.

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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

We are one in the Spirit

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1. We are One in The Spirit, we are One in the Lord,
we are One in The Spirit, we are One in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity will one day be restored,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our Love,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love.
2. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
we will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
and together we'll spread the news that God is in our land,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our Love,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love.
3. We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
we will work with each other, we will work side by side,
and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our Love,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love.
4. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
and all praise to Christ Jesus, who is God's only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our Love,
and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

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Benediction

You have been called and anointed.
You have been strengthened and enlightened.
You have become one body in Christ.
Now go to spread joy and love
in word and in deed to all the world.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3521/worship-elements-january-27-2019>

Postlude